

Classical Lutheran Education Journal

A JOURNAL OF THE CONSORTIUM FOR CLASSICAL LUTHERAN EDUCATION

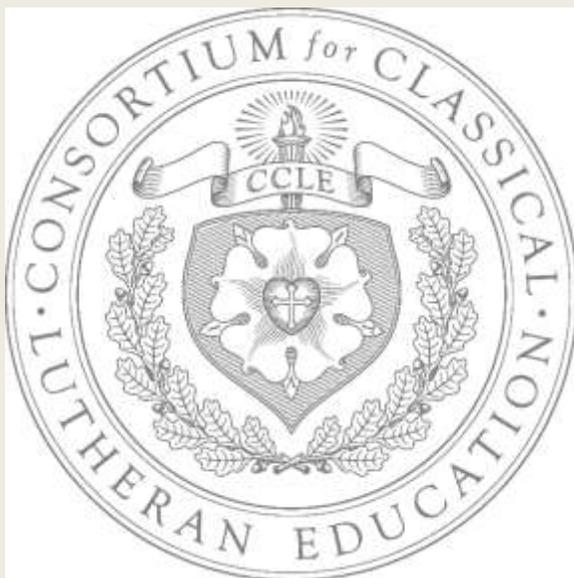
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Consortium *for* Classical Lutheran Education

The CLASSICAL LUTHERAN EDUCATION JOURNAL is dedicated to providing helpful resources for Lutheran educators and parents who labor in the noble endeavor of nurturing and educating God's children.



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In This Issue

In this edition we present five articles prepared for the Consortium for Classical Lutheran Education's eighteenth national summer conference.

- **And With All Your Strength: Knowing and Moving the Human Body** is a compelling paper written by Kristin Malcolm, a *summa cum laude* graduate from Hillsdale College who interned with – and now serves on the faculty of -- Immanuel Lutheran School in Alexandria, Virginia.
- **How Do We Teach Self-Governance?** fills us with thought-provoking questions from Katherine Kramer, a graduate of Patrick Henry's Classical Liberal Arts program who now serves as the assistant headmaster of the newly CCLE-accredited Immanuel Lutheran school in Alexandria, Virginia.
- **Stoic Ethics and the New Testament** from Dr. Jason Soenksen, a colleague with the new classical Lutheran studies program at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon, offers us a scholarly quest into the distinctions and influences of stoicism, ethics, and Pauline writings.
- **Ordering Our Days: The Church Year for Children** by Jocelyn Benson, head teacher at Wittenberg Academy, offers

reflections on the many ways the Church Year assists us in teaching our children in home and church through senses, saints, and seasons. This session was among the highest rated at our CCLE conference and we are pleased to share her thoughts here.

- **Martin Luther and the Art of Disputation** from Dr. E. Christian Kopff anchors this issue with an intriguing look at disputation on this the 500th anniversary of Luther's Heidelberg Disputation. Dr. Kopff serves as Associate Professor of Classics and Associate Director of the Honors program at University of Colorado in Boulder, Director of the Center for Western Civilization, and frequent banquet speaker for CCLE. We remain in prayer for Dr. Kopff, who is undergoing treatment for cancer. We give thanks for Dr. Kopff and are thrilled to announce that in 2018 both Dr. Gene Edward Veith and Dr. E. Christian Kopff received CCLE's highest commendation, the Magister Magnus Award.

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And With All Your Strength: Knowing and Moving the Human Body

by Kristin Malcolm

Embodied Souls

The human being occupies a unique place in all of creation. Find the nearest human being and look at him: you are looking at the only creature in the cosmos to possess both a body and a mind. Find the nearest rock—a body, but no mind. Find the nearest plant—a body, but no mind. Find the nearest animal—a body, but no rational mind. Find the nearest angel (!)—a mind, but no body. Find your neighbor again; he alone has both. He can learn, reason, understand; he is intellectual. He can see, walk, digest; he is incarnate. The immaterial world and the material world meet in the creature that is man.

As teachers and as parents, we are charged with the task, at once maddeningly mundane and maddeningly lofty, of teaching human creatures what it means to be human, and then of helping to make them so. We do this in a thousand ways, small and large. For example, we say to our students, “You are a baptized child of God; come, I will show you how to live as one.” “You are, whether you’d like to be or not, a mathematician; come, I will show you how to live as one.” “You are a lover of story; come, I will show you how to live as one.” In short, in each lesson and lecture and exam, teachers say to their students: “You

are a knower of truth; come, I will show you how to live as one.”

So much for the intellectual truths we teach to our intellectual students. Let us also, then, remember to teach a thousand truths to and about the bodies of these embodied intellects. For example, “You are a running thing; let me show you how to live as one.” “You are an eating thing; let me show you how to live as one.” “You are a seeing thing; let me show you how to live as one.” “You are a singing thing; let me show you how to live as one.” In short, let us in all our lessons and for all our days teach our students that they have flesh and blood and bones, hands and quadriceps and faces, and then show them how to live with them.

“You are a bodily thing”

I am privileged to formally teach my students that they are embodied. At Immanuel Lutheran, the 5th Grade science curriculum consists solely of Anatomy and Physiology, and I could not recommend more highly this formal, extended study of the human body. Do our children know where their kidneys are? Can they name the components of their blood? Do they know the purpose of breathing? They should! The bodies of our students are complex, beautiful, ordered systems: cells join to make tissues, which join to make organs, which join to make organ systems, which work together to keep our students alive by transporting, discharging, and balancing molecules and chemicals. We are made of trillions of moving parts. We are, indeed, heaps of atoms! (We are not

merely atoms, of course—we are more than this. But we are not less.) 5th Graders at Immanuel Lutheran are forced to turn their knowing minds to their own atoms, cells, tissues, organs. But why? Why study Anatomy & Physiology?

Children are known for asking the question, “Why do we have to learn this?” Now, ironically, Anatomy & Physiology is perhaps the only class in which I am not asked this question by my students; but I answer it for them nonetheless, because I delight in answering that fundamental philosophical question, “Why?,” and I will answer it here. The most proximate reason to study Anatomy & Physiology, and the reason most readily grasped by students, is the practical reason: studying Anatomy & Physiology will help us in life in clear ways, such as teaching us to cure sickness when sick or maintain health when healthy. Indeed, to serve others by keeping them alive and healthy is the reason physicians study the human body—many students, instinctively drawn to the beauty of this vocation, voice their own desire to be physicians when they grow up!—and we are grateful for this noble vocation and for those who fulfill it. But all humans are called to be stewards of God’s gifts, and we do this when we know our own bodies and know how to keep them sound and healthy ourselves, to the extent that we are able.

A second reason to study Anatomy & Physiology is a pedagogical one: the students truly love it. No one of my classes is filled with more questions, excitement, and sincere interest from the students

than is Anatomy & Physiology. From Day One I forbid my students from using the word “Science” to name this class—they may say “Anatomy & Physiology” or “A&P”—and they, picking up on the fundamental human love for names, soon feel that 5th Grade is some sort of cult of the anatomically-informed. They know they are the only grade in the school to study the human body for a whole year, and they delight in this privilege. They also love the proximity of the knowledge. By contrast to other classes, the truths learned in Anatomy & Physiology are immediately present to the students. In history class, for example, students are asked to turn their thoughts to a situation that happened hundreds or thousands of years ago, hundreds or thousands of miles away; in literature class, students are asked to turn their thoughts to a fictional world, created in the imagination of an author; in math class they are asked to turn their thoughts to an abstract science. In Anatomy & Physiology class, students are asked to turn their thoughts to—their favorite thing—themselves! The student is asked to look at his wrist and find a pulse, to look at his abdomen and wonder how twenty feet of intestines are cramped into that space, to look at his Achilles tendon and watch it stretch, and so on. Anatomy & Physiology, as an essentially embodied subject, is immediately delightful to our children.

The third reason to study Anatomy & Physiology, which I’ve said already but in a different context, is an essential reason, a reason based upon the essence of our

students. This is, I think, the highest reason to study Anatomy & Physiology—or to study anything. We study Anatomy & Physiology because it is true. We are knowing beings living in a knowable world created and governed by a Creator who knows all. Humans, Creation, Creator—there is a wonderful harmony of these three things in the act of knowing. So, again: Why do study? Why do we seek to know? Because God knows, and because He, secondarily and as a gift, created us to know.

In addition to these three reasons to teach Anatomy and Physiology to our children, I have a personal favorite reason, but I will save it for the conclusion.

