

Required Reading and Continued Education Resources for Administrators and Teachers of Meadowlark Collective

Books (* = required reading)

- **Teaching From Rest*, Sarah MacKenzie
- *For the Children's Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School*, Susan Schaeffer Macaulay
- *A Philosophy of Education*, Charlotte Mason
- *Know and Tell: The Art of Narration*, Karen Glass
- *The Liberal Arts Tradition: The Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*, Kevin Scott and Ravi Jain

Articles (attached)

- **Desiring a Kingdom School*, Christopher Perrin
- **Scholé in the Scriptures: Desiring What is Better*, Christopher Perrin

Videos

- **The Liturgical Classroom: Virtue and Renewal of Education*

<http://insideclassicaled.com/the-liturgical-classroom-virtue-and-renewal-of-education/>

- Teaching from a State of Rest, part 1 of 6 (<https://vimeo.com/88906519>)

Audio Lectures

- Assessment that Blesses, Andrew Kern (<https://www.circeinstitute.org/audio>)

Podcasts

- The Mason Jar (<https://www.circeinstitute.org/podcasts/the-mason-jar>)
- A Delectable Education (<http://www.adelectableeducation.com/podcast-episodes/>)
- Scholé Sisters (<https://www.scholesisters.com/blog/>)
- Ask Andrew (<https://www.circeinstitute.org/podcasts/ask-andrew>)

Continued Education

- ClassicalU at ClassicalAcademicPress.com (<https://www.classicalu.com/>)
(members of Scholé groups have discounted access)
- Teacher Training videos at ADelectableEducation.com
(<http://www.adelectableeducation.com/teacher-training-videos/>)

Websites

- CharlotteMasonInstitute.com
- CirceInstitute.org

Desiring a Kingdom School

Christopher A. Perrin, PhD

A review of *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* by James K.A. Smith.

We all have ideals—ideals for a wonderful marriage, the best job, a superb vacation. Our ideals, however, are often fuzzy. What does the ideal church really look like? An ideal government? What about an ideal school?

Well, to outline an ideal marriage involving the intersection of two inscrutable human beings is a difficult challenge; to actually live out an ideal marriage is beyond difficult. What might an ideal school look like—with the intersection of two to three hundred human beings—parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and...students? And that would be a small school.

If James K.A. Smith is right, we simply cannot help imagining an ideal future, an ideal of human flourishing. According to Smith in his book *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation*, imagining ideals is a large part of what it means to be human. We all are seeking some version of the good life; we all desire a kingdom. What is more, we are all being shaped and formed in various ways to love and desire one sort of kingdom or another.

Smith contends that before we humans are cognitive, rational beings, we are creatures of desires, passions, and loves. He further contends that the way we change is not primarily a matter of the mind, but primarily the result of the heart-shaping forces of the “cultural liturgies” we encounter in the world. He writes:

Because our hearts are oriented primarily by desire, by what we love, and because those desires are shaped and molded by the habit-forming practices in which we participate, it is the rituals and practices of the mall—the liturgies of the mall and market—that shape our imaginations and how we orient ourselves to the world. Embedded in them is a common set of assumptions about the shape of human flourishing, which becomes an implicit telos or goal of our own desires and actions. That is, the visions of the good life embedded in these practices become

surreptitiously embedded in us through our participation in the rituals and rhythms of these institutions.

Smith takes time to examine the ways that various institutions do in fact act as cultural liturgies. He begins with the mall, imagining what it might be like for a Martian anthropologist to study its culture. Smith is convinced that such an anthropologist would see the mall as a thoroughly religious institution. The mall has a daily visitation of pilgrims who enter a large and dazzling cathedral of glass, concrete, light, and ornamentation. There are banners and flags displayed in a large atrium; there are familiar texts and symbols placed on walls to help us easily identify what is inside the various chapels that are contained in this labyrinthine cathedral. Rich iconography lines the wall of each chapel, and there are many three-dimensional statues adorned with the garb that we too can acquire in imitation of these ideals. These same icons, statues, and exemplars can be found in similar temples across the country and around the world. In fact the wide distribution of these colors and icons are found in many places in the outside world and have drawn us as pilgrims in the first place. The power of the gospel message of these temples is the power of beauty, “which speaks to our deepest desires and compels us to come not with dire moralisms but rather with a winsome invitation to share in the envisioned good life.”

