



MONDAY'S MEAL

SUSTAINABLE NOURISHMENT *for the* LONG DISTANCE RUN

An Educational Vision (part 2)

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Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy. Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.

**"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..."
Hebrews 10:24**

The Golden Triad: Truth, Beauty, Goodness

Consider, first, Truth. As a human being you have a mind, you are a rational being. Why has God given you a mind? In order that you might grasp the Truth. He has given you a mind in order that you might come to embrace what is true and reject what is false. Truth exists because God exists. God is Truth. God announces to Moses that He is abounding in goodness and truth (Ex 34:6) And Jesus declares to His disciples, I am the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6)

Note, therefore, that Truth exists whether I acknowledge it or not. It is a transcendental. God exists whether I believe it or not; $2+2 = 4$ whether I believe it or not; Jesus Christ rose from the dead whether I believe it or not. Truth transcends me; it exists over me. Hence, when we use our minds rightly, we do not create the Truth, we discover the Truth for the Truth exists independent of our minds. But God has given me a mind in order that I might discern the Truth and embrace it. Jesus commands us to love the Lord our God with all our mind "this means that we must cultivate the life of the mind.

Christianity is not a collection of nice feel-good stories; it is not a collection of fairy tales. It is the truth of God. Peter writes (2 P 1:16) "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

These things really did happen they are true, open to investigation and analysis, comprehensible and rational. Skeptics say that Christianity requires you to shut off your brain: Faith is believing what you know ain't so. But I certainly hope you don't shut off your brain. Faith is trust when I stand on a stage, sit in chair, walk on the ground, drive my car, read a history book, I am exercising faith. One should never put one's faith, one's trust in that which is not reliable but God is supremely reliable, Jesus is supremely reliable, because He is Truth. When we believe in Christ we are exercising our minds.

If anything, it is our broader culture that is obscuring Truth. We are bombarded by skepticism, relativism, and cynicism; by the absurd notion that whatever's true for you is true for you; these beliefs have been steadily deadening our souls and eroding

our longing for the Truth. But Truth exists because God exists, and God has given us minds to apprehend and embrace the Truth. So we are to cultivate the life of the mind. Think. Reason. Explore. Evaluate.

So how do we cultivate the life of the mind? First, read the Word of God. Jesus prays for us in John 17:7, Sanctify them in the truth; Thy Word is truth. The psalmist reminds us in Psalm 119:151 You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth. Again we read in v. 160, The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. It was this Word on which Adam was to rely; this Word that Satan attacked in his temptation of Adam and Eve; this Word that the Church is to uphold. The Church is the pillar and support of the Truth (2 Tim 3:15). God's Word cultivates our minds so we can more faithfully embrace what is true and shun what is false.

Second, we cultivate our minds by studying the world God has made. Because Jesus is the Truth; because there is a God who has created all things and sustains all things; therefore, the world is full of Truth. The world really does exist; abstract realities are real; mathematical truths exist. Our calling as rational creatures is to study and embrace that which is true and repudiate that which is false. We are to cultivate our minds. Students, you are to cultivate the life of the mind; to learn to love God with your mind; to apprehend the truth with your mind. Irrational Christians are poor Christians.

Consider, second, Goodness. As a human you have a conscience, you are a moral being. Why has God given you a conscience? In order that you might understand and embrace what is good and reject what is evil. Conscience is the built-in power of our minds to pass moral judgments on ourselves, approving or disapproving our actions, thoughts, and plans, and telling us, if what we have done is assessed as wrong, that we deserve to suffer for it. Your conscience enables you to grasp and embrace what is good. Goodness exists because God exists. God is Goodness. God announces to Moses that He is bounding in goodness (Ex 34:6). And Paul reminds us in Romans that it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (2:4).

Note, therefore, that Goodness exists whether I acknowledge it or not. Like Truth it is a transcendental. Blasphemy is wrong whether I think so or not; immorality is perverse whether I think so or not; showing respect to parents is right whether I think so or not. And God has given me a conscience in order that I might discern Goodness and embrace it. We no more create Goodness than we create the Truth. Things don't become wrong because I say they are wrong; they are wrong, and I come to perceive that they are so. Because God exists and God is good, therefore Goodness exists, righteousness exists, independent of my choices or beliefs or opinions.

God declares in the prophet Isaiah, Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Is 5:20). Isaiah insists that our responsibility as human beings is to align our perception of what is good with what is in fact good. Just because we think or say it is good is not the measure of Goodness. We are to cultivate our conscience.