“Let me show you how to live as one”

While we teach our children the truth of their embodiment we must also teach them how to move their bodies. Again: as intellectual, man is made to know truth; as embodied, man is made to move through space. The human body is meant to move; there are many different ways for a child to move spatially. There is movement that is enjoyable and artistic, such as beautiful dance. There is movement that is fittingly competitive, such as sports. There is movement that is productive, such as gardening. There is movement that is freeing, such as running. There is movement that is strengthening, such as lifting weights. Whichever way our children choose to move, the theme is the same: they should be moving!

In motion humans do one of the things humans love best to do: they turn potentiality into actuality. Or, in other words, they work to reach a goal. The walker has not yet arrived at his destination, but he will, if he moves. The lifter is not yet strong, but he will be, if he moves. The gardener does not yet have plants to admire and harvest, but she will, if she moves. In movement our students learn that not all things in this world are instant. It is required that we work, move, act, in order to get what we desire. When we allow our children to be stationary so often and for so long, we deprive them of both the patience required to move toward a goal and the joy felt in reaching it.

Movement is, additionally, delightful in itself. This is a truism. Even when they are not working toward a goal, humans simply like to move. The muscles we have, and the souls that govern them, delight in acting. It is as if our bodies say to the world: “Look what I can do!” The leg muscles want to show how high they can jump; the feet want to show that they move beautifully to the music; the hands want to show how strong they are against weeds and thorns. Indeed, even in daily life and speech, motion is associated with freedom and joy, and lack of motion is associated with bondage. People describe themselves as being “stuck”—in a waiting room, in traffic, in a meeting, for example. The image is one of motionlessness. They cannot leave, cannot move from the place: they are not free. When we imprison criminals, we bind their hands in cuffs and

confine their bodies to cells. They cannot move: they are not free. When we allow our children to be stationary so often and for so long, we deprive them of the joy and freedom inherent in movement of the body.

I fear that screens, now worshipped by our culture and even, often, by us, have consigned our children to a life of motionlessness. These screens are supremely useful and can certainly be used for great good. But they are also dangerous, and we do well to be wary of them. One danger in the television, laptop, iPad, iPhone, etc. is that it makes us, and our children, motionless. The screen, in its immediacy, deprives our children of both the patience and joy of moving toward and reaching a goal. The screen, in its captivating nature, deprives our children of the freedom and joy of movement for its own sake. They cannot—or will not—leave the screen, they cannot move away; they are unfree.

But I also fear, sometimes, that we as teachers have consigned our students to a life of motionlessness. Every day I ask a group of growing, determined, joyful, free-hearted ten-year-olds to stay seated—nay, more, to stay perfectly still, with feet and hands and heads in proper position—for more than five hours a day, often for forty-five minutes at a time. Now, no teacher loves more than I do a structured classroom, a bulletproof seating arrangement, a long lecture. But in this I am hypocritical, because, when I find myself a student or a listener rather than a

teacher, I can barely tolerate the motionlessness required by education. That is: nobody loves more than I do to see her students sitting perfectly still in desks—What power I have, when they are so! What an orderly classroom! What discipline! These things I think to myself—but nobody is less willing to sit still herself. I recently started a Masters Program; after the first day of class, I asked my professor—who graciously, if hesitantly, consented—if I could stand in the back of the classroom for the rest of the semester, as I could not bear to stay seated for three hours straight. Indeed, becoming a student again has raised my sympathies for my students in many ways, not the least of which is this very theme of movement. How much may I deprive my students of motion? For how long is it fair to make them sit still? How much bondage can they, or should they, tolerate? What amount, and what kind, of motion contributes to learning? And what kind hinders it? In short: how do I ensure that my students are able to move well and sufficiently? I wish I had more answers to these questions than I do; but it is my job, and the job of every teacher, to consider them as we plan our days and lessons.

Conclusion

To conclude this reflection on the human creature as an embodied intellect, I would like to offer what I think is the most beautiful reason to teach our students to know and move their bodies. It is this: God Himself has a body. For two thousand and eighteen years—a very small amount of time, for this Person—the Second Person

of the Godhead has had a body. Our students are embodied creatures; our Lord is an embodied Creator. An incarnate God. A sack of blood and bones, and the Logos Himself. For all of eternity the Son of the Father was spiritual only, like the Father and the Spirit. But, “when the fullness of time had come” (Galatians 4), when the time was full and ripe and good, He entered time and space, and entered the womb of a maiden. God Incarnate was an embryo, as our students were. God Incarnate was born and he cried, as our students were and did. God Incarnate learned to walk, as our students have. God Incarnate ran and sang and laughed, as our students do. The lungs of God Incarnate breathed, the stomach of God Incarnate secreted acid, the bones of God Incarnate stored nutrients, as do the lungs, stomachs, and bones of our students. God Incarnate suffered, as our students do—suffered, even, in a way that they will never have to suffer, in order that they may never have to suffer in that way. The flesh of God Incarnate was bruised and torn, the veins of God Incarnate were

broken open, the blood of God Incarnate was spilled; the body of God Incarnate was lifeless while he descended into hell in order that our students may never so descend. And when he emerged as Victor over death, he emerged again as God Incarnate, and when he ascended to the right hand of the Father, he ascended as God Incarnate: he did not cast aside his flesh, his bones, his heart and veins and blood, after he had accomplished his salvific work. Our en-fleshed Savior dwells eternally with the Father and the Spirit, as will our en-fleshed students when the Day dawns.

Our salvation story is the story of a God with a body. Like Jesus, our students will have bodies for all of eternity. Let us today start teaching them how to live with them. In doing so we will, as we confess each week in the Creed, “look for the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen!”

CLEJ

How Do We Teach Self-Governance? by Katherine Kramer

Try this thought exercise: Take no more than 5 minutes and make a list of all the choices your children or students might make on a given day. Then, review that list and see if you can categorize those choices in any way. Truly – take a few moments to do this! Start with whether to rise from bed punctually. Proceed to dressing. Which clothes shall I wear today? How neatly? Which shoes? Shall I tie them hastily or securely? Shall I make my bed now or after breakfast, or not at all? Shall I greet the person(s) I see first thing in the morning? If so, how?

What do you learn? Are there any patterns or presenting themes? Perhaps you will see categories of preference, moral choices, organization, personal needs, and so on. Then, examine what percentage of choices a day your student makes regarding category. What do you learn? Which choices might a student be faced with spiritually or morally? How much responsibility does your student have? Ask yourself how his levels of responsibility relate to his development.

It fascinates me to note that when I search the question “How many daily decisions does a person make?” on Google, the first few pages of results cite something around 35,000 decisions a day. Now, this is not scientifically

verified, but it is amazing to think of how volitional the human life is. Clearly every movement, every breath, every picking up of the knee and foot and moving forward through air and then down again into a new step involves a whole host of decisions: commands from the brain to the muscles, choices we simply perceive to be unconscious. Very often, from moment to moment, we are in the act of deciding.

When we talk about choice, we primarily refer to conscious choices, and more often than not, moral choices. The decisions we think the most about are the ones we are unsure of, and perhaps particularly the ones in which our passions disagree with our conscience. In terms of teaching and parenting, we are mostly intrigued by those questions that are related to wise and unwise, right and wrong.

We are then able to consider: what governs decision-making? How does one determine choices? Do *you* determine *your* choices? Consider to what extent external forces, such as laws and fear of other people, shape your decision-making? What about children you know? What sorts of things truly guide the decider: Love? Selfishness? Prudence? Efficiency? Idealism? One could argue, and I would if I had more time and space, that all of our choices indicate something about what we love and what we fear.

For the medieval mind, governance of self was ideally driven by the virtues. The four cardinal virtues are justice (or courage as some would call it!), prudence, temperance, fortitude. They were thought to be ruled by the three theological virtues: faith, hope, charity. Have you ever noted that the four cardinal virtues tend to benefit your neighbors, and also yourself? It may require some degree of sacrifice, but the sacrifice is made in the interest of a greater good to enjoy. Being prudent may require you to deny your desires, but by doing so, you avoid greater troubles. Being temperate typically leads to a more peaceful life for yourself. Having fortitude allows you to endure the troubles you face in a healthier way.

By contrast, the theological virtues bring rich blessings to your neighbor, yet not necessarily to yourself, while often requiring personal sacrifice or pain on your part. And yet this is upheld as a noble good! To love others in charity requires sacrifice of a variety of resources, the like of which you will not expect to see returned to you in an earthly way. Obeying the theological virtues often requires the cardinal virtues. Can you truly love another without fortitude? To truly hope and be faithful when the world around us suggests otherwise (“curse God and die”) is a searing thing. There is a fresco in a medieval Italian courtroom in Siena by Lorenzetti in which the virtues are portrayed as women and show the

benefits they bring to the country while their corresponding vices are on the opposite side in the room and show the sulfuric consequences of their life. What message do we hear in that courtroom? “Be virtuous, or else.” Amazing!



