

V E R I T A S U M



The Origin of the OmniFeast Tradition

| Bill Dawson

I didn't want my students to wander around for 40 years like me before figuring out what food and drink have to do with their faith. So four years ago I decided to start having regular feasts in my Omnibus classes.

Admittedly the first feast was, shall we say...um, unbalanced. Being excited about the concept, I neglected to foresee the practical outcome of letting my eighth grade students choose to bring to feast day whatever they thought up, without any guidance. To my naïve surprise, that first feast was dominated by three basic food groups: sugar, chocolate, and peanut M&Ms. The students themselves did not seem to notice the unbalanced nature of the table delights. After all, I had told them that part of the reason we were instituting feasts was to "taste and see that the Lord is good". What better way to taste the goodness of God, they reasoned (not unreasonably) than partaking of copious amounts of sweets! It was a unanimous opinion in the class. Needless to say the students were thrilled with that first feast, proclaiming it an unqualified success. Going home on a sugar high, they shared their exuberant experience with their parents. The next day I heard feedback from some of their parents....

And so began the Omnibus feast tradition at Veritas. Future feasts did incorporate a wider variety of delectable delights, sugar intake was considerably reduced without any corresponding reduction in student enjoyment, and sharing favorite

fairy tales, stories, and histories of interesting saints became a regular part of feast days. The success of the feast days can best be judged by how jealously students now protect the tradition. No Omnibus teacher can get through the year without holding a few feast days, and I am constantly reminded by *my* students when I fail to declare a reasonable number of feast days.

Why did it take me 40 odd years to become aware of the deeper connections of my faith with food and drink? I don't know for sure. It may have been my communion experiences in a wide variety of churches—from Catholic to nondenominational and everything in between. Dissolving wafers, dry bread crumbs, stale saltine shards, or tasteless white bread cubes, were followed in short order by kids grape juice or mediocre-at-best wine. My church "cover dish" or "fellowship meals" were not unpleasant experiences but nobody ever connected the food with any church teachings other than saying grace.

Over time it slowly started to dawn on me that I perceived food and other "mundane" things in life as necessary to sustain health or livelihood, but virtually unconnected with faith and the "important" things in life. I had unconsciously absorbed the false, and fatal, idea of the *separation* between material and spiritual things that has, down through the centuries, plagued the church. "Nowhere in the Bible do we find [this false separation]" said Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann in a skinny insightful book entitled *For The Life of the World*. Rather "the food that man eats, the world which he must partake in order to live is given to

him by God... as *communion with God*." Thus "all that exists is God's gift to [us], and it all exists to make God known to [us], to make [our] life communion with God." In other words, our "scientific" way of looking at our physical environment as an object to be reverse-engineered and manipulated to get what we want is wholly inadequate to a biblical understanding of our environment as the context of daily communion with our Lord and each other.

Another superb, skinny book, *Blessed Are the Hungry: Meditations on the Lord's Supper* by Peter Leithart, reinforces this notion of our environment as feast table. Leithart notes that in recent times the Western churches' "view of faith tended to be narrowly individualistic....In scripture, however, the connection between faith and the feast is set in a much more expansive horizon. Faith is not only trusting God to save *me*, but trusting God to do what he has promised to do in the world. And what God has promised to do in the world is all bound up with bread and wine."

Leithart notes that because there is still much in the world that "seems more a wasteland than a garden" the modern church avoids really *celebrating* the Supper "because we have no confidence that the land is ours," that is that Christ is and will be victorious in history. This way of thinking is rebuked by, among many biblical examples, Abraham and Jesus. After rescuing Lot and the "kings of the valley" with a stealth military action, Abraham celebrated by breaking bread and drinking wine with the mysterious Melchizedek in the land that God promised to his descendents. At that point it was far from a land



“flowing with milk and honey” and there was much struggle to endure, including slavery in Egypt, before Abraham’s descendants would take possession. Yet God sanctified this “premature” celebration feast as a positive act of faith, just as Jesus celebrated the Last Supper “prematurely,” that is before his horrible death by crucifixion. Leithart concludes, “Abram believed the God who brings life from the dead and ate a conqueror’s meal in a land that was not yet his.” Although we have the luxury of seeing much more redemption accomplished since Abram’s time, there are still many promises to be fulfilled. “We must also embrace the truth that [God’s people] not only live by faith but feast in faith as well.”

