II

Classicism, Christianity, and Humanism

In this paper, I shall examine critically the origins, growth, and decline of the classical curriculum; the way of life that it has fostered; and the values that may be salvaged from it before it passes away. That the classics are in extremis has long been known. Almost fifty years ago, in 1922, George H. Stevenson, Fellow and Tutor of University College, Oxford, wrote an essay entitled, “Some Reflections on the Teaching of Roman History” in which he said: “Now we are taking in each other’s washing. Schools provide universities with graduates—universities provide schoolmasters to schools.” More recently, in the spring of 1958, the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions (in Great Britain) declared war against “a limited culture dominated by the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome reflecting little of the achievement, the ideas and the philosophy of modern science.”

A culture and a discipline that have endured for some four hundred years and during that time, for better or worse, have formed the mind and character of western Europe should not be interred without decent funeral rites. Unfortunately, I am unable to do this without being personal and autobiographical, and for this I ask your indulgence. In his inaugural address upon his induction as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English Liter-
ature at the University of Cambridge in 1954, C. S. Lewis observed that the title of the new chair was significant. By joining the Middle Ages with the Renaissance, it implied that the traditional antithesis between the two had been exaggerated. I am essaying an even more radical judgment: that my education as a growing boy and the way of life that it inculcated were much closer in subject matter and temper to the schooling of the sixteenth century than is the contemporary system to that of World War I America; that there was less change in the character of western Christendom between 1600 and 1914 than there has been between 1914 and 1971.

This remarkable cultural continuity was due to a historical coincidence. In the Renaissance and for some three centuries following it, the classical spirit of Greco-Roman antiquity was joined with the Christian spirit of the Middle Ages to create Christian humanism. This was a mixed marriage and has always shown the stresses and strains of an imperfect union. Nonetheless, it bore bounteous fruit because what each had in common with the other was so precious and so intimate that the traits whereby they differed could not keep them apart. This is not to say that the betrothal was necessary. Like all betrothals it was fortuitous. None will maintain that one need be a classicist to be a Christian or a Christian to be a classicist. In the fourth century the emperor Julian attempted to impede the sponsalia; and in the eleventh century Saint Peter Damian tried to obtain a decree of nullity. Both failed, and in the sixteenth century the union was consummated.

There were three reasons for this: (1) in the sixteenth century the superintendence of education was almost a complete monopoly of the Christian cleric, and therefore, whatever changes might occur in the curriculum, the intent of the teachers could not be other than to con-
firm a Christian pupil in the Christian faith; (2) the
vehicle of communication, written and oral, was the
same for both Christian and classical studies—the Latin
language; (3) it was shortly discovered, though through
a glass darkly, that there was a subtle and salutary con­
nection between the humanity of Jesus and the humanism
of the Greco-Roman spirit. Had not Plato and Plotinus
in the late classical period and Aristotle in the high
Middle Ages given intellectual form to Christian philos­
ophy and theology? Had not Vergil been baptised by
Dante?

Finally, it was in the guise (or disguise, if you will)
of Christianity that the fundamental Judaic concepts of
the unicity of God and the complete dependence of man­
kind upon Him were brought to the Western world. Car­
dinal Manning once remarked that spiritually we are
all Semites. Certainly, there is much to the contention
that Christianity is Judaism made acceptable to the Gent­
tiles. Teste David cum Sibylla, as the medieval hymn put
it. David and the Sibyl were both prophetic of the new
order. Thus the classical concept of the wholeness and
self-sufficiency of man was joined with the Judaic con­
cept of the absolute sovereignty of God. These two points
of view seem, and indeed are, contrary, if not contradic­
tory; and the only belief that made such a synthesis pos­
sible was the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation—
verbum caro factum, the Word made flesh, the humaniza­
tion of divinity. I remember as a young man attending
church in Switzerland and hearing a sermon De Deo
ludente—God at play. O sancta simplicitas! As Thomas
Hardy says in his poem “Christmas Eve”: “So fair a
fancy few would weave in these days.”

This Christian classicism, engendered in the Renais­
sance, became and remained the basis of the education
of the youth of western Christendom from the sixteenth to
the earlier part of the present century. In our times and in our country it has expressed itself most fully in the curriculum and discipline of the small American church-related liberal arts college. In the second half of the sixteenth century this type of education was no less a reality at Eton and Winchester in Anglican England than it was at Strassburg under Johann Sturm, the headmaster of the Lutheran gymnasium there; or under Calvin at Geneva; or, finally, at Messina in Sicily, where the Jesuits had opened their first school in 1542. Indeed, it may be said that if there was, at the time of the Reformation, one issue on which both middle-class and conservative Protestantism and aristocratic Catholicism agreed, it was the necessity of instituting and maintaining a Christian classical curriculum.