In modern schools, we too have some key language. Self-Confidence, Tolerance, Kindness, Respect – all are terms that quickly come to mind. We also have a traditional system of merits and demerits to measure just how well a child is doing at staying out of trouble to help the child and his family decide for themselves how many more merits he needs, or how many more demerits before serious consequences arise. Do we hear a message from that too? What does it communicate?

In many ways the term “self-governance” seems synonymous with self-control. Self-control is the idea of being master over your passions, being able to restrain yourself, limit your actions in some way for good. Self-governance, however, is a bit different: *To know what is right and to choose what is right is to be self-governed.* So you might think of it as though self-control is a smaller part of the greater picture of self-governance. It is an internal steering toward what is right, and choosing how to act rightly or wisely. Overall, self-governance is active in the sense that the volition typically entails some sort of positive motion. If we know what is right and then do not choose it, we are poorly governing ourselves.

In most homes and schools, self-governance is part of our hidden curriculum, meaning if we teach it we are doing so largely covertly rather than overtly. In other words, children are certainly learning about governance, whether we formally teach it or not. You don't have a syllabus for “self-governance.” Think of the people you know who say: “I'm just not a math person.” That presupposition was taught through the hidden curriculum. Are you an incredibly punctual teacher and watch the clock before and at the end of every class to start and end with precision? Then we would say children are learning about punctuality in the hidden curriculum. It's not formally documented but it is a part of our training,

either intentionally or as it happens in the course of discipline and conversation. This covert curriculum is an incredibly powerful thing and presents many opportunities to teach. A valuable question to ponder might be: What is the hidden curriculum of my school? Of my classroom? Of my home? What particular values are modeled and upheld simply by how we operate?

If we are hoping to train students and prepare them to know what is right and choose what is right, then oughtn't we be moving to overt conversation about this, talking about self-governance in our schools, with parents, with each other, with the children themselves? How does a wise community, a wise Lutheran community in particular, best talk and serve in this regard? What sort of system of training and discipline is a wise Christian (and Lutheran) approach? Is it ever possible to truly systematize this?

Teaching our students to become wisely self-governed-requires consideration of at least 3 things:

First, self-governance is a gift of the Holy Spirit, one that requires our action. It is certainly something for which we can pray, and is a weapon in the hands of any Christian in this temporal world. Without the Spirit's influence upon us, we could not choose what is right (certainly not in the sense that I mean, with pure motives, although we know that

many can choose civil good.) Truly knowing and choosing what is good must be something that is a result of God's action in and upon us. And yet, it seems paradoxical, because we certainly must engage volitionally and actively decide.

Second, a person who is wisely self-governed will have strong habits, a repetitive orientation toward seeking what is good and doing it. It takes much practice to know and choose what is right, something deeply aided by practice, and requires reinforcement from authorities (both corrective and formative!). Perhaps this relates to the paradox above, that it is in some way volitional. Notice that forming habits does not require that every single decision or choice is guided by the individual's deep and flawless love of doing the right thing, but by habit. It is an acknowledgment that we are sinful and cannot solely rely upon our wills to choose rightly.

Finally, training in self-governance requires freedom, and failure. At some point, choosing what is right involves the opportunity to choose what is NOT right. Instinct tells that us that it would be unwise to allow children limits of choice that exceed their cognitive and moral developmental level, but it is also unwise to protect children from ever failing. Children are sinners, so shouldn't we control the environment a little more tightly to protect them from themselves? Keep their souls pure?

We know that no matter how many rules and punishments we set children are sinners, and yet families and schools that exercise too little discipline and correction face a host of problems that arise from an undisciplined sinner's life. What is a healthy standard? This is a topic we would do well to talk a lot more about when it comes to growth, to grit. Given that the task or rule is a reasonable expectation for the child, then certainly children need to fail and try again. To do this is to engage in learning and growing, and something we would do well to discuss warmly and openly as teachers and parents. And yet, as parents and teachers, we are called to discern well and make sure the challenges are appropriate. Asking a 10 year old to read 30 pages every night for one subject alone and then write an outline for homework the next morning is definitely going to lead to failure because it overburdens the child past reasonable developmental and cognitive expectations. In this case, it seems a valuable exercise to question what is governing our own decision making in setting rules: fear of failure as teachers, or perhaps fear of being perceived as failures, love of efficiency, practicality, idealism, what?

Ultimately, then, we are still left with questions: How do we train children to govern themselves such that they can serve well in their vocations? How should we think about

this as classical Christian educators? Classical Lutheran educators? How do we hope that we ourselves can sort out a system of training in self-governance that is wise, humble, manageable, and dare we even say desirable? How do we, in every moment of discipline and encouragement and correction, take our students and point them to that which we all need to focus upon more and more chiefly: Christ crucified, for you, and for me.

CLEJ

Stoic Ethics and the New Testament

**by Dr. Jason Soenksen,
Professor of Theology, CUW**

Introduction

The church father Tertullian, reflecting on the relationship between the biblical faith and Greco-Roman philosophy, famously quips: “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?” In fact, there is much to gain by comparing the biblical revelation with contemporary thought. Stoicism, the dominant philosophical system of the first-century Roman Empire, is one area for fruitful comparative study. Comparative studies in biblical theology run the risk of attributing the source of the content to the contemporary world. However, comparative study is not intrinsically subject to a low view of Scripture. Instead, comparative study of the ancient world and the New Testament may be pursued from the perspective of the second article of Creed, fully appreciating the incarnation of the Son of God and the communication of his message in language that was understandable to people of the first century.

There are instances where New Testament authors, particularly Paul, use Stoic terms. In the study of these instances, it is important to keep in mind the context and the creativity of the New Testament author, rather than reading all the Stoic background into the New Testament usage. The Stoic term, like the

Greek language itself, has received a new master. At the same time, the reader ought to consider how a first-century Stoic would have heard the term.

A more general comparison, one not exclusively based on common vocabulary, is also fruitful. By studying an ancient, indeed, a contemporary and widespread system of thought, we are able to gain a greater appreciation of the unique message of the New Testament. Such comparative study also helps modern readers understand how the message of the New Testament would have been heard from a first-century Stoic perspective.

Historical Context

Most of us have heard of the adjective “Stoic,” the caricature of person who endures griefs without showing emotion. Stoicism itself, however, is not nearly as well known. Stoicism emerged in the Hellenistic Age, the age of Alexander the Great and his successors. Zeno, a native of Cyprus, came to Athens to study philosophy, and in 301 BC began teaching in the colonnade (στοά, stoa) of the Athenian agora. The system of Zeno was intended to show that the happiness of the individual did not depend upon anything outside of himself, but was completely within his own reach.

In the Hellenistic Age, Stoicism was one philosophy among others, but by the first century, especially in Rome, it was the dominant philosophy. The Roman Stoics

included Seneca (4 BC-AD 65), a contemporary of Paul and the tutor of Nero, and the well-known Epictetus (AD 55-135), among others.

The Stark Contrast between What Is Good and What Is Not

On the one hand, Stoicism shares a general similarity with New Testament ethics in so far as there is a very selective definition of what is good. In Stoicism, only the morally good is good, while other types of so-called goods are only morally indifferent. Here the Stoics actually use the term *adiaphora* (ἀδιάφορα). Yes, the term familiar to students of the Lutheran Confessions is actually a Stoic term¹! The presence of such so-called goods, such as wealth or health, should not elicit excitement, nor should their absence prompt grief, according to the Stoics. Only the sage is always able to distinguish the true moral good from other supposed goods. As a result, he performs what are called “right acts” (κατορθώματα, *kathōthōmata*), while the non-sage is only able to perform acts that are “appropriate” (καθήκοντα, *kathēkonta*) even when doing the same thing.

Paul uses the term “appropriate” in Rom 1:28. God has given those who reject the knowledge of him over to a reprobate mind so that they are doing the things that are not appropriate (τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα, *ta mē kathēkonta*). Paul then

goes on to give a list of vices. Is this a subtle dig at the Stoic philosopher, who, rather than making progress toward virtue while doing the appropriate things, is doing what is inappropriate?