And so, the OmniFeast tradition at Veritas Academy is a small step in attempting to incarnate this reality for the students, so that they can leave the wilderness sooner than our generation. As for the parents’ response to that first sugary feast, well, fortunately for me they encouraged the feast idea even as they gently suggested that I might want to broaden appreciation of the Lord’s fruits by specifying a more well-rounded selection of God’s bounty for future feasts. With a sigh of relief I enthusiastically accepted these parents’ wise suggestion.

Madrigal Feast

The King and Queen of the Veritas Madrigal Singers and Chorale, issued a royal proclamation, bidding one and all to come to the first annual “Midwinter Madrigal Feast” celebrating Valentine’s Day.

The feast was a great success and a wonderful time was had by all who attended and participated. Amid roving minstrels and the cries “Wassail, Wassail,” the public celebrated the Valentine season with a royal 16th century-style candle-lit banquet and at the same time witnessed the tournament for the Royal Court as the wandering Troubadour (played by Zach Spykstra) vied for the position of Jester (played by Stephen Jacobowicz).

This event was held in the beautiful new ball room at the Inn of Leola – Casa di Fiori. Mazzi’s Restaurant, known for their luscious and exquisite fare catered the multi-course period-authentic meal.

Attendees lost themselves in an era gone by as all the charm of Renaissance England and the Royal Court was recreated. Much thanks are due to Stan Deen and Debi Long, Drama Director and Choir Director at Veritas Academy, and to the many parents who constructed costumes and spent hours and hours preparing for this event.

Jugglers, beggars, and musicians mingled with the group offering greeting in word and song. A jovial court jester taught guests how to juggle or play other games from the past. Even the knaves and wenches (who served the food) were in costume and addressed each diner “My, Lorde” and “My, Ladye”





Narnia Feast

The seventh graders and their teachers found an exciting way to bring their Omnibus texts to life. After they finished C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* they held a Narnian feast! In small groups of two or three the students worked hard for weeks to create banners and assemble costumes for the event representing different regions and characters from the books.

They decked out an entire room with garlands and candles, and to enter one had to walk through a rather large wardrobe just like the one in the books.

After a long procession around the school's halls carrying their banners and cheering for Narnia, the students settled down for some fun and feasting.



Athletic Director's Report | Graham Dennis

What a great season we've had with our sports teams. At every game I've been very impressed by the level of enthusiasm of our players, their coaches, and the parents and friends of Veritas who are attending the games. Among the many highlights was the Varsity boys' electric win over our sister school (and friendly rival) Covenant Christian. The Varsity boys' team beat Covenant resoundingly, 56-39. It really gave the team a great boost in confidence, and they've never looked back since then. I would be remiss if I neglected to talk about the play of our girls and junior high boys. Our girls have had a phenomenal year. It has been wonderful to watch so many girls who've never played basketball learning how to play the game. Their confidence just seems to be growing and growing with each game. Mr. Miller (along with his "dream team" coaching staff) should be commended for the job he has done not only making it enjoyable for the girls to learn and play basketball, but especially tackling the very difficult challenge of outfitting so many girls for each game. If you've watched the games, I'm sure you've been very impressed by the character of the





girls—they really have played their games very intensely yet virtuously and Christianly. As with the girls, the junior high boys' squad has really grown together as a team. It has been exciting to watch them mature, especially as they've put together many solid back-to-back games this year. It has also been exciting to watch our headmaster masterfully handling the team. If you have the opportunity, please thank Mr. Fischer for the countless hours he has poured into the lives of these boys (hours that he can hardly afford to divert from his busy schedule). Our season has reached its close, marked by the annual Sword and Shield Tournament on Feb. 16th.

Secondary Ice Skating | Hannah Hoover

On January 4th during Christmas break, a number of secondary students gathered together at the Lancaster Ice Rink for a morning of skating. This was the second year for this secondary outing, which started last year after a decrease in snow that made the ski trip near impossible. We spent the morning at the rink, enjoying two hours of fun and games among the group. Some of the parents were brave enough to try skating with the students along with alumnus Aaron Hoover. Besides the multiple falls there was also some games of tag on ice and races. Afterward, we went over to the Park City Mall food court to have lunch. The day was enjoyable, and ended with the students comparing each other's bruises. Hopefully this is a tradition that will continue through out the years.