At this point, Smith is just getting started with his analysis of the “religion of the mall.” He goes on to describe the purchasing experience as a kind of secular Eucharist. Understandably, he does not like or praise the religion of the mall. He does acknowledge, however, that the mall understands something profound about human beings. It embodies its view of its kingdom, rather than merely talking about it. He writes, “Indeed, the genius of mall religion is that actually it operates with a more holistic, affective, embodied anthropology (or theory of the human person) than the Christian church tends to assume. Because worldview-thinking still tends to focus on ideas and beliefs, the formative cultural impact of sites like the mall tends to not show up on our radar.” (We don’t have glasses to see them.)

As you might guess, the point of Smith’s book is to help us turn on our radar to the formative impact that various cultural liturgies have on us all. Of interest to classical educators will be his liturgical analysis of university education and of Christian college education. Using Tom Wolfe’s book *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, Smith points out that the college experience is far more than the fifteen hours a week a student spends in a classroom. Secular university experience exerts a

dynamic and intentional shaping influence on college students in dozens of ways. Dorm life, frat house life, football games, drinking, bar and club escapades, hooking up, and an exhausting, frenetic rhythm of classes, study, and exams shape and form students for the “real world” of “corporate ladder climbing and white-collar overtime needed in order to secure the cottage, the boat, and the private education for the kids.” Smith concludes that while the classroom, laboratory, lecture hall, and library have performed some role in shaping a student, they do not compare to the other ways students are shaped. The information provided in the academic areas is “not nearly as potent as the formation we’ve received in the dorm and frat house, or the stadium and dance club.”

His look at Christian colleges is not much more encouraging. Too many Christian colleges in his opinion simply take the basic secular approach to education and add the integration of a Christian worldview or Christian perspective. Smith suggests that the dominant paradigm of Christian education asserts that “goal of a Christian education is to produce professional who do pretty much the same sorts of things that graduates of Ivy League and state universities do, but who do them ‘from a Christian perspective,’ and perhaps with the goal of transforming and redeeming society.” For Smith this is regrettable reduction as it “unhooks Christianity from the practices that constitute Christian discipleship.” For Smith, the worship practices of the church must be vitally bound up with the rhythms and practices of a Christian college (and school). When the Christian college is unhooked from the liturgies of the church, we end up with an intellectualization of Christianity, leading students to think that “being a Christian doesn’t radically reconfigure our desires and wants, our practices and habits.” This happens because for far too long Christian education has “been concerned with information rather than formation; thus Christian colleges have thought it sufficient to provide a Christian perspective, an intellectual framework, because they see themselves as fostering individual ‘minds in the making.’ Hand in hand with that, such an approach reduces Christianity to a denuded intellectual framework that has diminished bite because such an intellectualized rendition of the faith doesn’t touch our core passions.”

I think by now Smith’s thesis is beginning to sink in. Christian worldview instruction is not enough. Appealing to the mind and intellect is not enough. Not that instruction in Christian worldview and ideas should not be done—such instruction is vital. But it is not sufficient, not enough. We must address the core

passions of our students, and we do this by means of creating community, atmosphere, rhythms, practices, and traditions that shape the hearts of students by engaging them as affective, passionate lovers, not mere minds. The church, rightly worshipping, seeks to do this. Welcoming, greeting, singing, hearing, tasting, standing, kneeling, we worship with all of our person—mind and body. Embodied worship is formative and shapes our love for the kingdom of God and acts as a powerful counterformation over against the formative influence of a dozen secular liturgies we witness and experience. In fact the liturgy of worship helps subvert the power of these secular liturgies, wising us up to their power and methods.

This is where things get interesting. Could it be that our children are being shaped to love a version of the good life that is primarily determined by the “liturgies” of the mall, football stadium, TV sitcoms, and the iPod? Could it be that our schools that privilege direct engagement with the mind, and the presentation of ideas and a Christian worldview but are nonetheless failing to thwart the power of these other shaping influences? Any teacher with experience can tell you about scores of students whose minds and hearts are seldom truly present in the classroom. They are rather occupied with the shopping for the next fashionable item, the next soccer game, the latest movie, Monday Night Football, the coming rock concert. These things shape them and engage them as lovers, and the teacher often feels powerless standing before her whiteboard with a black marker in her hand. She wonders if it would not be better to show them an educational movie—something they can relate to.

