

# ROCKBRIDGE REPORTER

A Newsletter for Rockbridge Academy

February 2003

## RADICAL EDUCATION... WITH A 2500 YEAR HISTORY:

“RADICAL,” FROM THE LATIN RADICALIS, “HAVING ROOTS.” *by Michael J. McKenna*

While visiting with the Director of Admissions for St. John's College in Annapolis, he made a comment that didn't seem so profound at the time. However, after giving it some thought, I realized that his observation has considerable import for our school families.

“Classical Christian schools are springing up all over the country!” he remarked. I replied that, yes, indeed they are, and that Rockbridge Academy is called upon to help train teachers or assist new classical schools in getting off the ground quite often. Parents all across America, and the world for that matter, are rediscovering their roots, what our forefathers spent the last several hundred years squandering. For this educational renaissance we should be grateful. God is blessing the efforts of parents, students, teachers, and administrators all over the country as we labor to recapture that which has been lost; as we turn again to the most radical of all educations.

However, there's an inherent danger in any worthwhile endeavor when it begins to catch on. Whenever a word becomes popular, it is perilously easy to use that word a lot, and not realize that you're no longer dealing with the root, but instead with this or that branch or leaf. Classical. Worldview. Latin studies.



“Classical Christian schools are springing up all over the country!”

Logic. Rhetoric. These are easy phrases to toss around. But, if we're not careful to recommit ourselves to our “first love,” to be truly radical, we may be in jeopardy of losing our vision or settling for something far removed from the root. We didn't get into the educational hole in which we find ourselves overnight, and we're not going to fill it in overnight either. It requires a long obedience in the same direction.

The first thing we need to consider again as we set about getting to the root of classical Christian education is this:

Classical Christian education protects our children. Lest you misunderstand, permit a clarification. When I say “protect,” I do not mean in a “Columbine,” “Jonesboro,” or “Beltway sniper” sort of way. While it is true that a school such as Rockbridge Academy provides a demonstrably safer environment than many other schools, it is also true that arrows fly by day, and pestilence walks in the darkness, and these things will not overtake us until such time as God decrees they should. And when He does, they will...no matter where we find ourselves. Nor do I mean that classical Christian education is designed to somehow protect our children from the encroachment of the world, hermetically sealing them off from its influence. No, when I use the word protect, I'm using it in a larger, more philosophical sense.

Classical Christian education protects our children from the Big Lie. Alan Bloom, in his insightful work, *The Closing of the American Mind*, pointed out that the only thing he could count on as a professor from every student entering his classes each year was this...they did not believe in absolute truth. Now, it would be safe to assume that a Christian or two passed through Professor Bloom's classroom over the years. And yet he could still make such a statement. How did our children learn to think this way?! Where did such virtually universal relativism come from? Sadly, it

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came from our disobedience, which we in turn taught to them. They learned the Big Lie from us.

*Secondly, classical Christian education equips our children for battle.*

By equipping our children with the tools of learning—grammar, logic, and rhetoric, all within the beautiful confines of the Gospel—they are equipped with tools, weapons if you will, that make them less susceptible to the claims of the relativists (*which they will encounter*) and ready to take back the ground that has been squandered. We will protect our children not by teaching them to run away, but by giving them the weapons they need to tear down the walls of the city of man. Our children will not cower; they will charge!

Now, some of you might be thinking, “C’mon, Mike! Is that the meekness that’s going to inherit the earth?” Just in case, let me take a moment to answer that charge. First, believers down through history will stand with me in my use of such metaphorical language. Our Christian forefathers often used the adjective “militant” to describe the church. This is not to say that we should all show up for services next Sunday morning dressed like jack-booted thugs. It does, however, recognize that the Church is constantly at war with unbelief. Second, in my call for teaching our children spiritual offense, as well as defense, I am only parroting Scripture. At times Paul sounds a little militant; “Put on the full armor of God...raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord...our battle is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers...”; Even Jesus seems to openly advocate battle at times: “I did not come to bring peace but a sword...the gates of hell will not prevail against her [the Church]...the strongman must be bound before his house can be ransacked.”

That is what is so exciting about classical education. This is the education that produced the greatest intellectual warriors throughout Western history.

Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards (who graduated from Yale at the age of 17 and delivered his valedictory address in Latin), Edmund Burke, our founding fathers, Adams, Madison, Jefferson and Franklin, were all educated

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in this manner, and this barely scratches the surface. Before intellects such as these, unbelief retreated, nations convulsed, and earthly powers were shaken. Classical education equips great fighters.

Should we continue to consider a truly radical education for our children? After all, such tools protect them from the lies of unbelief; such weapons equip them for the warfare that awaits them. Education of such a radical nature even prepares them to win back some of the ground that the church has surrendered.