The corresponding element in the New Testament, and this is a very general comparison, is faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul writes that anything that does not come from faith is sin (Rom 14:23). The author of Hebrews writes that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). The only good works are those that are performed through faith in Jesus Christ, for our sin is overlooked by the Father for the sake of Jesus. Other good works constitute a form of righteousness, civic righteousness. But no matter what the unbeliever does, these works are not pleasing to God, for they are not done out of faith in Jesus Christ.

The general similarity between faith in Jesus as the only way for works to please God and the right acts of the sage could easily have served as a bridge, at point of general contact, between the Christian message and the Stoic philosopher.

Intellectual Nature of Greek Ethics vs. Divine Intervention and Transformation

However, there is plenty to contrast between Stoicism and New Testament ethics in this area of good works. The

¹ See, for example, FC X, Concerning Ecclesiastical Practices.

guiding principle of Stoic ethics was that the sage would act in accordance with nature. In some versions of the teaching, the term reason, logos, was used. The one who knows what is good is able to carry it out. Stoicism increased the intellectual emphasis in virtue in comparison to the ethics of the Classical Age.

In contrast, the ability to do good works in the New Testament arises not from the intellect, but from the will. And this will to do good (good that God considers as good based on faith) is something that does not emerge from within man, but from outside of himself. God must give us a new will. For example, Paul speaks of the fruits of the Spirit, what the Spirit produces in Christians. Among these, Paul includes one of the virtues (Gal 5:22-23), self-control (ἐγκράτεια, enkrateia). Paul also mentions joy (χαρά, chara), which the Stoics, who generally did not accept emotions as characteristic of the sage, ranked among the “good emotions.”

The New Testament, unlike Stoicism, teaches that even the one who knows what is good still transgresses against it. In Galatians, Paul acknowledges the struggle of the flesh against the Spirit: “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do” (Gal 5:17 ESV). In Rom 7:18-20, the apostle Paul writes about the struggle within himself, the conflict between the desire of his mind

and that of his flesh, the sin that dwells within him.

We cannot do the good, what is good in God’s eyes, based on intellectual perception, nor is the means to this good, God-pleasing life revealed in nature. Rather, it comes through special revelation. “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, sanctified me....,” Luther writes in the explanation of the third article of the Creed.

The Goal of Happiness vs. the Suffering and Self-Denial of the Christian Life

The goal of Stoic ethics, as of Greek ethics in general, is “happiness” (εὐδαιμονία, eudaimonia). In Stoicism, this means to be without the passions, emotions like grief or fear. These passions arise because of false judgments about what is truly a good or about what is truly an evil.

The goal of the Christian life is not defined primarily in terms of any good in this age. Peter writes to those who were being persecuted for their faith, commenting that they were receiving the goal of their faith, the salvation of their souls (1 Pet 1:9). Living the Christian life, far more than pursuing any philosophical system, results in suffering in the present.

The goal of the Christian life is not primarily about the individual’s own happiness. In fact, Jesus calls his disciples to deny themselves, to take up their cross

and follow him (Matt 16:24). Jesus calls blessed those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matt 5:10). Though the New Testament does not define such suffering in explicitly philosophical terms, it does not go beyond the evidence to say that suffering for the sake of Jesus is not a matter of indifference (an ἀδιάφορον, adiaphoron), but rather a good. James says that the testing of faith is a source of joy and it results in growth in perseverance (ὑπομονή, hypomonē; Jas 1:2-3), actually one of the words that the Stoics counted as a virtue. To avoid this suffering would be evil, a sin, rather than a matter of indifference.

Suffering for the sake of the name of Jesus is a blessing. The apostles in Acts count themselves blessed that they were considered worthy of suffering for the sake of the Name (Acts 5:41). While Stoicism defines happiness as the final good of human life, the New Testament points to good that is not realized completely in this life. Stoics regard suffering as an adiaphoron, something that was neither good nor bad, neither preferable nor something not to be preferred. To avoid suffering for the sake of the Name of Jesus is not just “not preferable,” it is a great evil.

Living according to the Logos

The goal of Stoicism is to act “according to reason (λόγος, logos)” or “according to

nature (φύσις, physis).” Stoics believed that the λόγος (logos), reason, permeated the universe. Actually this reason, rationality, was thought of as god; the Stoic god was imminent. John 1 describes the pre-incarnate Son of God as the Logos. Though some might argue the use of the term logos in John is derived from Stoic influence, Weinrich argues for the influence of the wisdom literature of the Bible². The Logos of John 1 is not an impersonal force, but a person. More than that, the Logos, as the second person of the Trinity, is in relationship to God the Father and in relationship to mankind. He is the incarnate expression of the Father’s message³. At the same time, one should be aware that those trained in Stoicism would naturally have thought of god as the logos that permeated the universe.

The Stoics argued that the goal of the philosopher was to train himself according to the proper understanding of the moral good so that he did not assent to the false understandings of what was good and bad; assents to false claims would result in the passions. Part of living according to nature was to accept a broader plan of god, the logos immanent in the universe, even if this meant accepting things that others thought were bad or evil, such as various forms of suffering.

The New Testament teaches that there is a rationality in the universe, that the universe gives witness to God, and that

² William C. Weinrich, *John 1:1-7:1* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015), 132.

³ See Weinrich, *John*, 132-135.

mankind is accountable to him for our actions. There is also the notion of the conscience, the law written on the heart, which accuses and sometimes defends even unbelievers in their motivations (Rom 2:15). Paul speaks of homosexual acts as contrary to nature in Rom 1:26. Whether this reference plays off of any Stoic teaching on homosexuality or merely on the general principle of Stoic ethics is not clear, but would be worthy of further consideration.

But the truth about the way that man can please God is not accessible naturally, by or through nature, or by any rational deduction, but must be revealed from outside (Rom 3:21). The wisdom of God stands opposed to the wisdom of the philosophy based on human principles, the popular philosophies of the New Testament era (Col 2:8). The apostle Paul says that God has made foolish the wisdom of the world through the foolishness of his Son's cross (1 Cor 1:18-25).

To make a connection between Stoicism and the message of the New Testament, one could say that the goal of the Christian life is to live according to the Logos, the Son of God. To phrase this more in the way of the Gospel, one could say that the Logos came to live like one of us so that we might live like him. Rather than conforming ourselves into the image of the Logos, we are being conformed, divine passive, into Christ, who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15).

Levels of Progress

Stoicism presents a stark contrast between two groups, the fools and the sage. Within the category of fools are those who are making progress (προκόπτων, prokoptōn) toward virtue, the perfect understanding that would allow a sage (σοφός, sophos) to act correctly. Once a person has achieved this perfect understanding, he cannot make a mistake.

The New Testament sometimes speaks in terms of different levels of maturity in the Christian faith. Paul speaks of the weak (ἀδύνατος, adynatos) and the strong (δύνατος, dynatos; Rom 15:1). Paul also uses the term mature (τέλειος, teleios), or spiritual (πνευματικός, pneumatikos; 1 Cor 3:1), sometimes in explicit contrast to the term for infant or minor (νήπιος, nēpios; 1 Cor 3:1). Hebrews also uses this dichotomy (Heb 5:13).

But the dichotomy between these two categories in the New Testament and the two groups in Stoicism differs in very substantial ways: the mature person about whom Paul and Hebrews speak is not perfect in the sense of being sinless. Paul himself, who would certainly have ranked himself among the mature, acknowledges in Philippians that he has not yet been made perfect (Phil 3:12-14). The author of Hebrews, in speaking about the sacrifice of Christ says this: "by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" (Heb 10:14 ESV).

Paul and the author of Hebrews use the verb “perfect” in different ways. Paul means that the Christian still sins, while the author of Hebrews means that through Christ’s priestly work he has objectively made all perfect before God, though God continues to sanctify the souls of believers. All believers, whether weak or strong, whether mature or infants, have the same objective standing before God in Christ. We are perfect in Christ. We have been made wise to salvation through faith in him. All of us, weak and strong, mature and infants, are still being made holy, still pressing on toward the goal to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The Role of the Virtues

Stoicism worked within the framework of the cardinal virtues that it inherited from the Classical Age. The term for virtue in Greek means “excellence” (ἀρετή, aretē). The cardinal virtues are justice (δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosynē), prudence (φρόνησις, phronēsis), temperance (σωφροσύνη, sōphrosynē), and courage (ἀνδρεία, andreia). These were defined in terms of knowledge. For example: “prudence is the knowledge of good things, bad things, and those that are neither.”⁴

Rather than emphasizing justice (δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosynē), the Stoics

emphasized prudence (φρόνησις, phronēsis). That prudence is defined as the knowledge of what is good, evil, and neither hints at its central role in Stoicism, since the key moral assertion of Stoicism was that only the morally good was good.

