

ROCKBRIDGE REPORTER

A Newsletter for Rockbridge Academy

October 2001

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

 by Michael J. McKenna

Given the enormity of the events that changed our world on September 11, 2001, and the almost inescapable barrage of information that has surrounded us since that fateful day, I wouldn't be surprised at all if, after seeing the title of this article, you decided that enough was enough, and used this *Rockbridge Reporter* as a fish-wrap instead of its intended purpose. One grows weary of hearing and reading about nothing else for almost a solid month.

Understandable as that may be, I took on the task of writing about that day, not because I think I'm insightful enough to add to your understanding some tidbit you hadn't already thought of. (I'm not that presumptuous.) Rather, I thought I would write about that day in terms of what went on inside the walls of Rockbridge Academy, instead of adding my voice to those who've already tried to explain what went on in Washington, Pennsylvania, and New York. I think it is important for you to know what your children and their teachers were doing and saying, and how, since then, we have been trying to grapple with the enormity of it all.

When the news first arrived that a plane had hit the World Trade Center, I was attending the Teacher Support Team breakfast in Crownsville. At first, I thought it was an accident. We stopped to pray for those involved. Before too long, we got word that another plane had struck the towers, and that our nation was under attack. Upon driving back to school, and hearing on the



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radio that the Pentagon had now been hit as well, it became clearer what was actually taking place.

As I walked up the sidewalk to the building, I told Don Dwyer, one of our board members, that I thought we should close the school. He agreed, and so, the emergency dismissal procedures were set in motion; the phones started ringing, and within minutes, parents began arriving to take their children home, even before many of them had gotten a call that school was closing.

The amazing thing, however, was what happened next, as the word began to filter into classrooms around the school. (Permit me to interrupt myself to assure you that we took great pains to make sure that younger children were spared details which we thought they would not have been mature enough to fully comprehend. By the end of that week, teachers had written home in their Friday Letters to inform parents as to what exactly was said at each grade level. Obviously, the older students were able to understand more than the younger, and were, therefore, privileged to more information.) Almost without any prompting, the classrooms ceased their regular work and began to pray...and then to sing hymns...and then to continue praying. The older children knew that some of our Dads were employed either at the Pentagon or with airlines that were involved in the hijackings. These men, their families, and their children, were lifted up in prayer as a natural, almost second nature response to the news. Our leaders were being prayed for as students interceded with God to grant those men and women wisdom in the days ahead. What else was there to do?

Not that I expected it, but there was virtually no sense of panic or fear discernable among the student body. Certainly, students who knew that their Dads worked in Washington or flew airplanes for a living were shaken. But the prayers of classmates served as a calming agent. To know that so many are praying for you is, and was an especially great comfort to all of us, and certainly to these children.

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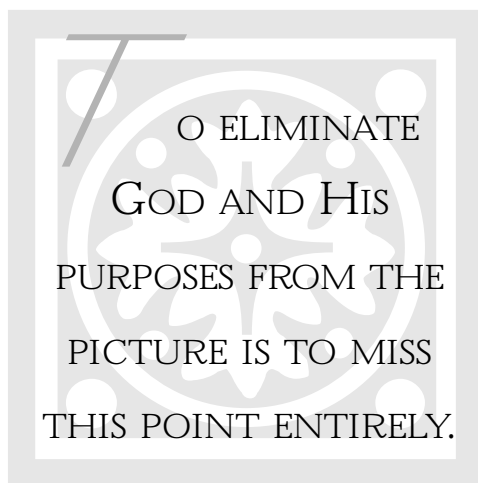
At one point during the dismissal, Linda Janikowsky came through the hallway upstairs and, bursting into tears, announced that one of the towers in New York had collapsed. We were stunned into disbelieving silence...but still the teachers and their students kept praying. They kept singing. They kept seeking God's face. It was remarkable to see and hear.

All who were here that morning have been blessed in a special way. That day, September 11th, 2001, will go down in history as one of those where-were-you-when moments. No one who was alive and conscious will ever forget what he was doing when he heard the unspeakable news. However, for those of us who were here, our memories won't be those of being glued to the TV to find out the next piece of grisly news from Dan Rather. Rather, our memories will be one of children and teachers praying for one another, for their country, for their friends' parents, for their leaders. It will be one of hearing the strains of hymns as parents collected their children. It will be one in which God was sought in the midst of the unimaginable. Nothing else was more necessary. I couldn't ask for the horror to be set in the midst of a better context. I pray that, at some point in the future, your children will, perhaps, think of it in that light.