Myself, I received my early education at a Jesuit preparatory school and a Jesuit college. Subsequently, I was matriculated at Oxford where, in the School of Litterae Humaniores, I continued on a higher level and with little deviation from the norm my earlier education. Since then, whatever training I have received has been professional, not liberal. If the earlier years are the period in which a young man's mind and character are formed, I confess (and I say it with gratitude and affection) that I am the product of Jesuit schooling. Now, of the many manuals and treatises of instruction and guidance composed and published during the Renaissance in order to initiate this new system, the Jesuit Ratio Studiorum, definitively expressed in the edition of 1599, was one. There were editions before 1599 and several since then, and, taken together, they represent the most detailed and most comprehensive description of the Christian classical curriculum and its purpose. In Catholic Counterreformation Europe, the Society of Jesus enjoyed an almost complete monopoly of the education of boys; and in
Protestant Europe, however much they might differ theologically from the Catholic church and among themselves, the Church of England, the Lutheran church, and the Reformed church all agreed that the learned Christian gentleman was the Christian educated in the classical tradition. Since I have not only read but also to a degree studied the *Ratio* and (what may be more important) experienced its application and effects in my formative years, I believe that I am competent to pass judgment on it and, in doing so, on the several cognate Protestant systems directed toward the same end. I doubt that there is any school in Christendom, even a Jesuit school, where I could receive the same kind of education today. I am a relic. There are not many like us left, and you will not see our kind again.

The *Ratio* was not the invention of the Jesuit educator. Ignatius of Loyola himself declared that the model of his system was the classical curriculum already in use at the University of Paris, his own alma mater and that of his first companions. In fact, he was wont to compare the discipline of Paris with the lack of discipline in the contemporary Italian universities, and he deliberately staffed his own Roman college with Paris graduates. But the *Ratio*’s antecedents go even further back. In 1538 Johann Sturm, already identified as the Lutheran headmaster at Strassburg, published his treatise *De litterarum ludis recte aperiendis*. Indeed, Sturm and his companions contended that the Jesuits had stolen their plan from him, and none can deny that the palm of priority belongs to Pastor Sturm. The fact is, of course, that the classical contagion was already abroad, and both Ignatius and Sturm had been infected by the schools of the Brethren of the Common Life. Sturm had studied for three years (1521–24) at their college at Liège and, according to his biographers, adopted its organization
as the model for his Strassburg school. Ignatius, in turn, when he began his studies at Paris, had lived at the Collège Montaigu, where the system of the Brethren already prevailed.

Before describing this curriculum, let us examine its antecedents, and first, on the classical side. There are three names associated with its development—Isocrates, Marcus Tullius Cicero, and Quintilian; and there are two works essential for its understanding—the three books of Cicero's *De Oratore* and the twelve books of Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*.

Let us start with Isocrates. Greek formal higher education began with the Sophists, of whom the first was Gorgias and the last and best was Isocrates. In form the word *sophistes* means a man who makes a profession of wisdom—one who makes his living by teaching for pay. Before Pericles the aristocratic code of Pindar prevailed—that male excellence (*arete*) was a combination of good breeding and beautiful bodily form, active and at rest. But Pindar was the last of the Greek aristocrats, and before he died in 438 B.C., he was disturbed by the growing insolence of Athenian imperialism and the rise in Athens of an urban proletariat of the type that later Cicero calls in Rome the *turba forensis*. After Pericles' death in 429 B.C. Cleon established the prototype of the *novus homo*, which leads to Aristotle's definition of man as a *zoon politikon*, the man who is domiciled in the polis and engages in political activity. But effectively to do this in fourth-century Athens was to study rhetoric and to excel in the art of public speaking. In an age in which there was no radio, television, or newspaper, in which reading matter was scarce and generally inaccessible, when, as Demosthenes tells us, men came in from the suburbs at dawn to ask, "What's the news?", the only way to public notice and public office was by the art of
literary composition and the practice of public declamation. This was a present need for a practical end, and the sophists supplied it. For Isocrates the proper study of man was rhetoric, and his highest good was active participation in public affairs. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, Isocrates considered philosophy as propaedeutic to rhetoric, and unlike the Pre-Socratics, he viewed astronomy and geometry simply as "gymnastics of the mind." To use a later Latin phrase, to Isocrates the well-rounded man was the bonus vir dicendi peritus—the man who was both good and a good speaker.

Thus Isocrates established two principles of formal education that became in time, and thereafter remained, the foundation of a liberal discipline: (1) that the art of correct and elegant composition is fundamental in every school system; and (2) that the formation of character, moral training, which is the adaptation of the child to the mores of the community, is and should be the aim of every educational system. As to the art of composition, we must remember that to the Greek logos meant not only the spoken and written word but also the thought that lies behind the outward form. There is nothing that compels us to define and refine our ideas more than the requirement that we put them down in writing for everyone to see. This training in literary form, this acquisition of the three fundamental qualities of good writing, clarity, economy, and grace, became then and remained thereafter the basic discipline of the Latin grammar school.

As for the second of Isocrates' two principles, that a good orator must also be a good man, we must remember that the Greek male was not a domestic animal. He lived in the open air and not at home. His was the public assembly that voted on the propositions of the public orators. Thus the orator must be the politician
and the statesman, versed in domestic and foreign policy and genuinely dedicated to the welfare of his state and fellow citizens. In this way the art of composition is raised above the level of verbal dexterity, and the public orator is put in a higher echelon than the demagogue. He deals with issues that are great and honorable, that contribute to the general welfare and happiness of mankind, and that tend to liberate the mind from mean and selfish motives and to produce that quality which Cicero, in the De Officiis, calls magnanimitas. If he does not become in Plato’s words “the spectator of all time and existence,” at least his vision extends beyond the frontier of his native land and his concept of human needs beyond his personal wants.