Most of the nouns for the virtues do not play a prominent role in the New Testament. The word for virtue (ἀρετή, aretē) only occurs four times (Phil 4:8; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Pet 1:3, 5). Only one of the passages refers to virtue in the philosophical sense. In 2 Pet 1:5, the apostle references virtue, since in the list that follows he cites other virtues current in philosophical texts, including self-control (ἐγκράτεια, enkrateia) and endurance (ὑπομονή, hypomonē).

As a brief aside, it should be noted that the virtue and vice lists in the New Testament also offer a fruitful opportunity for comparative study. While many scholars have argued that the New Testament takes these lists over from Hellenistic sources in a formulaic way, one should assume that the lists have meaning that is relatable to their contexts, and that the arrangement of such words and departures from traditional lists are significant.

The word for “justice,” one of the cardinal virtues, is prominent in the New Testament, but is not used in a philosophical sense. This noun and

⁴ Andronicus, *De passionibus* (=SVF I.266 [Stoicorum veterum fragmenta, I-IV, Leipzig 1903-1924]).

attendant verb “to justify” are prominent in the New Testament, especially in Paul’s letters. One might argue that this prominence bears more affinity with classical philosophy than with Stoicism, since justice was the key virtue in classical philosophy. Paul speaks of two kinds of righteousness in connection with man – a righteousness based on the law and the one that comes as a gift for the sake of Christ through faith. Justice is an attribute of God. This justice culminates in the cross. Paul says that God is both just (meting out punishment for our sins upon Christ) and the one who justifies the one who believes in Jesus (Rom 3:26). Justice is not an achievement, our own virtue, but the gift of God in Christ (Rom 3:24). Nevertheless, the focus on justice (we are accustomed to the word righteousness) would have been of interest to the philosophically-minded reader of the first century.

An Overview of the Passions

As there were qualities that reflected the philosopher’s knowledge of the moral good, so also there were negative qualities that resulted from ignorance, from the refusal to accept the fundamental Stoic thesis that only the morally good was good. The passions (τὰ πάθη, ta pathē) were understood as disturbances within the soul, irrational movements within the soul that resulted from assenting to false notions about what was good and bad, failing to

recognize that only the morally good was good.

The four cardinal passions are: lust (ἐπιθυμία, epithumia), grief (λύπη, lupē), pleasure (ἡδονή, hēdonē), and fear (φόβος, phobos). Two of these passions are concerned with the past and two of them are concerned with the future. Within each category, one passion arises from something perceived to be good, while the other is concerned with a perceived evil, though neither of these things are either intrinsically good or evil.

Grief and pleasure deal with the present, while fear and lust deal with the future. Grief is the belief that something bad is present, while pleasure involves the assumption that something good (other than the morally good) is present. Similarly, fear arises from the false belief that something bad is coming, while lust arises from the longing for what is falsely believed to be good. These passions, or irrational movements with the soul, result when someone assents to a false belief about what is good or evil.

The goal of the Stoic philosopher is to become the sage who is without these passions (ἀπαθής, apathēs). The Stoics are not categorically against emotion, since they claim the existence of “good emotions” (εὐπαθεῖαι, eupatheiai), such as caution (εὐλάβεια, eulabeia) and joy (χαρά, chara). They are only against the passions, mental disturbances that arise from false understandings of what is truly good and evil.

Comparison of the Passions in Stoicism and in the New Testament

Before launching forth into a more detailed comparison of some of the emotions in Stoicism and in the New Testament, it should be pointed out the term “passions,” as used in the New Testament (Rom 1:26; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5), is clearly a negative concept, something to be avoided. All three occurrences in the New Testament occur in proximity with, or directly refer to, immoral sexual behavior.

Lust

In two instances in the New Testament, the word “lust,” one of the passions in Stoicism, is mentioned along with the word “passion” (Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5). It should be pointed out here that this word for “lust” is the word used in the Ninth and Tenth Commandments as they are translated in the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament). The New Testament usage is predominantly influenced by the Septuagint. However, a Stoic reader would have heard the philosophical meaning.

Lust is, for the New Testament authors as for Stoics, a negative. Both Stoics and Christians would like to be rid of it. The Stoics believe the removal of the passions is at least theoretically possible, while the

New Testament teaches perfection is not possible in this life; the struggle against “lust,” coveting, continues until death or the return of Jesus.

Pleasure

Pleasure is another passion in Stoicism. This pleasure is not necessarily or primarily physical pleasure. Rather, pleasure is produced by the assumption that something good (other than the morally good) is present. Sandbach refers to this passion as “mental pleasure”⁵.

The noun “pleasure” occurs four times in the New Testament. The pleasures of this life, Jesus says in his explanation of the parable of the sower in Luke 8, may choke out the seed of the word (Luke 8:14). In Titus 3:3, Paul describes the life of mankind before conversion to faith in Jesus Christ: we were slaves to lusts and pleasures. The words “lust” and “pleasure” occur together also in Jas 4:1, where the author says that fights and quarrels among and between believers emerge from pleasures at war within their members. 2 Peter 2:13 speaks of false teachers who enjoy the pleasure of reveling, even in daytime. Thus, like lust, the New Testament views pleasure as a negative force: unbelievers are slaves to it; it is characteristic of false teachers who indulge in it; it has the potential to choke out faith planted by the Word of God; it causes divisions among believers.

⁵ F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics*, 2nd ed. (1975; repr., London: Duckworth), 61.

One might be tempted to conclude that the New Testament authors do not want believers to enjoy life, but the results above are based only on the study of this word, pleasure. If one were to engage in dialogue with a Stoic, or to summarize the New Testament evidence based on Stoic wording, one might say pleasure is evil when it is sought for its own sake, as if it were God, not just what is considered “good” in a philosophical system. Augustine uses the language of “use” (utor) and “enjoyment” (fruor). God alone is to be “enjoyed” (fruor), while all else is to be “used” (utor) for the sake of God and the neighbor.

In summary, both lust and pleasure, two of the four passions of Stoic thought, were also viewed negatively in the New Testament. However, the other two, grief and fear, are treated far more favorably in the New Testament.

Grief

For the Stoic, grief is an irrational passion, for it assumes the presence of something that is thought to be an evil, but is not. For example, in Stoicism, death is not evil or bad, but rather described as “not preferable” (ἀποπροηγμένον, apoproēgmenon). Life would be “preferable” (προηγμένον, proēgmenon), but if life is not to be retained, then death should not be grieved as an evil.

The Holy Scriptures teach that death is an intruder in the world caused by sin. Death is the last enemy (1 Cor 15:26). The Logos, Jesus the Son of God, faces a death like no other in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus tells his disciples: “my soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Matt 26:38 ESV). The term for “very sorrowful” is a compound adjective (περίλυπος, perilypos) based on the word for grief (λύπη, lupē), that the Stoics considered a passion.

To make the claim that God, that is, the Son of God, suffered according to his human nature by virtue of the communication of attributes, is a profound Christological confession. Early church fathers struggled to come to terms with the suffering of the impassible God. To be sure, the confession of a God who suffers is foolishness to Greeks, as is the incarnation itself, but it is in fact the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:23, 30). Not only are we saved by the suffering of Christ, but our experience as incarnate beings is affirmed and even our suffering is sanctified.

Regret

The Stoics considered regret (μεταμέλεια, metameleia) and pity (ἔλεος, eleos) as two different kinds of grief (λύπη, lupē).⁶ Since the sage, the Stoic ideal man, never makes mistakes once he has learned to distinguish the moral good and evil from

⁶ Andronicus, *De passionibus* (=SVF III.414).

all other supposed good and evil, he does not experience regret.

The New Testament speaks of a specific kind of regret, repentance. Far from being something to be avoided, repentance and the emotion of grief that accompanies it, is a good. The prophets call for repentance, a turn from sin to Yahweh. John the Baptizer and Jesus begin their ministries with the call to repentance (Matt 3:2; 4:17), literally a change of mind in Greek (μετανοεῖτε, metanoete). Note that this mind-oriented word should not lead to the conclusion that the ethics of the Bible are purely intellectual. To reach such a conclusion would be to base theology on etymology without regard for the argument of the authors and the wider context of the word's usage.

In 2 Cor 7:8-11, the apostle Paul makes several allusions to repentance, grief, and regret, actually playing on the word regret by saying that repentance leads to salvation and therefore is not regrettable. He defines grief as grief that is in accordance with God. Here are Paul's words:

For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it— though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss

through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief (τοῦτο τὸ κατὰ θεὸν λυπηθῆναι, touto to kata theon lupethēnai) has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter (ESV).

