

LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

*The Development of
Christian Civilization*

Part One

3rd PROOFS

*“I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

—Isaiah: 49:6

LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

The Development of Christian Civilization

Part One

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Produced and developed by:

Catholic Schools Textbook Project

In cooperation with:

Ave Maria University

3rd PROOFS

Editing: Bridget Neumayr and Christianne Thillen

Design and Production: Hesperheide Design, Gary Hesperheide,
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Acknowledgments:

Research Contributed to *Light to the Nations: The Development of
Christian Civilization: Part One*

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Cover Image

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ISBN 0-XXXXX-XX-X

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Ruth D. Lasseter is the wife of Rollin Lasseter and mother of their six children, now adults and teachers. She was Director of Admissions at a private Catholic school. She was Assistant Editor of *Canticle*, a magazine for Catholic women, where she wrote a regular column. She has published and lectured in several Catholic forums.

Dedication to Professor Rollin A. Lasseter

By 1969, when Yale University conferred a Ph.D. in English on him, Rollin Lasseter had already achieved an array of honors. Before graduating Summa Cum Laude and being awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to graduate school at Yale, he led his Vanderbilt team for three contests on national television's popular "College Bowl." In addition, he was editor of *The Vagabond*, Vanderbilt's literary magazine, published a volume of poetry, *Flags and Other Poems*, and received several academic and literary awards. At the University of Kentucky, his first academic position, he was named "Teacher of the Year" three times and was invited to direct the Honors Program. A few years later, he joined the English faculty at North Carolina State University, where he was given tenure. During that time at Raleigh, Dr. Lasseter and his wife, Ruth, became parents to their six children, all of whom have followed their father's example and entered the teaching profession.

In the 1970s and 80s, academic institutions everywhere in America abandoned the good of Christianity and its heritage of Western Civilization, but Dr. Lasseter embraced the Faith and defended the tradition more firmly. Following the example of his teachers and mentors, Donald Davidson and Cleanth Brooks, who were champions of the Western literary tradition, Dr. Lasseter looked to the future, even while defending the past. It was with hope that in the following decades he dedicated himself to learning, teaching, and writing. His articles on Catholic education have been published in *Catholic Faith* magazine and *This Rock*, and his poetry has been printed in several journals. He has, in addition, designed a K-12 curriculum for private Catholic schools, served on the faculty of the University of Dallas for several years prior to his retirement, and shaped the Catholic Schools Textbook Project as director, editor and main writer. Now in his 68th year, he has battled cancer for the past decade and has given over the task of completion of the series to his younger colleagues. Despite his retirement, he continues to lecture extensively on education and to give workshops on composition and poetry for teachers. A new volume of his poetry, *The Cast of Valor*, published in April 2008, is available from St. Augustine Press.

Dr. Helen Lasseter, his youngest daughter, recently praised her father in these words: "He has always been influential and encouraging to his colleagues, as well as being a great teacher. If he had looked only to his personal advancement

when he was a young professor, instead of balancing his career and his care of our family, he might be really famous today; but, had he done so, he would not have been our daddy.”

For my part, Dr. Lasseter has been the mind behind our Catholic School Textbook Project. I could never have made it to page one had it not been for his tireless dedication and expansive knowledge and experience. All of us who have worked so hard and long to offer these textbooks to Catholic schoolchildren would like to thank and honor Dr. Lasseter, a true teacher’s teacher, by dedicating this volume to him. God bless you Dr. Lasseter, and thank you for bringing Catholic culture to the classroom and into our minds and hearts.

—Michael J. Van Hecke, M. Ed.
President

[Thank you to Mrs. Ruth Lasseter and family for providing the above information, and for your own hand in countless hours of support, reading and contributing to your father’s work.]

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From the General Editor

History is a treasure chest of riches. In its stories are the most exciting, the saddest and the happiest moments of human life. All the great souls and heroes of the world are to be met in the pages of a good history book.

A Christian interpretation of History is the story of God's love for mankind. As a long and complex story, it can tell of tragedies as well as comedies, of famines as well as feasts, of exiles and homecomings, defeats and victories. There is among the many stories of history some story to entertain or to edify everyone. But over all, the story of history is the tale of God's acts in time and space, the story of rebellious mankind, and the Mercy of God for human folly. History is a story, a story of hope.

However, events in our own time tend to leave most people in fear of the future, despite the watchword of our culture, which remains: "Progress! Be always Optimistic!" Current secular ideologies have given "history" a god-like power, that makes sometimes wild proclamations: "Someday, History will look back and say . . ."; or "History will show the wisdom of . . ."; or "History will prove he was right . . ."; or "History will leave this 'whatever' behind in the dust of the

ages." This ideological sense of the name "History" is more than a little idolatrous in its foolish optimism. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI has written in several places about "optimism" as but a shallow mockery of Hope.

The evidence of the stories that come down to us from the ancient world and the medieval era do not promise all good endings. Humanity makes costly mistakes. Great men and women pay for those mistakes with their lives. Great empires collapse. Utopias are not realistic, nor realized.

The Hope that the Christian Faith offers is more than an optimistically happy ending. The end of history will be the return of Our Lord in Glory and the end of time. Providence does not mean every time a happy ending—only a blessed one. It is God's abiding care and love, in History and in individual lives. It is the vision of the perfection in Christ to which all people are called, not just what society and cultures—however great—have been.

May you, the readers of this book, young and old, find in its tales the traces of that Providence that keeps all of us safe in his Everlasting Arms.

—Rollin A. Lasseter, Ph.D.
General Editor, CSTP

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