

# ROCKBRIDGE REPORTER

A Newsletter for Rockbridge Academy

September 2004

## A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

The following was never meant to be published; it was meant to be delivered. The difference between the spoken vernacular and formal prosaic composition is astounding. Compare C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*, which is a compilation of radio addresses and notes, with any of his formal novels or dialogues. Both style and diction radically contrast. That being said, the transcript below is simply a foundation. All [the faults] were hopefully masked last May by the immense amount of scribbles, arrows, and notes that covered my own copy.

Gavin N. Blair  
Arnold, Maryland  
July 2004

The following Valedictory address was delivered by Gavin Nelles Blair at Rockbridge Academy's first graduation ceremony, May 28, 2004

The more a man is educated, the less he seems to know. In the limited course of my studies, the endless ocean of knowledge has flooded my brain with more questions than answers. It seems the four-year olds are right: you can always ask 'why?' Any question raises every question. All the subjects correlate; an asymptote in math signifies a paradox in philosophy. The mysteries of quantum mechanics mirror the majesty of an omnipotent God. These are things that men have



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struggled for centuries to grasp, and yet still can hardly describe. What is motion? What is time? What is matter? What is space? What are words? What is language? Each is much more intricate than it first seems. Man has found himself in an awe-inspiring, terrifying and yet elegant universe, but we fail to accept it as such and think we can condense it into a teaspoon. The modern man claims to plot the universe in Cartesian coordinates and put God into a pie chart, and yet he

can't even put into words the mechanics of his own mind.

It has become increasingly clear to me what a cold, dark world we are left with if men imagine that their intellects are limitless. Education is just a drop in the bucket. One can pack all the knowledge he wishes into his head, and all he will get is a headache. If one takes history into consideration, it's surprising that the human race hasn't died of migraines! What was the lie that Adam and Eve bought into at the Fall? Satan convinced them that they, too, could be like God, with the richness of His divine understanding. In the moment Eve bit into the fruit she determined that it was she who ought to have the knowledge of good and evil. The first thing she knew was her own nakedness.

Of course, knowing per se is not bad. Though knowledge puffs up, we are called to pursue knowledge. It need not be used badly. But knowledge without wisdom is like pearls before swine. We live in the information age. Knowledge is prevalent, and wisdom is rare. It is unfortunate to note how the ratio of idiots to experts always seems to hover around one. Knowledge is no good unless one has the contextual understanding to use it properly. Knowledge is the fodder of the mind. It only makes sense when it

*continued on page 2*

## A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS...*continued*

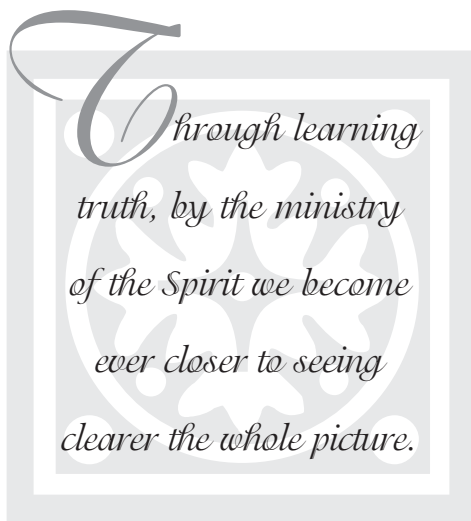
is digested by the correct worldview. If knowledge is void of wisdom, if knowledge is void of faith, if knowledge is void of Christ, it is nothing.

Faith is a profound concept. Christians have faith because they believe in what they cannot see. The materialist laughs at the loonies who believe in a spiritual realm, who believe in an all-powerful God. But even the materialist, who has the universe laid out in a syllogism, has faith. He too, has a god. But his god is math, matter, and void. He has an exceedingly profound faith that the world manages to hold itself together with the absence of someone to hold it. The evolutionist has faith that natural selection and the random workings of the universe have the ability not only to generate the intricate biome we call earth, but that they are capable of producing a cohesive and universal system of morality, order, and logic. This is a deep faith indeed. The progressivist has faith that in moving he will go someplace good. He has a faith that his progress isn't leading him to the edge of a cliff but to the top of a mountain. The atheist has the deepest faith of all. He is an empiricist who thinks he can prove a universal negative. Belief cannot exist without faith. In that sense, men in their pursuit of learning are all the same. All build their philosophical houses on some sort of foundation. Some is rock, some is sand.

The writer of Ecclesiastes wrote: "Is there anything of which one might say, 'See this, it is new'? ...I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after the wind." This seems a somber way to reflect on a joyous occasion, but it is very true. If we forget who we are in Christ, if we begin to think that the limits of the universe are within our grasp, it only

takes a glance over one's shoulder at history to remind us that in the perspective of time we are just a drop in a bucket. The intellectuals of our age are no different from those of the past. We all chase our tails.

Our worth is in Christ, and nowhere else. There are no truly new theories, there are no truly great ideas, there is no truly good news except that it reflects the good news contained in Scripture: that God Himself came down from heaven to earth, and that



through His wisdom, power, and glory He offered redemption to man—man who was facedown in the mire of his own self-involvement, choking on the vomit that was spilling out of his mind. Paul said: "There is no one who is righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks God." Only God Himself can set us free from our own traps. 'For while we were still helpless...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' It is only in Christ that we can rejoice with the angels saying, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

Education has purpose. It is not to secure a profession. It is not to make money. It is not an avenue to exhibit

our intellectualism. It is not about being classical. It is not about being reformed. Education can have one purpose and one purpose alone: to glorify God. This does not eliminate the practical uses of education, it amplifies them. It gives purpose to the purposes. God has given us minds, and he has given us his revelation, both special and general. "Since the creation of the world [God's] invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen being understood through what has been made..." Education is a reflection of those attributes back to God, in the same way that the heavenly host cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" The task of education is a primary part of the process of sanctification. Sanctification is a lifelong process. Through learning truth, by the ministry of the Spirit we become ever closer to seeing clearer the whole picture. "For now we see in a mirror but dimly, but then face to face; now [we] know in part, but then [we] will know fully..."