Consider the atmosphere and community of your school. What is its liturgy? That is, what are its rhythms, rituals, practices, and traditions? We carefully plan our curriculum and lessons. Do we carefully plan and create rhythms, rituals, practices, and traditions? Do our teachers carefully plan rhythms, rituals, practices, and traditions for each class of students? If Smith is right, then it is these things that will most profoundly shape what our students will love. Every teacher knows that students will forget seventy-five percent of the content you “teach” them in a classroom. Might it be wise then to pay attention to more than just content and think about form with the same rigor? How can we shape, form, and engage hearts, minds, and yes, even bodies? Is there vibrant worship in your school? Does music echo through the halls and great art adorn the walls? Are there dinner parties and great conversation with students and adults alike? Is your facility attractive and conducive to worship and learning? Are poems read and recited, stories written and told? Is Scripture read at lunch for a time? Are

there traditions of hospitality when existing students welcome new students into the school, when upper school students warmly welcome new 7th graders or 9th graders? Do teachers and parents gather socially to read books, cook meals, and pray? Do high school students babysit for the young children of teachers (maybe at no charge)? Do your older students help teach the younger students and join them for games on the playground from time to time? Do teachers and students go hiking together or bike-riding or running? Are pastors visiting your school, counseling students, speaking in your classrooms or chapel services, or teaching a Bible class? Do you pray for the churches represented by your school and for each pastor by name? Does your school fast occasionally and give money or food to the needy?

These and dozens of other questions might enable us to think more deeply about embodying classical Christian education, such that students absorb it with all five senses and with their hearts as well as their minds. By considering such questions (and generating more), we might clarify our vision of an ideal classical school, and remove much of the fuzziness and confusion that impedes enthusiasm and momentum. Classical education has historically been communal and ecclesial, and Smith poignantly reminds us of this. He also helps us to see more clearly that a classical Christian education involves the collaboration of family, church, and school as we seek nothing less than the kingdom of God. Classical educators and leaders would do well to learn from the insights of this valuable and timely book.

Embodied Learning Outline for Discussion

PHILOSOPHY

1. We are not merely thinking things...or disembodied minds. Our hearts are actually shaped through our five senses to love some ideal of human flourishing. The rational part of us—our minds—is crucial and part of being made in the image of God. But our bodies are just as important, and just as determinative of what we choose to love. This insight is developed in James K.A. Smith's book *Desiring the Kingdom*.
2. Augustine said we should “order our loves” so that we love beautiful things with the appropriate esteem and affection due those things. There is a proper way to love a daughter and a proper way to love an oak tree. We

need to learn how to “love those things which are lovely”—which means our affections need to be cultivated.

3. C.S. Lewis develops this theme in his slim book *The Abolition of Man*. He argues that modern students are not so much jungles that need to be cut (overly affective) but rather deserts that need to be irrigated (students lack robust affections and sentiment).
4. Because we have been conditioned to resist calling something truly lovely and then loving it, we often lack the courage to praise, extol, admire, and praise. We also lack the courage to blame the ugly, despise the lie, flee the immoral. We have become humans without robust emotion, without conviction, without affections, without heart. In Lewis’s words, we have become men without chests.
5. Because we are physical beings we are creatures of habit in the world, creatures who create and live in various daily, weekly, and annual “liturgies”—rhythms, practices, and routines that impart meaning and direct our affections to a view of the “good life.” There are secular as well as ecclesial liturgies. For example, the mall has its own “liturgies” that attract our hearts (through the five senses) and shape our loves (often disordering our loves). Other liturgies: sports, TV, Facebook, concerts, fraternity or dorm life, etc.

PRACTICE

If we are liturgical creatures who live life through our bodies, then what are the implications for education?

1. Education is embodied whether we acknowledge it or not. It always takes some form, even if “patched together” with little thought.
2. Consider the forms (liturgies, embodiment) of your past education: the architecture of the school, the setup of the classrooms and hallways, the bells, the smells, the cafeteria, the liturgy of the bus ride to and from school... Recall the materials posted on the walls of your classrooms and the way your teacher would greet you and dismiss you from class. Recall the pledge of allegiance, the school song...