Isocrates’ own life and work are an example of this broader concept of the function of rhetoric. Although he composed many speeches for others and taught rhetoric for some forty years, because of a speech deficiency he never appeared in court. He was really a tractarian, and his compositions were in effect tracts for the times. Living when the Persian menace once again appeared great and the Greek states were destroying themselves in fratricidal strife, he sought the political unity of Greece under a leading state or statesman. Appealing in turn to Athens, Sparta, and Dionysius of Syracuse, he finally found his champion in Philip of Macedon and died happily on the morrow of the battle of Chaeronea. To Isocrates, as he says in his Panegyricus, the word Hellenes should apply to those who share a common culture rather than to those who derive from a common ancestry. More than any other individual of his time, except perhaps Alexander the Great, he foresaw the Hellenistic world, and it was he who handed on the torch to Marcus Tullius Cicero.

Because Cicero was a Roman and wrote and spoke
Latin, we are apt to forget that he lived in a world society that was culturally Greek. As the Greek classical age was the period of creative literary activity, so the Greek world after Alexander was the age of conscious literary criticism and formal scholarship. Alexandria, as a contemporary writer put it, became "the hen-coop of the Muses," where grammarians, philologers, textual critics and textual commentators flourished. The literary art became a self-regarding activity in which poets wrote for other poets and coteries of scholars clustered together like bees in hives to fan one another. It was in this atmosphere and by these groups that the classical Greek authors of the golden age of Greek literature were made the paradigms of the higher education and Attic Greek, and only Attic Greek, the language of the learned class. The Latin language, on the other hand, though it was achieving literary maturity in the usage of Cicero and his contemporaries, had not yet attained that academic status which admitted it to a place in the curriculum of higher studies. Its position was not unlike the position of the vernacular languages (English, French, Spanish, and so forth) in relation to Latin in the time of the Renaissance. Accordingly, in Rome during Cicero's time all the tutors of well-born Roman boys were Greeks; and most Romans, if they could afford it, went to Greece for their graduate studies. Molon, the Rhodian ambassador, was one of Cicero's tutors, and on one occasion addressed the Roman Senate in Greek without the aid of an interpreter. Cicero spoke both literally and tropically when he remarked, "We Romans have gone to school in Greece." Note finally that by this time Greek professors of rhetoric were teaching Romans the art of composition and public oratory for the very good reason
that it was in Rome now, and not in Greece, that public oratory was the path to public honor.

Cicero carried on the tradition of Isocrates in one respect and differed from it in two other respects. In the Rome of Cicero, as in the Athens of Isocrates, the teaching of rhetoric and public speaking was for use and not for pleasure. Public policy there, as in Athens earlier, was being decided by the plebs urbana, or, as Cicero less graciously expressed it, the faex Romuli; and it was only in the Forum, in the Senate, and in the lawcourts that a political program could be made public and brought to completion. But it was wherein he differed from Isocrates that Cicero made his greater contributions. To Cicero, no doubt partly as a result of his political misfortunes, the study of rhetoric for use was ancillary to the study of literature for its own sake. In moving from Rome to Tusculum, from his town house to his country villa, as the winds of political favor rose and fell, Cicero combined in a remarkable fashion the active with the contemplative life, the "slings and arrows" of the hustings with the otium et quietes of exur-bia. In the second place, unlike Isocrates, Cicero made rhetoric ancillary to philosophy. To him, as to Plato and Aristotle, the intellect was superior to the will, and the contemplative to the active life.

It is in the light of these two differences from the Isocratic formula, the cultivation of literature for its own sake and the primacy of philosophy over rhetoric, that Cicero’s De Oratore is to be read. In the three books of this work Cicero expresses professionally his whole theory of education. This essay was published in 55 B.C., when Cicero was at the height of his fame and intellectual powers. There is nothing narrow about it. From the title one might think it is a handbook on
rhetoric and oratory, or at best a technical treatise on education. It is all that, but more. It elaborates Cicero's mature views on rhetoric, literature, philosophy, history, and politics, so far as each contributes to the formation of the ideal man of the golden age of the Greco-Roman world. In it Cicero is the first to name the seven liberal arts that later were to form the trivium and quadrivium of the Middle Ages: literature, rhetoric, philosophy, mathematics, music, geometry, and astronomy. He is also the first to embrace these studies under the captions artes liberales and liberalis disciplina. In doing so, he translated into Latin and through Latin into the European languages the Greek expression en-kuklios paideia—all-around education. The meaning of the Greek phrase is more precisely expressed in the Latin. Liberalis comes from liber and connotes freedom; not just freedom from slavery but emancipation from manual and mercenary pursuits; and the enjoyment of that otium cum dignitate without which what Aristotle calls "the activity of leisure" cannot be exercised. As the old Egyptian proverb put it: "A blacksmith never goes on an embassy."

Cicero's ideal is the doctus orator: as Crassus says, "When I am asked what is the highest excellence of all, I give the palm to the doctus orator." It is he who possesses par excellence the quality of humanitas, and it is in the De Oratore that the word humanitas most frequently occurs. In fact, the word is almost the exclusive property of Cicero. It is interesting, in passing, to note that the Greeks thought of education as beginning with the boy (paideia from pais), and the Romans conceived it as reaching its perfection in the man (humanitas from homo). Cicero makes it clear that this ideal is not easy to attain because it involves the simultaneous achievement of two aims: the practical one of Isocrates—to
make a man good and a competent public orator; and the more academic aim of Cicero—the cultivation of the more humane letters and philosophy for their own sakes. Most men will not have the nature, the ability, the opportunity, the leisure, and above all the financial means to attain them. But the Ciceronian concept of the double aim persisted, in theory if not always in fact (Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, as Horace says) until, more than a century later, the rhetorician Quintilian institutionalized and made professional the amateur program of Cicero.