Repentance and the grief that comes from it are good, godly experiences. Since no person is perfect, everyone is in need of repentance. As Luther remarks at the outset of the Ninety-Five Theses, “when our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent,’ [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”⁷

Compassion

It should also briefly be noted that the Stoics view mercy (or compassion) as a passion, an irrational movement of the soul. As more contemporary scholars of Stoicism have pointed out, this teaching has been misunderstood. Some Scandinavian scholars argue that the first-century Stoics offer an even broader concern for the neighbor than Paul does in Romans. This provocative claim is worthy of serious engagement, though it goes beyond the scope of this paper to

⁷ Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses* (AE 31:25).

address it. The Stoics saw pity as a passion when one experienced this emotion based on the false identification of suffering, illness, or misfortune as true evils. This principle is nothing other than the extension of the principle that the Stoics applied to the individual's own perception of his or her experience of illness or financial loss.

The New Testament presents a picture both of Christ, but also of Christians, as vulnerable to the concerns of others. This position is based on the assumption that there are things in the world that are not as they once were, not as they should be, nor as they will be. Sorrows and hardships of every sort are not good. Rather than seeing our suffering as that which is indifferent and merely for us to accept, Christ undertook a great exchange, taking the curse of our sin and God's judgment that we might inherit God's eternal blessing through him. Christ's loving work as bridegroom for his bride makes possible the genuine compassion and active love both within and outside of the community. To use Paul's metaphor of the body, when one member suffers all suffer (1 Cor 12:26).

Fear

According to Stoic thought, fear arises from the false belief that something bad is coming. Fear is the expectation of evil.⁸

The emotion of fear plays an important role in the New Testament, building on Old Testament roots: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, Proverbs says (9:10). Jesus calls Christians to fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt 10:28). Fear is generally positive in the New Testament when it has the proper object, God. Fear of God is closely connected to faith; it is reverence for God.

At the same time, fear can appear as a negative; it is associated with judgment. The person who does good should not fear the government, while the person who does evil should (Rom 13:3-4). Implicit in statements like these is that fear plays the analogous role of physical pain to the body, indicating that there is something wrong that needs to be cured.

God would set our hearts at rest through the Gospel concerning our standing before him. 1 John 4:17-18 speaks about the goal of God's love in us in relationship to fear: "By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love" (ESV).

Fear of God has its appropriate place, as Dr. Luther would remind us in his explanation of the Ten Commandments ("we should fear and love God so that....").

⁸ Diogenes Laërtius, VII.112 (=SVF III.407).

At the same time, God would not have us live in absolute dread of his judgment, for his love for us in Christ excludes and drives out this fear (1 John 4:18). So also, even the fear of suffering persecution or a martyr's death are driven out by God's perfect love.

But the reason for comfort in such circumstances is not the intellectual consent that such things are not bad in some way, but the promises of the one for whom we suffer. It is Jesus who says "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10 ESV). Even where we fear God through his mask the government, or fear his judgment in general, this fear serves a positive role, like the pain of a wound that needs to be healed, rather than primarily or only as the sign of a vice that must be removed merely by understanding what is good and what is evil.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper attempted a broad but selective survey of Stoic ethics in comparison with the New Testament. The parameters of the survey were largely limited to the use of vocabulary in common with Stoicism. To be sure, there are limits to this approach. Recent studies have attempted to deal with the deeper structure of arguments. The paper also cast a wide net of comparison between Stoic ethics and the New Testament. Though Paul's letters occur frequently above, this survey also drew upon the

Gospels and other New Testament documents. In several places in the paper, similarities between Stoic ethics and the New Testament were observed. These similarities do not prove that the New Testament draws its ethical vision from contemporary Stoicism. The apostle Paul certainly was generally aware of Stoic ethics and plays off of Stoic terms on several occasions. At the same time, the paper observed how Stoic readers would have heard the ethical teachings of the New Testament, even in places where the author did not necessarily intend an allusion. There are points of connection for the message to be understandable in a general way, such as the stark contrast between what counted as good and evil.

What to make of other similarities between Stoicism and New Testament ethics? For example, both view lust and pleasure in negative ways. First, it should be pointed out that the two sources are not united on the reasons they view these two "passions" as negative. In the New Testament, as in the Bible as a whole, all sin is sin against the First Commandment, against God. Sin is lawlessness (ἀνομία, anomia), wanting to be one's own law. This "vice," whatever specific form it might take, is self-destructive and has collateral damage in the life of the neighbor, the Christian community, and beyond. Stoics view lust and pleasure as passions, disturbances in the soul, which deprive a person of happiness (εὐδαιμονία, eudaimonia), the undisturbability (ἀταραξία, ataraxia) of the sage. Fear and grief, on the other

hand, are treated far more positively in many instances in the New Testament: God deserves to be feared and the godly grief of repentance leads to salvation.

But in a very general level, it can be said that the Stoics, as other philosophers, recognized some problems in human existence based on reason. In the realm of the law, how things should be, natural man has some vague notion of what is right. In Stoicism, as in other non-Christian systems, echoes of the natural law are heard, though these convictions are not completely in tune with the true Logos, Christ.

Although this paper claims that the New Testament presents a unique form of ethics, it is important to point out that some modern scholars argue for a great deal of continuity between New Testament ethics, especially Pauline ethics, and first-century Stoicism. The scholars Engberg-Pedersen and

Thorsteinsson have argued that the role of Stoic thought in the New Testament, especially in Paul, is not well understood, and often not treated in commentaries and other scholarship.⁹ A close interaction with the evidence and arguments presented by the scholars mentioned above is a worthwhile task. Such a task, as laborious as it might be, should include a return to, and close reading of, the Stoic sources themselves (*ad fontes*) in their contexts. Do I hear the waves crashing on the rocky shoal of Scylla? Yes, hiding rock and treacherous shoal are always there. But chart and compass come from Thee, Jesus Savior Pilot Me. *Intellectum fides mea quaerit. Doce me Domine viam tuam ut ambulem in veritate tua!*

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⁹ Here are a few select works from these two prolific authors: Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000); Runar Thorsteinsson, "Stoicism as a Key to Pauline Ethics in Romans," in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, edited by Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg, 15-38 (Grand Rapids: Baker,

2010); "Paul and Roman Stoicism: Romans 12 and Contemporary Stoic Ethics," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2006): 139-161; *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: University Press, 2010).

Ordering Our Days: The Church Year for Children by Jocelyn Benson

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

So also, Luther tells us in the Large Catechism in the Fourth Commandment,

100] For let me tell you this, even though you know it perfectly and be already master in all things, still you are daily in the dominion of the devil, who ceases neither day nor night to steal unawares upon you, to kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against the foregoing and all the commandments. Therefore you must always have God's Word in your heart, upon your lips, and in your ears.

But where the heart is idle, and the Word does not sound, he breaks in and has done the damage before we are aware. 101] On the other hand, such is

the efficacy of the Word, whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, that it is bound never to be without fruit, but always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devoutness, and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts. For these words are not inoperative or dead, but creative, living words. 102] And even though no other interest or necessity impel us, yet this ought to urge every one thereunto, because thereby the devil is put to Right and driven away, and, besides, this commandment is fulfilled, and [this exercise in the Word] is more pleasing to God than any work of hypocrisy, however brilliant.

The familiar passage from Deuteronomy 6 and this portion of the Large Catechism are all “law” so when we read these, we hear that we have failed to teach our children. We hear that we have failed to always have God’s Word in our hearts, upon our lips, and in our ears.

As we repent of our failures, we can thank God that the Church in her wisdom has given us a joyful way to teach our children diligently, namely the Church Year! The Church Year gives us a framework by which to order our days and keep God’s Word as frontlets between our eyes. Frontlets, or phylacteries, were small leather boxes containing that law, worn by the Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the law. The Church Year serves in that function for us. It is always before us, keeping God’s Word before us in an orderly way.

And All Our Senses

In her wisdom, the Church has given us a very

sensory guide for our gathering together as the Church in the Divine Service and ordering all of our days in His peace. Color, sound, smell, and touch all serve to guide us through the Church Year.