So how do we go about cultivating our conscience? First, read the Word of God. God's Word is good and defines goodness, equips us to recognize that which is good. My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness (119:172). Paul writes: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

God's Word cultivates our conscience, equipping us to recognize and praise that which is good. Paul writes that the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5).

Second, we can study the deeds of men and nations. Because God is Good and has created and sustains all things, God has not left Himself without witness in human interchange and in history. By God's common grace, all men believer and unbeliever often recognize and resonate with that Goodness. The ancient, pagan biographer Plutarch writes in his, *Lives of Famous Greeks and Romans*:

It was for the sake of others that I first commenced writing biographies; but I find myself proceeding and attaching myself to it for my own; the virtues of these great men serving me as a sort of looking-glass, in which I may see how to adjust and adorn my own life.

Plutarch could distinguish virtue from vice because he was made in God's image. While he doesn't get it all right, he gets many things correct. God has been at work among all nations, leaving testimonies of His goodness. So we can study and benefit from these glimpses of Goodness so long as they harmonize with the Word of God. This is one of the chief benefits of the study of history. We are to cultivate our conscience in order to embrace Goodness.

Finally, consider Beauty. As a human being, you have an imagination; you are an aesthetic being. Aesthetics is the study of Beauty. Why has God given you an imagination? In order that you might understand and embrace what is beautiful and lovely. Your imagination enables you to understand and embrace Beauty. Beauty exists because God exists. God is Beautiful. Moses teaches us to sing, Let the Beauty of the Lord our God be upon us (90:17). And David declares his one desire is that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord (Ps 27:4).

Note, therefore, that Beauty exists whether I acknowledge it or not. Like Truth, like Goodness, it is a transcendental. Beauty is not in the eye of the beholder beauty is in the eyes of God and is reflected in the world that He has made. God has given us an imagination in order that we might discern Beauty and embrace it. Because God exists and God is beautiful, therefore Beauty exists, loveliness exists, independent of my choices. Our calling is to cultivate our imagination so that what we perceive to be beautiful and what is truly beautiful correspond so that we say, That is beautiful! or, That is ugly of the things God describes that way. Rotting flesh crawling with maggots is repulsive; a virgin bride adorned in her white dress is beautiful. A patchwork house is ugly; Rembrandt's "Nightwatch" is stunning.

So how do we cultivate our imagination? First, read and meditate on the Word of God. The Word of God is Beautiful, reflecting the character of the One who wrote it. The law of the Lord [is] more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb (Ps 19:10). We pray, "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your word" (119:37). So Scripture exhorts us to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps 29:2). Holiness is beautiful; the high priest's garments were made for glory and for beauty (Ex 28:2); the psalmist cries out, "How lovely Lord of hosts to me the tabernacles of thy grace" (Ps 84:1). God's word cultivates the imagination.

Second, Beauty exists in the world in nature, in art, in literature, in history, in architecture, in mercy ministry. Consider, pray, read and sing the psalms, meditate; compare what you see with what is described as beautiful in the Word of God. Cultivate your imagination even as you cultivate your mind and your conscience. Learn to identify and appreciate what is beautiful.

Conclusion: What we find, therefore, is that we have been created with minds, consciences, and imaginations with these receptors in order that we might perceive and embrace Truth, Goodness, and Beauty transcendentals. Paul commands us in Phil 4:8:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things. Here Paul borrows from a typical Stoic list of virtues to summarize the eternal realities, the transcendentals, upon which we are to meditate. Paul commands us to cultivate the life of the mind, the life of the conscience, the life of the imagination in order that we might perceive and embrace what is true (Truth), what is noble, just, pure, virtuous (Goodness), and what is lovely, praiseworthy (Beauty). We are to meditate on these things because God is these things. As we come to perceive these realities, these transcendentals, more fully, we are coming to know God more fully. God Himself is Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. So the goal of human life is to delight in what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful; for we have been made in His image. We are to reflect His glory.

It is not enough to have one or the other; we are to strive for all.

- Pr 25:11 - A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.
- Pr 11:22 - A beautiful woman who lacks discretion is like a pig with a ring in its snout.

Use this rubric of Truth, Goodness, Beauty to assess music, movies, speeches, actions, buildings

God has given you:

- A mind to embrace Truth;
- An imagination to embrace Beauty.
- A conscience to embrace Goodness;

So cultivate them and use them to the glory of God.