Between Cicero and Quintilian the nature of Roman society changed, as Tacitus makes clear in a famous passage in his Annals. The old narrowly Roman nobiles, which had ruled the later Republic until the revolution, was giving place to a new bureaucratic establishment made up of competent men from the more obscure Roman families, from Italy outside Rome, and from the provinces. Crassus had already observed in the De Oratore that the Latins were more interested in studying literature than the Romans; and later, Pliny the Younger, in a letter of recommendation on behalf of a young man, wrote, “He is fond of study like most poor men.” These were the novi homines of the early Empire who “by good luck or by hard work,” as Tacitus puts it, having achieved Roman citizenship ascended the ladder of honor (the cursus honorum) in the imperial civil service and attained an honorable place in the new regime. Of these the supreme example was the emperor Vespasian, a Sabine who never quite lost his rustic speech. His grandfather had been a centurion in Pompey’s army; his father a tax farmer in Asia Minor; and his mother’s brother the only member of his family before him to achieve the senatorial dignity. Vespasian himself started his public career as a tribunus militum
and rose through successive stages, quaestor in Crete or Cyrene, aedile and praetor in Rome, until he became proconsul of the province of Africa. Obviously, for these men, who lived throughout the empire, the old *tirocinium fori* (the novitiate of the forum), as Quintilian calls it, was largely unavailable. Cicero, you will recall, was taken by his father to Rome and apprenticed, as it were, to the distinguished family of the Scaevolae. But this had been in the good old days, and Quintilian, although he recommended it in principle, was quite aware that it was no longer feasible in practice. Consequently, it was for the education of this new class that Quintilian wrote his *Institutio Oratoria*, the most important treatise on education in the history of western Europe in its influence upon educational practice.

Quintilian lived and taught rhetoric in the first century of our era. He was of Spanish origins and therefore by birth representative of the new order. The two generations of his life-span were not a period in which political oratory was encouraged or practiced with safety. There were of course the lawcourts, where oratorical ability was still of use; but the practice of law was now becoming professional, and law schools were springing up not only in Rome but also in the provinces, especially at Beirut. Clearly this was not the way by which the *liberalis disciplina* of Cicero was to be preserved. On the other hand, there was the need created by the growth of the new non-Roman public servants and men of letters, whose spoken tongue was either not Latin or a provincial patois of Latin. Naturally these men, moving into Roman official and literary circles, coveted the badge of civility that only a correct and urbane Latin speech and style could confer. Because the only available system whereby this urbanity
could be acquired was that of the schools of rhetoric, at Rome and abroad, naturally it was to them that men of the new classes flocked. In the beginning there was chaos and a tendency toward exaggeration and artificiality in expression that is characteristic of the literary nouveau riche. Declamatio ran riot, and the younger Seneca justly observed, “We are being educated for the classroom and not for life.” On the other hand, this was the educational background of the great writers of the silver age of Latin literature, men like the younger Seneca, Lucan, the younger Pliny, Tacitus, and, above all, Quintilian himself; and therefore it had in it the promise of the future. Vespasian, when he appointed Quintilian the first salaried professor of rhetoric in Rome, took the initial step toward its official support; and Quintilian, when he published his Institutes about 95 A.D., inaugurated and institutionalized a discipline that lasted almost until the fall of the western empire. The discovery by Poggio, in 1410, of the complete manuscript of this work in the monastery of Saint Gall was without doubt the most important find in the history of Renaissance and modern liberal studies. Quintilian’s Institutes formed the model of instruction in the schools of the Low Countries conducted by the Brethren of the Common Life, where Erasmus studied, and also later at the University of Paris, where the founder of the Jesuits went to school. A contemporary of Saint Ignatius speaks of “noster Quintilianus”; and another early Jesuit, in a commentary on the Ratio published in 1703, cites the Spanish-born rhetorician continuously and almost exclusively as his authority.

Quintilian, although he defined the orator after the elder Cato as the bonus vir dicendi peritus, lived in an age when the professional practice of oratory, except in the lawcourts, was no longer the path to political
preferment. Therefore, his aim was rather the *bonus vir scribendi peritus*, and his purpose the training in the Latin language and Latin literature of the well-to-do youth throughout the Empire. Consequently, a broadening of the curriculum was necessary. The latter part of Book I, which discusses grammar and language, is directly of use to every student of Latin, even today, and indirectly to every student of language. In Book X, he discusses and recommends the acquisition of good reading habits, not narrowly for rhetorical uses but broadly for the study of all literature. His analysis in the same book of the works and styles of Greek and Roman writers is a *locus classicus* in the history of literary criticism. Although Greek was read and the Greek classics taught, the emphasis was now on Latin, spoken and written, for by this time, because of the achievements of the writers of the golden age, the Latin language had replaced Greek as the language of instruction in the higher learning and was now considered in and of itself worthy of imitation. Quintilian's own Latin style is redolent of Cicero, and it is Ciceronian Latin that he makes the model of instruction in Latin prose composition—*Ex uno fere Cicerone*, as the *Ratio* later puts it. His achievement was the guarantee in the later empire of a ruling bureaucracy that was not only literate but also to a degree literary. The architects of Renaissance education built their edifice upon two foundations, Cicero and Quintilian.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the education of talented youth in the second century became a matter of public concern, and that the municipalities in Italy and the provinces undertook the financial subsidy of their schools of grammar and rhetoric as well as their teachers. Most of the early Latin Christian fathers were trained in this discipline. Saint Augustine was a student
of rhetoric at Carthage and a professor at Milan. Ausonius at Bordeaux in the fourth century and Sidonius at Lyons in the fifth were the latest examples of the persistence of Quintilian's legacy. Both were Christians, the latter a bishop and subsequently sainted; yet they exhibit a remarkable ability to mix the sacred with the profane and to rub shoulders, as it were, in a friendly and graceful fashion, with their non-Christian schoolfellows and neighbors.