Even the youngest child will notice a change in color on the altar. The Church Year begins with Advent. Violet graces the altars, reminding us of repentance in preparation for the coming of our King. On the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete, some churches put rose paraments on the altar. While violet is a mix of purple and black, rose is violet with the blacks and blues withdrawn, thus, on Gaudete Sunday in Advent, we bring back the joy that we set aside for the duration of Advent. The season of Christmas is white and our rejoicing abounds at the celebration of Jesus' birth. White continues through Epiphanytide, then we change back to green for Pre-Lent or Gesimatide. Violet and a season of repentance follow in Lent. However, as in Advent, Laetare Sunday brings back rejoicing and rose on the altars. Good Friday we see black on the altars, but gold or white paraments shatter the darkness on Easter. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost gives us red on the altar and then we shift back to white for Holy Trinity. The season of Trinity, which takes us through the summer, is green. Just as the changing colors of tree leaves signal the changing seasons, so also do the changing colors of the paraments signal a change in the liturgical season.

While color is probably the most obvious sign of season change, the sounds of the Church Year permeate our senses almost to the same extent as color. The Ordinaries of the liturgy, the Gloria and Alleluias, and the Psalm tone, change with the seasons. During Advent and Lent, the Gloria in Excelsis is omitted. During Lent the Alleluia is also omitted. The starkness

of these omissions makes their return at Christmas and Easter even more glorious. The change in Psalm tones, if done seasonally, also signals change. Tone F on Good Friday, for example, sounds very different from Tone D on Easter Sunday.

It is said that he who sings prays twice. The glorious hymnody of the Church also guides us through the Church year. Giving children the gift of hymnody gives them words to which they can cling in all seasons of life. The rich words of "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright," "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come," and "Savior of the Nations Come," for example, put into the mouths of children of all ages a mini sermon they can carry with them long after the Divine Service has ended. Both the words and the music guide our journey through the Church Year and sustain us even until our last hour. When our last hour does come and, Lord willing, a blessed end is near, these hymns learned as children will still be on our lips. What glorious comfort!

As sights and sounds propel us through the Church Year, so also do smells. Some churches have lilies for Easter and live Christmas trees for Easter. Some churches utilize incense. If anointing oil used at baptism and incense used at other times match in smell, the incense then doubles as a reminder also of baptism.

Touch and taste round out the sensory guidance of the Church Year. Most notably, perhaps, in the touch of ash smeared on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday, reminding us that we are dust and to dust we shall return. The taste of the Body and Blood of Jesus in, with, and under the bread and wine remains a consistent piece throughout the journey of the Church Year.

The Divine Service; Feasts, Festivals, & Foods

The Church, in her wisdom, has centered our lives around the Divine Service. We see this most clearly in all of the examples we have just mentioned. But, we are frail humans and we need all the help we can get. Thus, the Church has set aside days of Feasting and Commemoration to aid us even further here in the Church Militant. Martin Luther said, "We rightly honor the saints when we recognize that they are held up before us as a mirror of the grace and mercy of God. For just as Peter, Paul, and other saints like us in body, blood, and infirmity, were made blessed by the grace of God through faith, so we are comforted by their example that God will look in mercy and grace on their infirmity.... Honoring the saints, also, consists in exercising ourselves and increasing in faith and good works in a manner similar to what we see and hear they have done." So also, Augsburg Confession XXI states, "Our churches teach that the remembrance of the saints is to be commended in order that we may imitate their faith and good works according to our calling."

At the front of our hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*, we find a list of Feast Days and Festivals and Commemorations. For the Feasts and Festivals, there is a color traditionally associated with the Feast. Just as colors on the altar signal a change in season, so also can they remind us of those who entered the Church Triumphant in peaceful death (white) or a martyr's death (red). There are many ways to commemorate saint days. Rev. William Weedon, with his book *Celebrating the Saints*, takes us through the Church Year and gives a narrative of each of the saints along with a collect and hymn stanza. At the very least, this is a wonderful resource we can utilize to teach

our children. Some Feasts and Commemorations have special foods associated with them. On December 13, St. Lucia Day, for example, a special saffron-infused pastry is served. Candy Krozier bread is traditionally served on St. Nicholas Day, December 6. Candlemas, on February 2, holds tamales and crepes as traditional foods.

Just as the Church Year centers our focus around the Divine Service and the gifts given there at the altar, food is a wonderful way to celebrate the Church Year in our homes. The anticipation of these special foods, for example, trains our children to order their days not by the world's calendar, but by the Church's calendar. Living in the world but not of the world means the ordering of our days will look different than the world. Perhaps in the season of Advent the only seasonal decoration in our homes is the Advent wreath. The world is done with Christmas before it begins, but just as God's people anticipated for millennia the coming of Immanuel, we can teach our children to order their days rightly by living fully in the penitential time of Advent, knowing full well that Christmas and the trees and lights will come, just as the Promise was fulfilled in the fullness of time.

Special foods in our homes can help order our days rightly, but so also can singing the hymns of the season in our homes and adorning our homes with the colors of the Church Year. We think nothing of bringing decorations highlighting the natural seasons (pumpkins, leaves, snowflakes, flowers, etc.) into our homes. These are wonderful reminders of God's provision through the changing seasons. So also, bringing the changing elements of the Church Year into our homes remind us of God's provision here in the Church Militant.

Ordering Our Days in His Word

The world, with its calendar, makes a mockery of the Church Year. Just as Satan questioned Adam and Eve with “Did God really say,” so also the world questions the Church’s ordering of days. Are Christmas and Easter really about Jesus? Ordering our days by the calendar

handed down through the ages from hands, many of which were martyred, to guide our marking of time is a point of confession. Thanks be to God the Church Year guides and keeps us steadfast in His Word all year long.

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Martin Luther and the Art of the Disputation by E. Christian Kopff

The disputation was a characteristic feature of the medieval university. A professor drew up a set of theses for discussion and debate. Each thesis was itself debatable and taken together the entire series of theses made an argument about a significant topic or theme. Disputations were often used as final orals for a student taking a degree. The first surviving disputation drawn up by Luther was his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*. Its 97 theses were defended by his student, Franz Günther, with Luther himself presiding at the final orals for Günther's graduation as bachelor of Holy Scripture on September 4, 1517. Luther's most famous disputation was the 95 Theses of his *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, published on the church door of the Wittenberg Castle Church and in a letter to Albert of Hohenzollern, archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg and bishop of Halberstadt, on October 31, 1517, although the 95 Theses were never formally debated.

The model of teaching in the early twenty-first century is the lecture using PowerPoint and textbooks, with clickers to check the students' knowledge of the facts. It aims at teaching right answers and "settled science." It does not encourage questioning individual points or the wider worldview behind the subject. Late medieval and early modern disputations aimed at preparing students and faculty to present in grammatical Latin a series of logical theses winsomely argued about important topics where nothing was taken for granted. The Middle Ages are often presented as a period of obeisance to authority, but its university curriculum encouraged

questioning and debate. Modern universities, on the other hand, inculcate coming up with the right answers, not critical thinking or reasoned debate.

Historian Lynn Roper describes the role of disputations in sixteenth century universities in her recent life of Martin Luther: "The custom was for the pupil to expound theses that reflected the master's views as part of their progression through the degrees. Ritualized debates, they depended on skill in argument and rhetoric, and provided a kind of licensed intellectual aggression. With the position set out as a series of related sequential claims, it was easier to accept or reject particular points of the argument, and to inspect the links between one proposition and another. It permitted intellectual adventurousness and freedom, because ideas could be tried out, without claiming that they were established truths. Such tests and intellectual combat greatly appealed to Luther, and the Reformation would develop the technique into a high art." (*Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* [Bodley Had: London, 2016] 94)

University students had begun their education years before with mastering step by step grammar, through the study of Latin, and the art of critical thinking by studying dialectic or logic and finally achieving mastery of the art of persuasion by learning rhetoric. At the culmination of their study they had to deploy the three arts of language to make a case for a significant philosophical or theological position.

Naturally lectures were then as they are today a major part of university teaching and they were devoted to explicating important texts or scholarly problems. The goal of lectures was to prepare students for

disputations, both the ones they would attend and participate in as members of the university community and especially the one where they would defend their teacher's theses when it was their turn to stand before the faculty and students of their university to prove they were ready to graduate.

The expectation of defending the theses of a disputation focused the studies of a university student in the sixteenth century. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries brilliant and innovative thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and William of Occam had encouraged students to concentrate on philosophy. This in turn had led universities to privilege dialectic over rhetoric in the study of the arts of language. This development was true of the universities that Luther knew best, although Erfurt, where he studied, favored the *via moderna* of Occam and Gabriel Biel, while Wittenberg, where Luther was professor, had eight professors of scholastic philosophy committed to the *via antiqua* (Aquinas and Duns Scotus). Luther commented in one of his Table Talks, "My master Occam was the greatest dialectician, but it must be admitted that he could not formulate elegantly." (*Weimar Ausgabe* TR 2.515, Nr. 2544a) That professors of scholasticism privileged dialectic over rhetoric was a common complaint of humanists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Luther was committed to a humanist curriculum that encouraged reading the Bible, the church Fathers and the pagan classics in the original tongues and aimed at restoring rhetoric, the third of the arts of language, to its position as the coping stone on mastery of all the arts of language.