As the gentleman observed, classical Christian schools are opening all over. While parents the world over are returning to their roots, we should be grateful that such a radical approach is not new to us, and commit ourselves to a long obedience in the same direction.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER?**

What should you do in case of snow or severe weather? Turn your radio dial to either WRBS (FM 95.1) or WBAL (AM 1090). Rockbridge Academy announces all early dismissals or school closings on both of these radio stations. We will also leave a message on our answering machine to indicate whether or not we will close. As always, we respect your decision to do whatever you feel is necessary for your family.

## **“AGE OF OPPORTUNITY”**

**A BOOK REVIEW** *by Leslie Collins*

Like most parents I have read countless books on children, discipline and parenting. While the Bible is the best book on the subject by far, a close runner-up for me is the *Age of Opportunity*\* by Paul Tripp. This book summarizes what the author believes the Bible says about parenting teenagers and presents the information in cogent, heart-piercing arguments. As my oldest is beginning her own age of opportunity, I was challenged to view this time in her life with an eternal perspective and view myself not as a police officer regulating her behavior, but rather as an instrument of God, seeking to change hearts. Tripp’s book challenges the reader to consider idols that parents serve in their parenting and pushes one to consider the challenge of working oneself out of a job. Essentially, this book is an extension of the principles set forth in *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*\* by Tedd Tripp (the author’s brother). Paul Tripp’s book focuses more effectively on building God’s kingdom instead of one’s own kingdom. It also clarifies the mindset of teenagers and the temptations they face (and how to guide them through this time). The title gives the reader the impression that this is not your typical book on teens, spouting the neglectful “expect rebellion, sexual promiscuity, and all around laziness” attitude. Rather, it emphasizes that this is the time in the child’s life when his heart is exposed. What they love is reflected in what they do. Rather than closing one’s eyes and waiting for this time to be over, it should be viewed as an age of opportunity to open their eyes and help them to center their lives on Christ. These are principles that benefit parents at any stage.

*\*(Books may be purchased in the school office.)*

## TEAM PHOTO:

The 2002-2003 Rockbridge Academy Middle School Boys Basketball team placed third in the Elkton Christmas Tournament posting the historic first win by a Rockbridge Academy athletic team in interscholastic competition. Their victory in the consolation game was secured by the tenacious efforts of all the players and Ethan Cusimano's last second heroics. The 2002-2003 Rockbridge Academy Middle School Boys Basketball team (From left to right): Front, Andrew Morsberger, Ethan Cusimano, Stephen Horst, Robert Sichelstiel, Michael Davis. Back, Assistant Coach Mr. Timothy M. Feeney, Matthew Tucker, Luke Adomanis, Brandon Antkowiak, Benjamin Heemstra, Palmer Horst, Tyler Antkowiak, John Hollidge, Head Coach Mr. Steve Hollidge, Assistant Coach Mr. Grant Colvin.



## COACH HOLLIDGE AND ETHAN CUSIMANO

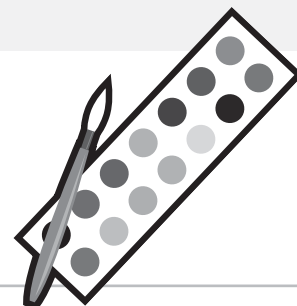
Rockbridge's Ethan Cusimano was selected as a member of the All-Tournament Team for the 2002 Elkton Christmas Tournament. Ethan's poise, ball-handling skills, scoring, and court leadership, were indispensable to Rockbridge's success. Coach Steve Hollidge presents Ethan with a trophy recognizing him as a member of the All-Tournament Team.



## BOARD UPDATE

As Rockbridge Academy pursues accreditation with the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS), one of the requirements of the accrediting committee is that the candidate school have a policy in place which prohibits the acceptance of tuition vouchers. To quote the rationale from the tuition voucher policy, "The proverb expresses the principle well in that, he who takes the king's coin becomes the king's man. If Rockbridge Academy were to receive money from the government, we must know that the money would come with certain conditions. Today, the conditions might be tolerable. But if they are not tolerable tomorrow...we will discover that getting out of the trap is a lot more difficult than getting in." For those who are interested, copies of the policy may be picked up in the school office.

## ART CONTESTS AND CLASSES



Are you looking for something extra to challenge or teach your student artistically? Information is available about local and national art contests for students, as well as a list of area art classes offered during both the school year and summer break. Please contact Mrs. Stevens if you would like more information.

## MORE FROM THE ART DEPARTMENT

Rockbridge continues to look for the donation of a good LCD Projector or cash donations to buy one. The projector would be a great asset in showing pictures of the world's art masterpieces to our students and would be useful to the school in other classes and presentations as well. If you or your company might be interested in a donation, please contact the school office at 410-923-1171.