From the fall of the western empire to Charlemagne, however, the issues were the cultural unity of Europe itself and the very survival of the Latin language as a medium of communication, literary and administrative. By the beginning of the fifth century Christianity was supreme, and the bishop was sitting in the seat of the older municipal magistrates. Learning was being transferred from the urban school to the monastery and public power from the civil to the ecclesiastical authority. It was now the task of the Roman church to assume the burden of Vergil's imperative, *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento*. It was no accident that the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic church were the only two institutions in western Christendom that combined a conviction of a special divine mission with a claim to universal dominion. The issue was no longer the survival of literary Latin; it was the survival of Latin, any kind of Latin, so long as it was intelligible, barbarisms and solecisms included. In the eighth century Saint Boniface, when he heard a child being baptized *in nomine Patria et Filia et Spiritu Sancta*, was genuinely concerned whether the baptism was valid. In the previous century Gregory the Great had come to the conclusion that the church had absorbed from the pagan classics all the culture that it needed, and he rebuked Bishop Desiderius of Vienne for teaching
Christian boys the pagan classics. He had Prudentius, he said, and he did not need Ovid: "The same lips cannot sing the praises of Jove and Christ." For quite a while the issue was by no means sure, and it was only with Charlemagne, who lifted up the fallen diadem and once again assumed the imperial mantle, that the dawn broke.

The story of the revival of learning is too well known to be recounted in any detail here. It began with Bede at Jarrow and Alcuin at York, and with the latter passed from England to the Continent when Charlemagne founded his palace school at Aix-la-Chapelle. The process that started in the Dark Ages was now being reversed. The care of learning was being moved from the monastery back to the town and its superintendence from the bishop to the crown. Since externi were now admitted to the new schools, the first small step toward the secularization of learning had been taken. Although education remained completely under the ecclesiastical thumb, it was now possible for men who did not envisage a career in the church to seek a higher education.

The purposes of this new curriculum were at first purely utilitarian: (1) to train priests who could read the Latin Bible; (2) to provide scholars who could read Latin to pursue the study of philosophy and theology; (3) to secure bishops who could keep records in Latin and thus efficiently administer a diocese; and finally, (4) to educate laymen in Latin so that they could become trained civil servants and administer the law. Thus medieval Latin emerged. It was not the Latin of Cicero, but at all events it was Latin and, under the best circumstances, as with the later Scholastics, correct and precise Latin suited to the needs of the time.

The next change in the cultural complexion of Europe occurred between the death of Charlemagne and the
beginning of the thirteenth century. The causes of this change were many, but important were the revival of trade, the renewal of town life, and the rise to prominence, if not to power, of a new middle class. The medieval university came into being, and with it the development of graduate specialties: (1) philosophy, and especially logic; (2) theology, and with it the move to reconcile Aristotle (and to a lesser degree, Plato) with Christian revelation; (3) law, especially Roman law, and with it the need to read and study the Justinian corpus; and finally, (4) medicine, with attention first to Galen and subsequently to Hippocrates. Thus arose in the medieval university the higher faculties of philosophy, theology, law, and medicine. Together with these developments, there occurred subtle changes in attitude. The prayers of Saint Augustine credo quia incredibile est and credo, Domine, adjuva incredulitatem meam gave way to Anselm’s affirmation credo ut intellegam. It was no longer intellectus quaerens fidem but fides quaerens intellectum. Philosophy became the handmaid of theology, and revelation was viewed as the friend and not the foe of the rational soul. The second change in attitude was the conscious search for and eventual recovery of the Greco-Roman classical sense of civic virtue to replace, or at any rate to exist alongside of, the practice of Christian perfection. The rise of the cathedral schools encouraged these changes. In the first place, they were conveniently located in the larger urban centers, especially for the attendance of the new middle class; and in the second place, they welcomed externi who had no intention of becoming monks or priests.

The third change in attitude was the development of a certain worldliness and a search for creature comforts, as the spiritual manuals put it. Luxuries became
available, even if only to a limited degree, and with luxuries leisure, and with leisure the pursuit of pleasure and, particularly, the joys of mundane love. Naturally, together with all this there developed a certain bourgeois cynicism with respect to the merits and practices of the religious life. No wonder that Ovid and Juvenal began to enjoy a vogue! The new men had no need of Prudentius—they had Ovid. It was in such an environment that the vernacular languages began to acquire literary maturity in the hands of such artists as Dante in Italy and Chaucer in England. A counterculture was in process of growth.