Since that day, questions have arisen about the tragic events in various classrooms, mostly older ones. As I said earlier, the younger children were told relatively little by us, leaving the details to be filled in for them by you. While not intended to be any sort of working script, what follows is generally how we have been attempting, in an informal sort of way, to understand that dreadful day and its meaning in our lives individually and as a nation.

The Sovereignty of God. Almost immediately on the airwaves, people began asking the inevitable question, "Where was God in all of this?" It's a reasonable question. Unfortunately, virtually all of the religious pundits, from James Dobson to Rabbi Kushner, explained the events in terms of God's absenteeism or impotence. "God had nothing to do with these events," one would intone. "God can't override the free will of wicked men," another would opine. Instead, we must agree with the Scriptures that the God of heaven is sovereign over all. The prophet Amos asked, "Shall there be evil

in the city and the Lord has not done it?" (Amos 3:6). In addition, when Job's wife encouraged him to forsake his integrity, curse God and die, Job chastised her for being the foolish woman she was: "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). We are then told that, in all of this, Job did not sin. God is not impotent, and nothing happens apart from his providence. As Matthew Henry wrote, "This consideration, that, whatever evil is in the city, the Lord has



done it, should engage us patiently to study to answer God's intention in them."

Repentance. All throughout the Old Testament, God uses one nation to punish another for its sins, and then raises up a third to punish that first nation. The repentance of God's people is always the goal of these afflictions. All throughout the book of Ezekiel, God instructs the prophet to tell the people that His judgments are coming, at which time "they shall know that I am the Lord." In case we get the idea that that was the mean Old Testament God, not the loving God of the New Testament, the gospel of Luke includes the following account of Jesus: "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4-5). When the God of heaven permits calamities such as this, he is calling the nation, and the individuals that make up that nation, to repentance. To eliminate God and His purposes from the picture is to miss this point entirely.

Pray for Our Leaders. We are commanded to pray for those in authority over us. (Could our failure to do just that, perhaps, be another corporate sin we need to repent of?) We need to pray that our President, and those who advise him, will be granted wisdom from above. But before we do that, we must pray that he, as our federal head, would lead the country in the humble repentance previously mentioned. America has grown complacent, and we have trusted in our own idols of commerce, greed, wealth, and might, instead of trusting in the God who gives us all these things.

Pray for God's Justice. I once attended a morning service at the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia, to hear R.C. Sproul as a guest preacher. He was preaching that evening as well, and, as a sort of invitation, requested the congregation to come back later that night to hear why, in his words, "The saints in heaven will rejoice when the wicked are thrown into hell." I couldn't believe what I heard, but you have to know that I came back that evening to hear what he had to say! His point was simply this: God's justice and judgment are perfect, and since there is nothing but rejoicing in heaven, especially insofar as the acts of God are concerned, at the consummation of God's justice and judgment, there will be only rejoicing in the heavenly realms. Hard words, to be sure, but harder still to argue with the logic thereof. The Scriptures are full of the idea that God loves mercy and justice, practices perfect judgment, and hates those who pervert such. It is not beyond a reasonable prayer to ask that God's justice would be meted out to those who committed such horrible acts.

These comments have not been intended to be the apex of explanations to help us understand these recent tragedies. As I said at the outset, I simply think it's important for you to know what your children are being encouraged to think about as we try to comprehend the world in which we live, especially at a time such as this.

Once again, I thank our God and Creator for placing us, even in the midst of such horrible events, in a context in which His word would be sought to help us and our children understand His works.

NEED TO KNOW?

Do you have an aspect of school life you'd like to see addressed in our monthly newsletter? Call the school office with your inquiry and we'll try to incorporate it in our next issue of the Rockbridge Reporter.



Matthew Vest, Dialectic Literature Teacher

MEET THE NEW FACULTY

Mr. Matt Vest: High School Literature

Matthew Vest grew up on a quiet ranch near Birmingham, Alabama. Matt recently received a B.A. in the Classics and Moral Philosophy while studying under George Grant at Bannockburn College in Franklin, Tennessee. In addition to teaching dialectic English and Literature at Rockbridge, Matt is pursuing a M.A. in Classics from St. John's Graduate Institute. Matthew enjoys reading the *Inklings*, rugby, backpacking, mountain biking and any physical outdoor sport.