The restoration of rhetoric to its position in the trivium and the importance of the disputation were not only important for individual instruction, it also affected the

climate of the university. Disputations were held every week in Erfurt and Luther introduced the custom to Wittenberg. "Between 1516 and 1521 Luther prepared twenty sets of theses, and his colleague Carlstadt almost thirty." (Scott Hendrix, *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer*, [Yale UP: New Haven, 2016] p. 61) Every week in term faculty and students would question and debate and, amazingly, these debates changed minds.

A good example is the disputation prepared by Luther for his student Bartholomaeus Bernhardi of Feldkirchen on December 25, 1516. Bernhardi's examining committee included Wittenberg's leading Thomist, Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt and Wittenberg's leading student of Duns Scotus, Nicholas von Amsdorf. Bernhardi amazed his examining committee with his mastery of the Bible and very un-scholastic views on grace and the freedom of the will, views he supported from Augustine's *On the Letter and the Spirit*. (This is the work where Augustine coined the expression *servum arbitrium*, the enslaved will, which Luther was to use for the title of his response to Erasmus' polemic *On the Free Will* in 1525.) When Carlstadt countered with quotations from *On True and False Penitence*, Luther responded that he did not believe that Augustine had written the work. The disputation drove Carlstadt to a thorough study of Augustine that ended with his accepting Luther's views on Augustine and his theology. Before long Carlstadt was teaching Augustine's *On the Letter and the Spirit*. Both Carlstadt and Amsdorf supported Luther in the crucial years that followed the controversy over the 95 Theses. Although eventually Carlstadt went his own way, Amsdorf remained loyal to Luther. In both cases taking seriously a disputation with an undergraduate changed their lives.

It was not only Carlstadt and Amsdorff who converted from the scholastic theology of Aquinas and Scotus to what we might call Biblical humanism, which emphasized reading the Bible and the church Fathers in the original languages. The curriculum of the University of Wittenberg changed in the years from 1516 to 1518 from teaching with a scholastic emphasis to one that was humanist. "This caused the development of an entirely new school, in which the restoration of Latin, Greek and Hebrew and the teachings of the church Fathers were to be studied in the original languages in which they were written." (Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation, II: The Reformation as a University Movement* [Fortress: Minneapolis, 1996] 457)

This development culminated in 1518 with the hiring of young Philip Melancthon, who was known to be the most promising young humanist in Germany. Melancthon's inaugural lecture as Professor of Greek was an academic triumph and before long Wittenberg moved from a small and isolated university teaching traditional scholastic theology to the gold standard for classical and Biblical humanism. The student body grew from about 200 to over 600. It became impossible to find lecture halls large enough to house Melancthon's lectures on the Greek classics.

Before Melancthon was hired, however, Luther was already exemplifying humanism in his teaching. The professors of scholasticism taught the relatively up-to-date developments of the theologians of the thirteenth and fourteenth century and their intellectual heirs. Dialectic replaced rhetoric as the crown of the arts of language. Luther expounded the text of the Bible in the original languages with the aid of the ancient church Fathers. As he explained in 1539, "Let them take a book of the Bible and look at the interpretations of the Fathers and the same things will happen to them that happened to me when I took up the Epistle to the Hebrews with the Gloss of St. Chrysostom,

Titus and Galatians with the help of St. Augustine, the Psalter with all the exegetes I could find and so on." (*On the Councils and the Church, Luther's Works* 41.19) The goal was not to contribute to ongoing academic debate, but to return to the sources (*ad fontes*), primarily the Bible and then Augustine and other doctors of the Church.

Luther's friend, John Lang wrote to another friend, George Spalatin, about Luther's lectures (March 10, 1516): "Very many students are all excited and enthusiastic about the lectures on the Bible and the early Fathers, whereas the study of the scholastic doctors (so-called) attract maybe two or three students." Luther wrote to Lang (May 18, 1517) "Our theology and St. Augustine are progressing well, and with God's help rule at our University. ... Indeed no one can expect to have any students if he does not want teach this theology, that is, lecture on the Bible or St. Augustine or another [Father]." (*Luther's Works* 48.42)

Luther was a popular teacher and a persuasive and winsome participant in disputations. Many students took his classes and his colleagues were converted to his views on the curriculum and the Christian faith. We do not have a description of his behavior at a disputation until 1518, when he was asked to prepare and preside over a disputation at the triennial meeting of the Augustinian Order in Heidelberg. If we possessed only the text of the *Heidelberg Disputation*, we would be impressed by its incisive clarity and theological depth, enlivened with a sense of humor. We also know that, as with his disputation of 1516, a group of colleagues, especially younger ones, were won over to Luther's views at Heidelberg. In addition, we possess a letter from one of these younger

colleagues that describes Luther's art of teaching.

The author was young Martin Bucer, a Dominican (not an Augustinian) who was studying at Heidelberg. He was an enthusiastic humanist and admirer of Erasmus and wrote the letter to Beatus Rhenanus (Beatus Bild), a friend and assistant of Erasmus. Bucer seems as struck by Luther's charm as a teacher and participant in the disputation as by his individual positions, which Bucer does not seem to have completely understood.

Bucer wrote effusively about Luther's demeanor. "Although our leaders tried to refute him with all their might, they did not move him a finger's breadth from his position with their wiles. His charm in answering is amazing; in listening his patience is incomparable. In his explanations you would recognize the sharpness of Paul, not Scotus. By his answers, so brief, so wise, and drawn from the Holy Scriptures, he easily drew everyone to admire him." (Martin Bucer, *Correspondance* [Brill: Leiden, 1979] 61)

Bucer discusses only part of Luther's art of teaching, but it is an important part. Luther listened patiently to those who were puzzled or challenged by his theses. Then instead of expressing his irritation with their incomprehension, he responded charmingly and gently. Understanding and persuading were more important than victory.

The audience is also part of the art of teaching, as Luther wrote to his friend George Spalatin (May 18, 1518). "The professors participated willingly in my disputation, and debated with me so unassumingly that I was very grateful to them. For although my theology seemed strange to them, they skirmished against it intelligently and well, except one, the fifth to speak and a junior

professor, who made the whole assembly laugh by saying: "If the peasants heard this, they would stone you to death." (*Luther's Works* 48.61) Today's academic thinking about the violence that meets unpopular opinions on some campuses marvels at the graciousness of our medieval colleagues.

Luther's letter mentions the role of content in teaching. Scholars today acknowledge that it was the theses of the *Heidelberg Disputation* of April 26, 1518 that first presented clearly Luther's distinctive visions of Law and Gospel and contrasted the Theologians of Glory and the Cross. The patience and charm of listening and responding that Bucer noticed in Luther was not part of a presentation of uncontroversial and widely accepted ideas. On the contrary, Luther was challenging a Christian world where God's commands and His promises, Law and Gospel, were inextricably confused, where the Theology of Glory seemed to have swamped and drowned the challenge of the Theology of the Cross. In one sense, the choleric young doctor with his prediction of violence was properly shocked, not only perhaps with the novelty of Luther's ideas, but also at the moderation and politeness of Luther's answers and his own colleagues' questions. Gentleness and patience do not mean very much unless they are employed to challenge students. For Luther teaching and learning is a two-way street. Students who are challenged need to respond with searching questions that are, however, also expressed with gentleness and the answers to which are listened to with patience.

Bucer did not mention Luther's sense of humor. In Thesis 30 Luther argues that reading a great philosopher like Aristotle is not as important as simplicity of mind and soul: "Just as only a married man can use

properly the vice of lust, so no one can practice philosophy properly unless he is a fool, that is, a Christian.” We can imagine the celibate Augustinian friars chuckling over Luther’s risqué introduction of the proper use of lust to illustrate the right way for a Christian to philosophize.

In today’s academic world where we seem more interested in shouting down our opponents than instructing them and university lectures are devoted to “settled

science,” we can perhaps learn something from the sixteenth century university, which encouraged students to debate and defend challenging theses. We can certainly improve our own art of teaching by observing how Martin Luther challenged his students and colleagues by debating controversial theses with patience, charm and a sense of humor.

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