Sometimes we get so caught up in the business of work that the eternal perspective is forgotten. The first answer in the Westminster Confession is engrained in our minds, but it is engrained so deeply that we often fail to see it. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever! Shout it from the mountain-tops! How can we be so foolish? All of creation cries out! Listen to the cicadas! Why do we get so entangled in the cares of this world—in grades, in degrees, in jobs—when the answer is so simple: Be still and know that I AM God!

### *Epilogue*

The senior class is graduating today. In a certain sense this is true. Rockbridge will be behind us. And yet, in another sense, this is not so much a graduation but a continuation.

*continued on page 3*

A VALEDICTORY  
ADDRESS...continued

Sanctification in this life goes on. Let us never, ever lose perspective of what education is and why we do it. Education is nothing without faith, and our faith is nothing unless God is getting the glory. We, too, are nothing unless we recognize that all other ends implode on themselves, because all other ends ultimately seek the glory of man. God is great and we are small. Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Be still.

On behalf of the senior class, I would like to thank our parents, friends, family, and the faculty and staff at Rockbridge Academy for their encouragement, love, and endurance in our struggles and successes. We thank God for the examples of our teachers, and feel blessed to have been exposed to the unique and familiar environment we have grown to love. For many of us, the years to come will be held in stark contrast. It is always important to start off on a sure foundation, and there is no surer foundation than the Word of God. Thank you.

Coffee Mugs

Rockbridge Academy coffee mugs are now available for sale in the school office. They are red with Rockbridge Academy's logo etched in white and sell for \$6.50. Please look for them displayed on the bookshelf in the school office.



Basketball  
Coaches Needed

Rockbridge Academy has openings for boys' and girls' basketball coaches for the 2004-2005 season. Interested applicants should contact Donna Griffith at [athletics@rockbridge.org](mailto:athletics@rockbridge.org).



ROCKBRIDGE  
ATHLETICS

Soccer practice for both boys' and girls' soccer teams began in earnest on Monday, August 16. Over 80 student-athletes took to Arden field with anticipation for a victorious season. The latest addition to Rockbridge athletics will be a JV team for girls this fall. Schedules for athletic teams can be found on the school's website at [www.rockbridge.org](http://www.rockbridge.org).

WHO DO I TALK TO...

...if I have a question about my child's school work? *Your child's teacher is the best place to begin if you have questions about his daily work, whether in school or at home.*

...if I have a question about the overall curriculum at the school? *Our Director of Instruction, Laura Tucker, would be the one to speak with if you have questions about curriculum, scope and sequence, reading material, etc.*

...if I have a question about school policy? *The Headmaster, Michael McKenna, will be the one to speak with if you have questions about the overall governance of the school.*

...if I have a question for the school board? *If you have a question for the school board (the policy making body of Rockbridge Academy), you may submit those questions to the board in writing, through the Headmaster, and they will respond to you through the Headmaster as well.*

...if my child is having a problem with another child in his class? *We desire all of our students to live according to the Golden Rule. However, when difficulties arise between children, yet are under the teacher's "radar," we encourage the parents (especially the dads) to talk to one another. It wouldn't be beyond the bounds of propriety for you to ask your child's teacher if she's noticed anything. (In fact, if she had, she probably would have called you already.) But if the difficulty is beyond her seeing, the best thing is for the parents to speak to one another to help their children learn to live at peace with one another, insofar as it's possible for them (Rom. 12:18).*

...if I have a question about the school building or the facility in general? *Our Operations Manager, Dave Collins, is the one to speak to if you have a question about the physical building, the grounds, where to park, and so on.*

...if I have a question about volunteering at the school? *Patty Herral is our Rockbridge Support Team (RST) coordinator. She would be more than happy to help you "plug in" to the many ways our parents volunteer to help. Her phone number is in the school directory.*

In addition to the above, many of the questions you may have about the school, its policies and practices, are addressed in the school's Parent-Student Handbook. Please read that over carefully in preparation for the coming school year. If you need an additional copy, you may pick one up in the school office during normal school hours.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- SEP 7 .....First Day of School for Grades 1-12
- SEP 8.....First Day of School for Kindergarten
- SEP 11..Study Skills Seminar for 7th Graders (6 gr. & 8-12 gr. optional)
- OCT 1 .....Back to School Night @ 7 p.m.—Grades K-6
- OCT 8 .....Back to School Night @ 7 p.m.— Grades 7-12
- OCT 22 .....Open House—*Daytime* 8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
- OCT 29 .....History Parade for Grades 1-6

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

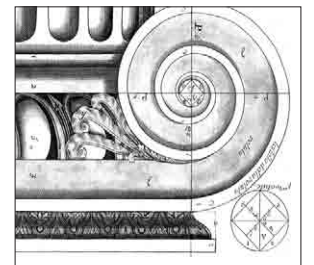
*What would the church be like, not if we had the right mechanics, or teachers, but if we would just think what God has commanded us to think?"*

—ABRAHAM KUYPER

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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