Development Director's Page | Rob Spykstra

Annual Fund Update

Thank you for all who have participated thus far in the Annual Fund. We are still in the matching challenge period whereby the board and several families have pledged to match whatever is given by March 31st 2008 to the Annual Fund up to \$36,000.

As you can see below we are well on our way to meeting our financial goal. However, just as important is the participation goal. We are falling well short of our full participation. If you have not yet given to the Annual Fund, now is the perfect time. Whether you give \$5 or \$5000 to the Annual Fund your gift will be appreciated, acknowledge and counted towards our full participation goal.

Veritas Community

It is hard to imagine a more picturesque and appropriate setting to celebrate Independence Day than in rocking chairs on the front porch of Mt. Vernon watching fireworks blaze over the Potomac. But that is exactly what Paul Lang did on a 4th of July weekend three years ago.

Paul and Maryann Lang enrolled their daughter, Sarah, at Veritas Academy in kindergarten in the fall of 2007. They are part of the Veritas Academy community.

The Langs were young newly weds when they were "recruited" while touring the grounds of Morristown National Historic Park in New Jersey. The village of Morristown served the Continental Army as

winter quarters on two occasions, the winter of 1777 and 1779-1780. On that particular weekend as Paul and Maryann passed by the 2nd New Jersey Regiment recruitment tent, they were taunted by the recruitment officer. "So you want to join the army?" On a whim they picked up the quill and signed on for a season. Seventeen years later, Paul serves as the regiment's quartermaster. Maryann and Sarah are campfollowers.

A quartermaster is in charge of providing the supplies for the entire regiment. By researching books and articles to be "historically accurate" Paul has learned just how little the Continental Army had in terms of basic supplies. "When you read about the men boiling their shoes and chewing on the softened leather, it really happened. I also never realized how far they had to march until I joined the Regiment." Paul added that the British were able to track Washington's troops by the drops of blood coming from their shoeless feet. "Everyday life was grueling."

Women and children didn't have it any easier. Known as campfollowers they were allowed to follow the army because Washington realized they kept their men from deserting. For many women it was unsafe to stay home or they were unable to handle the farm. Maryann attends to typical campfollower duties – nursing the wounded, mending soldiers' clothing, and laundry, all for half rations. Sarah serves alongside her mother in chores, carries firewood, and plays with other camp children. On her experience Maryann replied, "I've learned to appreciate what people had to go through for our freedoms. It is humbling. The women were not allowed to ride in

or place any items in the Army's wagons, they had to follow behind. Every personal item had to be carried on their backs even the pots and children. It is really astonishing what they went through to survive."

Paul, Maryann and Sarah's re-enactor's experience has taken them from Canada to North Carolina. They have camped during a hurricane, in snow storms and 112 degree heat but it is not just the challenge of the hobby that keeps them "enlisted". There are some perks. They have toured Martha Washington's 3rd floor private chambers at Mt. Vernon, participated in the 225th anniversary of the Siege of Yorktown, and slept on George Washington's back lawn. "It is a unique privilege to tour historic sites, touch artifacts, and see historical documents rarely viewed by the public. It is a wonderful and exciting way to teach our daughter the truth about our nation's heritage."

So next time you watch a Revolutionary War special on A&E, the History Channel or PBS take a closer look, you might see a Veritas family.

For more information on the 2nd New Jersey Regiment go to their website at www.2nj.org.

Odyssey, the Glory of Perseverance, Hope, Coming of Age and Faithfulness

The theme of this year's auction will be Homer's *Odyssey*. To celebrate we will return to the Lancaster Country Club on Saturday, April

12th. The themes of the *Odyssey* suit the purposes of Veritas Academy.

Perseverance. Early on in Homer's classic, we learn of Odysseus' ambition after his cunning defeat of Troy. Odysseus' sole ambition is to return home to his wife, Penelope, and son, Telemachos. Little did he know it would take many years to fulfill this ambition. At the end of Homer's tale, we come to admire Odysseus for his perseverance. Our ambition at Veritas Academy is to provide an excellent, classical, Christian education for all who desire it. The auction is our own adventure on making this happen. Much of the proceeds raised goes towards bridging the gap between the actual cost of education (approximately \$7400 per student) and the tuition (\$6550 per student). To keep Veritas Academy affordable we provide a tuition rate schedule that takes into account not only gross income level, but number of students attending the Academy. Thus like Odysseus we must persevere in raising funds outside of tuition in order to make Veritas affordable to as many as possible.