Once, however, the new men decided to abandon medieval ways, they had no choice but to return to antiquity. Just as the men of the Reformation sought to recover primitive Christianity, so the men of the Renaissance tried to find in the secular culture of classical antiquity a substitute for the obscurantism of the Middle Ages. Latin was the only universal learned language in western Europe, and any formal education was of necessity in and through the Latin language. Greek, to be sure, came in as an adjunct to Latin, but not as the language of academic discourse and instruction. Second, the medieval church was the only universal institution in western Europe in the sixteenth century that had at hand the organization and facilities to undertake formal education. Therefore, the new education, however much it might seek its models in the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome, remained under the supervision and discipline of the Christian ecclesiastical authorities. Thus the nuptials between classicism and Christianity were celebrated, and the union was consummated.

It is instructive to recall how clearly and surely the men who did this knew what they were doing. Erasmus
maintained that the profane subjects of the classics were admissible only \textit{si propter Christum}. Ignatius inverted this proposition by saying that one should absorb along with his letters the morals of a Christian. Thus the \textit{bonus vir dicendi peritus} of Isocrates becomes the \textit{bonus vir scribendi peritus} of Cicero and Quintilian and finally the \textit{bonus vir vivendi peritus} of Christian humanism. It is also instructive to recall how long into modern times this partnership lasted. In 1639 the words of a contemporary letter were carved on the gates of Harvard College. It read: “After God had carried us safe to New England and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God’s worship, and settled the civil government: one of the next things we longed for and looked after, was to advance learning and to perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the Churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.” When King’s College, later Columbia University, was opened in New York City in 1754, the advertisement read: “The chief thing that is aimed at in this college, is to teach and engage the children to know God in Jesus Christ, and to love and serve Him in all sobriety, godliness, and richness of life, with a perfect heart and a willing mind; and to train them up in all virtuous habits and all such useful knowledge as may render them creditable to their families and friends, ornaments to their country, and useful to the public weal in their generation.” It was not until 1852 that those who were not members of the Church of England could stand for degrees at Oxford, and not until 1876 that they could hold fellowships. Thus the classical curriculum became and remained Christian, and the propaedeutic Christian education became and remained classical.

It remains to inquire what purposes this Renaissance
education served then and up to the days of my youth. In the first place, in early modern times it was the necessary prerequisite for all higher education, in law, in medicine, and preeminently in the church. This was particularly true of the Roman Catholic church, for which Latin was the one and only language of ritual and administration; but also, in the Protestant churches Latin was required for the study of philosophy, theology, and sacred scripture. As to law, in England Latin was not necessary for the study of the English common law, where the Inns of Court sufficed; but on the Continent it was indispensable for the pursuit of the civil law, for which the Code of Justinian was required. Most important of all, the classical curriculum provided the terminal education for those who did not seek further professional instruction. For them, the classical curriculum provided not only the necessary discipline in the use of language in writing and conversation but also an acquaintance with the cultural background of European thought and morals and the necessary social graces to be at ease in an aristocratic milieu. In short, a classical education became the badge of civility, and a knowledge of Latin a sign of that quality which Pascal calls the \textit{\`esprit de finesse}. It was the \textit{enkuklios paideia}, the \textit{liberalis disciplina}, the all-around education of that limited group whose destiny was to give orders, whether in the churches, in the parliaments, in the officer class in the armed service, in the professions of law and medicine, or finally, in trade and business. Superficially, the classical curriculum seems to have been a kind of initiation ceremony whereby those who belonged to the ruling classes preserved their own cultural continuity and provided a kind of trial by intellectual ordeal whereby those who did not belong were enabled—a few of them by hard work, good luck, and winning scholar-
ships by passing difficult examinations—to achieve admission to the upper echelon. But this is not the whole story. For all its faults, its selectivity, its exclusiveness, its effortless superiority, one might even say its arrogance, the classical curriculum under Christian auspices was until 1914 the only remaining badge of European unity. Sir Edward Grey knew it on that early August morning in 1914; Hilaire Belloc expressed it when he wrote: “Europe is the faith and the faith is Europe, and the decline of the faith is the decline of Europe.” Shortly after the close of World War I, Jean Renoir dramatized it in that most sensitive and perceptive film entitled The Grand Illusion. The British officer with his swagger stick, the French officer with his white gloves, and the German officer with his monocle, all killed one another off in Flanders fields and at Verdun. Requiescant in pace!

Now, what has happened to the classics since 1914? In the first place, the Christian churches, including the Roman Catholic church, are no longer in control of education; in fact, they are no longer in control. They have abdicated their position of authority; they no longer give orders—not even the Pope of Rome. The classes in control are no longer Christian except in name. I do not mean that there are not professing and indeed genuinely sincere Christians among them, but simply that their public decisions are not now made on the basis of Christian morality—and this is the whole point. The Christian churches have been succeeded in the position of authority by two new classes: the managerial class, whose principle is efficiency; and the technological class, whose principle is material progress. Before neither tribunal can there be an appeal to mercy. Thus, the Christian pillar upon which our humanistic education rested is no longer there. We are
no longer a Christian nation, and this opinion has re-
cently been supported by several decisions of the United
States Supreme Court.

In the second place, the arts college has been de-
stroyed by mass education. The classical curriculum
never was, and was never intended to be, an education
for the many. This is a hard saying, but it must be said
because it is true. The Christian classical culture was
based on the hypothesis that seems to me to have been
universal among advanced societies until now: namely,
that the ruling class first disciplines itself from within
and then, having done so, disciplines the lower orders
from without. It occurred to me, while watching the
growth of communism, that the discipline that the
Communist élite (the party members) imposed upon
themselves resembled nothing so much as the discipline
that the Jesuit order imposed upon its members in the
period of its greatest success. The purpose of the clas-
sical curriculum—and once again may I emphasize
that it reached its highest expression in the small
church-related liberal arts college—was to train a
Christian élite. A Christian élite no longer exists, so
far, at any rate, as it exercises public power.