3. Some practices (embodiments) are more fitted toward the educational goals of wisdom, virtue, and eloquence (traditional, classical educational desired outcomes). Other practices will better fit the outcome of just getting a job, or serving the state.
4. Here are some practical questions that can lead to practical changes. Consider the atmosphere of your homeschool. What is its liturgy? That is, what are its rhythms, rituals, practices, and traditions? We carefully plan our curriculum and lessons. Do we carefully plan and create rhythms, rituals, practices, and traditions?
5. If Smith is right, then it is these things that will most profoundly shape what our students will love. Every teacher knows that students will forget seventy-five percent of the content you “teach” them in a classroom. Might it be wise then to pay attention to more than just content, and think about form with the same rigor? How can we shape, form, and engage hearts, minds, and yes, even bodies? Is there vibrant worship in your homeschool? Does music echo through the house and great art adorn the walls? Are there dinner parties and great conversation with your children? Is your homeschool “room” attractive and conducive to worship and learning? Are poems read and recited, stories written and told? Is Scripture read at lunch for a time? Are there traditions of hospitality when inviting younger siblings or co-op students into your home or class? Do parents in your co-op gather socially to read books, cook, dine, and pray? Do older school students babysit for the younger children—and for other parents in your co-op? Do you older students help teach the younger students and join in their games and play? Are pastors engaged with your homeschool or co-op—perhaps counseling children or teaching a co-op Bible class? Do you pray for your church and the churches represented by your co-op—and for each pastor by name? Does your homeschool fast occasionally and give money or food to the needy?
6. These and dozens of other questions might enable us to think more deeply about embodying classical Christian education, such that students absorb it with all five senses and with their hearts as well as their minds. By considering such questions (and generating more), we might clarify our vision of an ideal homeschool, and remove much of the fuzziness and confusion that impedes enthusiasm and momentum. Classical education has historically been communal and ecclesial, and James K.A. Smith poignantly reminds us of this. He also helps us to see more clearly that a

classical Christian education involves the collaboration of family, church, and community as we seek nothing less than the kingdom of God.

7. Consider starting a Scholé Sisters group. Scholé Sisters meet together to engage in...*scholé*. They take time to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty together on a monthly basis to ensure that they never stop being students themselves.

Scholé in the Scriptures: Choosing What Is Better

Christopher A. Perrin, PhD

Those of you who know this blog (or anything about me) know that I have been reading and writing about returning scholé (σχολή) to our schools and homeschools for about three years now. Here is an article relating the Greek concept of scholé to the Old and New Testament.

Aristotle and Scholé

Well, it was Aristotle who first described the importance of *scholé* (leisure, restful learning and conversation, contemplation), and yet the Hebrew Scriptures (which predate Aristotle) seem to touch on this theme as well. The New Testament certainly does too in some unique ways.

Aristotle writes in Book VII of *Politics*:

...we fulfill our nature not only when we work well but when we use leisure (scholé) well. For I must repeat what I have said before: that leisure is the “initiating principle” of all achievements. Granted that work and leisure are both necessary, yet leisure is the desired end for which work is done; and this raises the question of how we ought to employ our leisure. Not by merely amusing ourselves, obviously, for that would be to set up amusement as the chief end of life. (Book VII:iii)

Aristotle does not disparage wage-earning work, but he says that such work (and amusement) cannot be fitting ends for human aspiration and life. The highest end is the right employment of *scholé*.

Scholé in the Old Testament

Now this insight was picked up by the church (many centuries later) and identified with contemplation. This is not surprising since the Old Testament also suggests a life of “restful learning” and contemplation as the heart of a full human life:

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” (Isaiah 30:15)

“I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.” (Job 3:26)

The Hebrew concept of *shalom* (often translated “peace”) also includes a connotation similar to *scholé*: in addition to the idea of safety and soundness, *shalom* also frequently means quiet, tranquility, and friendship—all components of *scholé*.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), *scholé* only appears twice (in Genesis 33:14 and Proverbs 28:19) and means “leisure” in the primary sense of “going slowly” (Genesis 33:14) and even “wasting time” (Proverbs 28:19). In the Wisdom of Sirach, however, we find this interesting passage:

The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure (scholé): and he that hath little Venture shall become wise. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labors, and whose talk is of bullocks? (Wisdom of Sirach 3:24-25)

Here the word *scholé* is used very much as Aristotle uses it, and the context makes it clear that wisdom comes from the man who takes the opportunity of *scholé* and does not overindulge in wage-earning labors. Note how the passage not only addresses too much Venture or labor—but also addresses the mental preoccupation of the man who only talks about his work. If his only talk is of his bullocks, we must surmise that his only thought is about them as well.

