

THE BIBLE AND THE TRIVIUM

Does the Bible promote the Trivium as an educational model?

The three stages of the Trivium are Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. Each stage is designed to steward wisely the God-given development in each student.

The **Grammar** stage includes grades 1 through 6. During this stage the students easily memorizes stacks of facts: Bible verses and passages, grammar rules, math facts, dates, people and events of history, and loads of other material. They easily learn songs and chants with great joy.

The **Logic** stage includes grades 7 through 9. During this stage the students begin to reason through things, make applications, and understand how all the facts they have learned fit together. They want to know the why of everything.

The **Rhetoric** stage includes grades 10 through 12. During this stage students integrate truths they have learned while being trained to think, write, and speak eloquently on their own. They use what they have learned to develop and defend their own positions in a way that is truthful, clear, and beautiful.

Does God say anything about the Trivium stages? We might expect Him to say or model how we must teach our students because the Lord created them. Every person since Adam and Eve began as a baby, went through infancy, adolescence, and then to maturity as an adult, so we would expect God to give us some guidance. How then does God outline the periods of this baby's growth into adulthood? He used Israel as a model.

Israel began as a nation when the Lord delivered them from Egypt in Exodus and God continued that identity until the coming of Christ. The Bible portrays God as a Father bringing His son out of Egypt and leading him to maturity. The record of God

raising His son Israel to adulthood is from Exodus to Malachi, or most of the Old Testament.

In some sense, the Lord birthed Israel out of Egypt. In Hosea God says, ““When Israel *was* a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son” (Hos. 11:1). The Lord took them, as a father carries his little child, through the wilderness. “The LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son” (Deut. 1:31).

Paul tells of the childhood of Israel when he says, “Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father” (Gal. 4:1-2).

Understanding then, that the church, Israel, was born in Egypt, led as a child through the wilderness, and was kept under teachers until the coming of Christ, we may look to see how the Lord taught them from their deliverance from Egypt until the coming of Christ and how this parallels the Trivium. The teachers the Lord gave them were first priests, then kings, and finally prophets.

Priests in the Grammar stage: In the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, the Lord gave priestly instructions to Israel. There were many laws and regulations about their relation to God, to their Israelite neighbors, and to the heathen around them. The Lord expected them to commit all these rules to memory and know all the facts of their history. They really didn’t have to think, just remember what they had been told and experienced.

Aids to memory included repeating the laws, talking about them to their children, and the use of tassels: “You shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them” (Num. 15:39). Tassels are decorations on clothes, a bunch of threads or cords attached to the hem of shirts or coats. In this case, the Lord ordered Israel to attach them as an aid to remember all the rules He gave them. They were similar to the string you tie on your finger to remember something.

Kings in the Logic stage: After 400 years in the Grammar stage, the next teacher the Lord gave Israel was the office of king. The kings had to apply the laws; they were to administer justice and righteousness. They had to apply the laws they memorized and knew in wisdom. This is the way the Queen of Sheba spoke of the wisdom of Solomon: “Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness” (1 Ki. 10:9). Solomon was a wise king writing about the many reasons behind God’s laws; applying the law to common events.

The Lord gave one of the requirements for the kings in Deuteronomy: “When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book” (Deut. 17:18). The king must know the laws so he could apply them and give reasons why they would mean life to those who kept them and sorrow to those who broke them.

Prophets in the Rhetoric stage: The Lord instituted the final stage in Israel’s growing up with the prophetic office. They administered the spoken and written word, and that word was powerful and effected not only Israel but many other countries as well.

God instituted the office of prophet with Elisha. The Lord sent him to crown Hazael king of Syria. The long line of prophets went all the way to Daniel whom the Lord sent to Babylon. Daniel’s word asserted that the kingdom of Jesus that would overcome all the kingdoms of this world. Daniel’s word brought Nebuchadnezzar down to eating grass like an ox for seven years until he understood that the Lord God of Israel reigns in heaven and among men.

Here is what God told the prophet Jeremiah: “See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10). The Lord sent Jeremiah to all nations: “Then I took the cup from the LORD’S hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom

the LORD had sent me” (Jer. 25:17). This meant that Jeremiah traveled throughout the entire known world and delivered messages to all the heads of state.

Jeremiah was sent to the nations with a message of doom. By contrast Christ commissioned His apostle-prophets to bring the nations a message of hope. At Pentecost Christ opened the prophetic office to all His people as Peter said, “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17).

Rhetoric is the final stage of the Trivium. This is where we send out our children to make an impact on the world, to bring the truth of the Lord to the nations, to bring, as Isaiah 61 says, beauty for ashes, to loose the prisoners, to announce the acceptable year of the Lord. This is when we find our students equipped to make and articulate their own positions, to understand and act upon the calling the Lord has given them in this world. This stage is the crown of our efforts to equip these young men and women to go out and capture the worlds of government, education, business, research, technology, and science for the kingdom of Christ our Lord. And what a glorious calling it is, for they will be more than conquerors through Him who loves them.

At Coram Deo we are not merely patterning our classical education to model Plato and Aristotle, but we are trying to imitate how our Father has taught His people. The Bible takes us through the infancy, childhood, and maturity of Israel and sets a pattern for us to follow with our children.