Hope. What fueled Odysseus' perseverance? It was hope. He was driven by the truthfulness of his odyssey. He was consumed by Penelope's beauty. He was sure of Telemachos' goodness. It was the hope of these that urged him forward through many trials. Truth, beauty and goodness in the lives of our students, this is our hope as a community at Veritas Academy. The auction provides the financial resource to keep this hope alive.

Coming of Age. A third theme in the *Odyssey* is Telemachos' coming of age. He is old enough to understand the evil of his mother's

suitors, but not quite old enough to do anything about it. Telemachos is on his own adventure of maturity. Veritas is coming of age. We are in our twelfth year of existence. We are no longer that young, toddler start-up. We have moved into adolescence with all of its growing pains. This means the growing pains of increasing tuition that pays for the cost of education, and yet, providing an increasing amount of scholarships to those who cannot afford the full cost. We are moving toward providing scholarships whereby parents apply to a third party organization who will manage our scholarship fund and provide objective criteria in determining eligible families. The auction increases our scholarship fund.

Faithfulness. Finally, Homer recounts Penelope's faithfulness. Odysseus' wife patiently waits for her husband's return in the face of increasing pressure to give up hope and remarry. In the end her faithfulness is rewarded with Odysseus' embrace. We must remain faithful to our vision to provide a distinctive Christian education that employs classical methodology and content while working with the church to cultivate joyful young people whose lives reflect truth, beauty and goodness. The auction is one way to support this vision.

Please plan today to celebrate and support these age-old themes, perseverance, hope, coming of age and faithfulness on April 12th.

A Musical Metamorphosis | Hannah Yellak

Do you really like Christian music? If you consider the question honestly, you may find that, no, you really don't. This judgment would be largely accurate and deserved. Christian music constitutes a sorry conglomeration of insubstantial pop, white bread rock, and all but irrelevant organ music. Even if the lack of musical aptitude doesn't bother you, the lyrics just might be a deterrent. Every song seems to say exactly the same thing in exactly the same way. And even though the underlying message is many times good and true, it is communicated in an unmoving and inelegant fashion. Before the droning guitar parts are whittled down to only one power chord, a shift must occur—a shift that produces music which possesses a superior level of expertise, and that is derived from a Christian *worldview*, rather than being Christian in name only.

It could be said by those who oppose a shift that music isn't the Christian's main concern, and thus it is not necessary for him to pursue reformation in this area. This is not so—1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything to the glory of God." This says *everything*; this means *everything*. Music included. We need to seek excellence in all our work for God's glory. We were created to create, and to create well, just like the Source of our gifts does. Some might wander and comment: Why make music no one will listen to? Make the music that's popular and prevalent. Well, some people will always be into the current trend,

and it's not the artist's job to please the masses. Granted, it's desirable to make music people will want to hear, but we should do that by creating songs of beauty and meaning, not of shallow nothingness. Again, someone could say, "But if Jesus is in the words, how can it be shallow?" Jesus' is not a magic word like abracadabra. The power of Jesus' name comes from who He is and what He has done and continues to do. So, just saying the word without any demonstrated convictions is meaningless.

The adeptness of most Christian music, moreover, leaves much to be desired. While theology in lyrics is also important, the reality of Christianity is that we live in an integrated world where physical things are important as well as spiritual things. Our music communicates as much as our words. If we create things that declare disorder, relativism, or a lack of standard, we may as well be singing lyrics proclaiming these things, which is wholly unprofitable in a culture crumbling like an old brick building. A state of mediocrity pervades the music we produce, making it not enjoyable for Christians, irrelevant to unbelievers, and wholly sub par. Perhaps we need more music lessons....