In the third place, mass education has removed the
arts college from the center of the campus to its periph-
ery. We now have colleges of education, colleges of
commerce, colleges of public administration, and so
forth—all on the undergraduate level. But the purpose
of these colleges is not the inculcation of a way of life
but professional training either to do a particular job
or to make a specific kind of thing. They are in effect
training schools, and the only point on which they differ
from the earlier plebeian training school is that they
transcend the manual level.

Finally, the arts college has been given the coup de
grâce by the descent upon it from above of the graduate school, particularly in those subjects that once were the germane property of the arts college. This development was a contribution of German scholarship to the higher learning that reached American universities roughly at the beginning of the present century but had barely touched Oxford when I began my studies there. Now, there was nothing wrong in this development in itself. It was the application of the principles and techniques of the higher learning to the traditional subjects of the arts college, particularly to Latin, Greek, and the study of literature in general. It has produced a body of knowledge that has immensely broadened and deepened our appreciation of classical antiquity. No teacher of the classics, even in the traditional arts college, should be unacquainted with it. But this is not to say that it should affect the arts college so that practical and professional excellence in arts college subjects becomes the aim of undergraduate education. This deviation from the earlier norm is particularly apparent in the study of the modern languages. It is one thing to teach a student to read French; another to train him to speak it. In the first instance the purpose is to equip him to become culturally acquainted with a great literature; in the second instance the purpose is to provide him with a facile and current vocabulary for practical conversational usage. The one does not necessarily imply the other, as I discovered when I first visited Paris as a young man. On the other hand, an unlettered alien can come to our shores and in a short time acquire a practical conversational facility in English—not the best English, to be sure, simply parlando. But this tendency toward practicability and professionalization is evident in subjects other than the modern languages, among them Latin, Greek, and ancient history. Too many of
our students today study the classics to the end that they become professors of the classics, and by doing so evade or at least make secondary the acquisition of a humanistic manner of life. We must not forget what Stephen Leacock said in his little essay on “Homer and Humbug”: “I know there are solid arguments advanced in favor of the classics. I often hear them from my colleagues. My friend the professor of Greek tells me that he truly believes the classics have made him what he is. This is a very grave statement, if well founded.” When graduate disciplines are brought down to the undergraduate level, *Wissenshaft* triumphs over *humanitas*.

This professionalization and specialization within the classical disciplines has had another effect upon undergraduate teaching. It has limited the instructional ambit of the teacher. One no longer teaches ancient history. One teaches Greek history; another teaches Roman history; and a third teaches the history of the ancient Near East. One no longer teaches the classics. One teaches Latin; another teaches Greek. Once again, this fragmentation of special interest is appropriate in the graduate school, although even there I think it is overdone. Surely it is out of place, or at any rate unnecessary, in undergraduate teaching. In my own student days the same man who taught Homer in Greek also taught Vergil in Latin and Milton in English, passing from one language to another and from one poet to another with all the ease and insouciance of the amateur. In fact, that is what he was—an amateur—and that is what he ought to have been. *Amateur* comes from *amo*, “I love,” and he loved what he was teaching; he loved his pupils too, and they loved him in turn. An amateur pursues a subject, whether it is contract bridge, or chess, or tennis, or Latin, or English poetry, because it is fun and he
enjoys it. Ignatius saw this, and the Ratio recommends that a boy should pursue his studies *cum animi hilaritate*, laughing and joking on the way. Looking back upon my own academic life, I have come to the conclusion that perhaps my greatest achievement has been that I have been able to perform my professional duties and at the same time maintain my amateur status.

This brings us to our last two questions. What is humanism? And can we preserve humanism without the classical curriculum and the Christian dispensation that have supported it for so long a time? With regard to the first question, no precise definition can be given. Humanism is like love—it must be experienced to be appreciated. On the other hand, its nature is not ineffable. Perhaps it can best be defined in negative terms. For instance, political science teaches us much, but it cannot teach us that the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. The study of economics teaches us much, but it cannot teach us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Modern medicine can teach us much, but it cannot teach us that it is the duty of the strong to protect the weak. These are eternal verities, however much honest men may disagree with regard to their particular application. We all know that sympathy is better than callousness; that mercy is better than justice; that humility is better than arrogance; and that continence is better than self-indulgence.

This is only another way of saying that the purpose of a humanistic education is the training of the emotions. In this argument we have the Franciscans and the Augustinians on our side against the Thomists. Scotus tells us that the will is greater than the intellect, and Thomas à Kempis that it is better to love the Trinity than to be able to define it. We also have the men of the Renaissance on our side. Petrarch states that it is better to will
the good than to know the truth. We also have the great
mystics on our side. William Blake says that the forgive-
ness of sins is the essence of Christianity. The emotions
are strange affections of the human soul. They are
deepened and widened by repeated experience and at the
same time corrupted by overindulgence. This makes
their training a delicate discipline. Love feeds on itself,
but it can be sated. As both Plato and Aristotle taught,
the good man is the man whose emotions are sharpened
to the razor’s edge but remain in accord with right rea-
son. In short, the ultimate purpose of the arts college is
moral rectitude softened by love and pity. In the words
of Pascal, the heart hath its reasons of which the reason
knoweth nothing.