***Scholé* in the New Testament**

In the New Testament (written in Greek), *scholé* only occurs a few times. *Scholé* can refer to a lecture hall (where *scholé* or learned discussions occur), and this is what we find in Acts 19:9, where we read that Paul took his disciples daily for discussions at the lecture hall (*scholén*) of a man named Tyrannus. In 1 Corinthians 7:5, Paul writes that married couples should devote (*scholaséte*) themselves to prayer. Paul here uses the verbal form of *scholé* that means to have rest or leisure, or to be dedicated or devoted (no distractions or obligatory work!).

Beyond the actual use of the word *scholé*, we do find the New Testament addressing the concept of *scholé* in several places:

The Example of Christ

The first indication we get that Jesus condones “restful learning” is that time we find Him at age twelve, away from His parents for at least three days, “in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). Leaving aside the fact that “Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers” (2:47), we should note that Jesus spent three days (sleeping at the temple too?) engaged in conversation with the best teachers in Israel. And He did this at the age of a sixth grader. He tells His parents that “he had to be in his Father’s house” (see 2:49), but we note that what He was doing in His Father’s house resembles *scholé*, or restful learning.

We find Christ frequently going off by Himself to pray, even for forty days at a time. Christ seems never to be in a hurry, but relaxed and peaceful. Even when others around Him are frenetic, He is tranquil. In Luke 10, Martha implores Jesus to tell her sister Mary to help her with dinner preparations, for Martha was busy working while Mary was sitting and talking with Jesus. Jesus responds to her: “Martha, Martha you are anxious (busy) and troubled about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better (literally ‘the good part’), and it will not be taken from her” (see Luke 10:42).

It is hard to imagine a better illustration from the gospels about what *scholé* means than this event recorded in Luke 10. We all have to prepare meals, do dishes, and work for wages—and these are good things. The better thing, however (when we are free to chose), is to talk with a master. Mary was talking with the Master, and certainly chose wisely.

Example from Paul’s Writings

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

Paul notes that the faithful, in the context of the freedom given by the Spirit, contemplate (gaze, reflect) the glory of God and are then transformed to resemble that very glory. This reminds us of Christ's teaching that a student, when he has been fully trained, will be like his master (Luke 6:40). Paul also hints that this transformation is a process that takes time. We gaze and study the glory, and slowly (with ever-increasing glory, literally "from glory to glory") we grow to resemble this glory.

Paul has in mind the experience of Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai after meeting with God there, having received the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments. When Moses came down from that mountain, his face was glowing brightly enough that he spooked the Israelites and had to put a veil over his face.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.... Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD. (Ex. 34:29-30, 35)

Apparently to Paul, the life of the Christian is to be one of contemplation and gazing—looking on the same one that set Moses's face aglow. This implies undistracted gazing, focus, and...time. Looking, gazing, and contemplation thus become a metaphor for learning, conversation, and transformation. After all, Moses was not upon the mountain in a kind of dream sleep—he was rather talking and listening to God—having a remarkable conversation with the Master. Paul suggests that we can now do the same.

Conclusion

It seems that even when not using the word *scholé*, the Old and New Testaments nonetheless describe a growing and learning process that is very much in keeping with Aristotle's use of the word. Slow, restful, conversation and learning is set before us as an example to follow, with Christ Himself as the Master of *scholé*.

If the entire Christian life can be summarized as a kind of slow and sanctified conversation with the Master, could it be that all of our learning should take a

cue from this same kind “restful learning” and resemble a refreshing and ongoing conversation?

If Christ says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest,” and if He says, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29), then should not the way we educate our sons and daughters be gentle and restful?

How many of us have been busy about many things, thinking that we were not free to choose anything else?