Dee McClintock: 5th Grade

Dee McClintock moved from Waco, Texas to Bowie three years ago. Her husband, Bill, is a statistician. Her daughter, Liesl, is a second grader in Mrs. Borgeson's class. Dee teaches fifth grade. This is her fifteenth year teaching. She has taught all grades from Kindergarten through sixth. She feels very blessed to be a part of Rockbridge. After teaching public school for many years, she appreciates the Christian environment and parent support in our school.

Thanks to Our Student Helpers

The following students deserve a hearty "Thank You" for all of their help this summer with the labeling and distribution of our school textbooks.

Laura Collins	Daniel Collins
Ashley Dwyer	Jennifer Dwyer
Elisabeth Duvall	Colleen McKenna
Michael McKenna	Ellie Stevens
Madeleine Stevens	Matt Tucker
Drew Tucker	

We would also like to give a special "Thank You" to Gavin Blair who has spent many hours over the last two summers helping Mr. Collins and Mr. Blair with our computer network and a multitude of other tasks. Thanks, Gavin for sharing your talents and time.

Music to Our Ears

Our need for a piano has been filled! We are very thankful for the provision of a new piano. Praise God for His provision through the generosity of His people.



LATIN AND LOGIC CLASSES FOR ADULTS

Latin and Logic Classes for Adults Do you feel less than up to it when your child asks for help with his Latin homework? Are you embarrassed when you say something to your eighth grader, and he replies, "Mom, you just committed an ad populum fallacy!" and you have no clue as to what he's talking about? Now you have opportunity to do something about it! Rockbridge Academy will be offering evening adult classes in Latin and logic this October and November.

LATIN: MISS RUTH COMANDA
Topics to Include:
Basic Noun Cases, Noun Gender, Declensions and Declining, Verbs and Conjugations, Sentences, and Sentence Translation

LOGIC: MR. BRADLEY FINKBEINER
Topics to Include:
Informal Fallacies, Aristotelian Logic, Stoic Logic, Definitions, and How to Argue a Point

WHEN?

LATIN: M, W, F October 15–26, 2001
7:30–9:00 PM
LOGIC: M, W, F November 5–16, 2001
7:30–9:00 PM

WHERE?

Rockbridge Academy, 2nd Floor,
Pascal Room

COST?

One class: \$60 per person
Both classes: \$100 per person

Class space is limited so please register by the following dates:

Latin class registration
by Friday, October 12, 2001

Logic class
registration
by Friday,
October 26,
2001





CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Oct. 5Back to School Night—Grades 7-10
(starts promptly at 7:00 PM)
- Oct. 10Academic Warning Day
- Oct. 15-26Evening Adult Latin Class (M,W,F)
- Oct 19.....Picture Day (*individual pictures*)
- Oct. 26.....History Parade
(begins at 1:30 PM)
- Oct. 31End of the 1st Quarter
- Nov. 1Daytime Open House—8:30 AM-3:00 PM
- Nov. 2SCHOOL CLOSED—Teacher Work Day
- Nov. 5-15Evening Adult Logic Classes (M,W,F)
- Nov. 21-23SCHOOL CLOSED—Parent/Teacher Conf. &
Thanksgiving Holiday

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

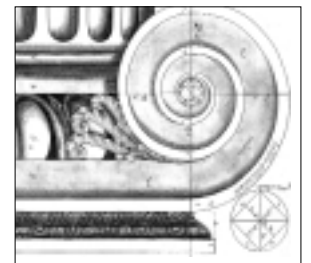
am not so blind to differences of age as to think that the very young should be forced on prematurely or given real work to do. Above all things we must take care that the child, who is not yet old enough to love his studies, does not come to hate them and dread the bitterness which he has once tasted, even when the years of his infancy are left behind. His studies must be made an amusement: he must be questioned and praised and taught to rejoice when he has done well; sometimes too, when he refuses instruction, it should be given to some other to excite envy, at times also he must be engaged in competition and should be allowed to believe himself successful more often than not, while he should be encouraged to do his best by such rewards as may appeal to his tender years."

—**Quintilian,**
INSTITUTIO ORATORIA, I.I.20

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Internet: www.rockbridge.org
E-mail: learning@rockbridge.org
FAX (410) 923-6588
(410) 923-1171

ROCKBRIDGE
ACADEMY



A CLASSICAL &
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
911 Generals Highway
Millersville, MD 21108