What then do we have left—humanism standing erect
upon nothing, but humanism still standing, as the young
are now showing us, however confused their thoughts
may be and however faltering their words. *Ex ore in-
fantium!* Fortunately, humanism never was and never
can be a Christian classical monopoly. It is part of
human nature, and all men partake of it to a greater or
lesser degree. *Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum
puto.* Moreover, there have been and are other forms of
humanism than ours—Chinese, Indian, Islamic, and
Jewish, to mention some. But it is one thing to have in-
dividuals who are humane and quite another thing to
have an established humanistic culture based upon an
educational system and discipline. Our crisis is that our
humanism has been founded upon half a millennium of
conscious, organized, disciplined education based upon
the Greek and Roman classics and the Christian faith.
Moreover, we have tied our mores to an absolute. We
have had no Confucius to teach us the prudential virtues.
Consequently, when the Christian faith collapses, Chris-
tian morals, which are our mores, collapse with them.
This can be catastrophic. *Ave atque vale! Morituri te salutamus!*

Watchman, then, what of the night? This side of complete chaos—and that can happen, read Gregory of Tours—I see three possibilities: (1) In the course of time, *in saeculis saeculorum*, our Christian classic culture may be subsumed, as the philosophers say, by an alien dispensation, Chinese, Indian, Islamic or some other, just as the Christian culture subsumed that of the Greco-Roman world. *Non uno itinere itur ad tam grande mysterium*, as Symmachus, the last of the pagans, said when in the fourth century he protested against the removal of the statue of Victory from the Roman senate chamber. There is no one only way to the ultimate mystery. However, when we reflect that it took Christian Europe a thousand years to achieve this kind of synthesis, such an anticipation is not immediately consoling, and it is doubtful that any of us living today will survive to witness the event. (2) Another way might be through the medium of the fine arts: painting, sculpture, music, the theater, and such like. The *Ratio* itself says: *friget enim poesis sine theatro*. The Muse of poetry needs the theater for her life-blood. This alternative has at least one advantage over the classical curriculum: it can be made to reach the many in a way and to a degree that the old discipline never did, and it is the many and the young that must be reached. They are already crowding the schools and universities; they have already moved the arts from the fashionable drawing room to the street and the marketplace, and they are no longer content to spend their lives as Plutarch’s “rude, mechanical multitude.” (3) Finally, there is the suggestion made recently in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* (London) by Professor F. R. Leavis and by Roy Fuller, the present Professor
of Poetry at Oxford. Conceding (non sine lacrimis) the end of the old system, they recommend that the English School—or, as we say, the English Department—assume the mantle of humanism. After all, just as Latin in the time of Quintilian and into the Renaissance had displaced the Greek of Cicero’s period and had become the literary language of the learned world, so by this time the several vernacular languages (and for us this means English) have achieved literary maturity and are in the position to displace Latin as the language of polite discourse and instruction. None will deny that they—and preeminently the English language, if one thinks of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton—have within themselves the essence and all the qualities of humanism. This alternative appeals to me because it leaves something for us classicists to do. Just as, until now, we have been explaining classical mythology to Christian humanists, so, hereafter, we can explain Christian mythology to the new secular humanists. Non omnis moriar.

In the entire span of recorded history there have been three ultimate dangers to the survival of advanced societies: undisciplined power; undisciplined wealth; and undisciplined pleasure. The onset of one alone would be difficult enough to offset; the attack of all three marching abreast is terrorizing. Surely, Plato must have had a point when he said that only those should be trusted with authority who could be counted upon to refuse it. Nolo episcopari. Surely Saint Francis must have known what he was doing when he embraced Lady Poverty. Surely John Calvin could not have been wholly wrong when he taught that only those are to be trusted with great wealth who have been rigorously trained from early childhood “to shun delights and live laborious days.” It is time, therefore, that we recall some
of the maxims of the classical past: *meden agan, ne quid nimis*, nothing too much; *gnothi seauton*, know thyself. “The proper study of mankind is man.” To the humanist the universe is anthropocentric. He may be wrong. It may not be. But it is the only assumption that makes the human condition tolerable. Protagoras said that there are many appearances and some are better than others, but none is truer. Among the phenomena is the phenomenon of Man. Art is long, but life is short. There is the famous passage in Herodotus where Xerxes, watching his immense host crossing the Hellespont, bursts out weeping and, when asked why, replies that it has just occurred to him that none of these men will be alive a hundred years from now. *Sunt lacrimae rerum.* As Mr. Dooley, the sage of Halsted Street, said: “I know histhry isn’t true, Hinnissy, because it ain’t like what I see every day in Halsted Street. If any man comes along with a histhry of Greece or Rome that’ll show me the people fightin’, gettin’ drunk, makin’ love, gettin’ married, owin’ the grocery man, an’ bein’ without hard coal, I’d believe there was a Greece and Rome, but not before. . . . Histhry is a post-mortem examination. It tells you what a counthry died iv. But I would like to know what it lived iv.” Perhaps what the children mean when they say today that love is better than war—though they do not know this because since they are not products of Christian classicism—is that the Greek word for human excellence, *arete*, should be sublimated to the Christian concept of human perfection, *agape*. 