Furthermore, for all intents and purposes (other than sales), the "Christian" music industry is null and void. It is not enough to say God's name in the chorus of your song; rather, the foundational philosophy behind your music must also be sound. As Christ said in Matthew, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the person who does what my Father in

heaven wants." Not to say that those artists in question do not serve God, but it should be pointed out that to *say* something doesn't necessitate the reality of that thing. A good Christian song could possibly leave out an explicit reference to God's name, yet acknowledge the existence of God in its assumptions. The worn out adage "Do as I say, not as I do" could well be applied as an anti-paragon to musical endeavors. Also, our music should not only acknowledge ultimate truth, it should be truthful in regards to smaller realities. This means that it isn't necessary to make happy music to have a Christian worldview. We can acknowledge the presence of suffering, doubt, sorrow, and death, keeping in mind, like the psalmist David, that God supersedes these things as the Creator and Lord of all.

Sadly, Christians do not live as if God is truly Lord. Looking at statistics from the secular culture and from the Church, there seem to be few differences. Divorce rates, for example, are identical. The Church is falling into a trend of embracing all of culture. It is good and right that we accept and embrace the true aspects of culture. Unbelievers, still in the image of God, can practice truth, beauty, and goodness in a certain manner. We should not, per contra, embrace all of the negative and mediocre facets of culture. We should, in a sense, filter it, taking some, leaving some. "Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) We serve a God of new things, of new beginnings, and as such we are called to be transformed—transformed to make

new things. While we appreciate and contribute to the culture around us, we are not to become like it. In doing this, we live in the will of God, reaching for a higher standard of excellence, goodness, and truth.

In conclusion, a musical metamorphosis is long overdue, a metamorphosis that results in artistic excellence and striving towards a higher standard, and that functions based on a truly Christian worldview, filtering culture, and bringing about Biblical transformation. The principles of excellence and transformation should be present throughout every facet of our lives, reaching out to our Christian communities, the unbelievers, and bringing glory and honor to God.

Movie Review: Sweeney Todd | Jordan Melton

In the opening scenes, we are presented with the background information that a barber named Benjamin Barker and his beautiful wife and daughter were separated by a cruel judge who wanted Mrs. Barker for himself. Mr. Barker, after having been sent away, has changed his name and returned by sea over ten years later, seeking revenge. He finds his old landlord, a woman by the name of Mrs. Lovett, who runs a meat pie shop on Fleet Street.

Three biblical principles are exemplified in this film: Be sure your sin will find you out, you reap what you sow, and he who lives by the sword dies by the sword. They are exemplified by the three main characters whose secret sinful lives shape the plot. First, Sweeney Todd

(once Benjamin Barker) whose vice is vengeance, second his old landlord and new business partner Mrs. Lovett who practices deceit, and of course the lustful Judge.

Mr. Todd reveals that the thing which drove him was revenge. As the plot thickens one can see it taking over his very existence. What started out as a hate for a single man grew into a bitter vendetta against all of mankind. "Even you, even I, we all deserve to die," he sings to Mrs. Lovett. Furthermore noting the way people treat each other, he thinks it no great leap to kill them and serve them to each other in the form of meat pies in Mrs. Lovett's shop. "Eminently practical and yet appropriate as always! For what's that sound of the world out there, those crunching noises pervading the air? It's man devouring man, my dear, and who am I to deny it in here."

Mrs. Lovett is deception embodied. She secretly loved Todd as far back as the audience can see and this leads to some heinous events. When Sweeney Todd's revenge streak reaches its climax he kills a beggar woman whom he fails to recognize as...his wife!

The judge represents lust, desiring what is not his own and harming others and himself in the process. His sin is much like that of king David's with Bathsheba, and likewise has very similar effects: death, pain, and dissatisfaction.

Tim Burton's cinematography is excellent. Small touches make definite statements. For example characters like Mrs. Lovett are very dark people but in the dark rooms and basements they're most comfortable in they look almost normal. Placed out in the sunlight,

however, they can be seen for how they really are. Their skin is grossly pale and their eyes and mouths are dark and bloodshot.

The music, too, is very well done. The lyrics are often backhanded humorous commentary of society, the state of man, and the worldviews of individuals.

This was a movie with a very sobering message. It displays the grotesque effects of sin. It is not, however, devoid of hope. There are three characters who embody innocence and the pursuit of goodness, and while they do feel the effect of the sins of others their fate is in stark contrast to that of three who pursue lust, deceit, and revenge.