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As we survey the educational ruins around us, classical and Christian education appears to be an idea whose time has come. Actually, in the light of history, it is a concept whose time has come again. More and more Christian parents are seeing the failures of modern socialistic education—and these failures have been monumental—such parents are hungering for a substantive alternative, one that has been tested before, and found to be good. Classical and Christian education presents them with just such an alternative.

Parents are coming to see that it is simply not enough to pull the kids out of the government schools. When a demon is cast out, and nothing put in its place, the final result can be seven times worse (Mt. 12:45). Reactionary Christian education is consequently not really a permanent alternative. Many Christian parents who had initially just reacted to the godlessness of the government schools are now seeing the shallowness of that kind of Christian response. They have become hungry, on behalf of their children, for an education that is unabashedly Christian, rigorous, and thorough. At the same time, parents who think this way also commonly
acknowledge they really do not fully understand what it is they desire.

This brief treatment aims to present some of the basic principles and methods of a classical and Christian education, tailored for use in a homeschool setting. One of the primary purposes of classical education is to equip the students to learn for themselves. So, in a similar way, the purpose of this booklet is to set interested parents on this path and to give them some of the basic information they will need to walk on it. Even though it is an unfamiliar path to many of us, it is still well-worn from centuries of use, and it should be possible for us to feel at home there once again.

At the same time, we should remember that a classical and Christian education is not a “package deal.” No one supplier or textbook publisher will provide you with everything you need in a fifty-pound box, delivered by UPS. Western culture weighs more than this, and the abandonment of the fast-food, convenience-store mentality which currently surrounds education is one of the first indications that we are making significant progress.

In a very real sense, this kind of classical education results in a certain mindset, a certain orientation. It is that mindset which is briefly set forth and commended in this small booklet. Parents who undertake this pattern for education will, of necessity, feel very alone in some respects. But as the process continues, they will make many friends—some living and walking the same path with them, and many others dead and pleasantly entombed in their favorite books.

So what is presented here is nothing more than amiable company for the first few steps on these “older paths” and a rough, sketched-out map for the remainder of the journey. *Deus vobiscum.*
To give to someone else what one never received one’s self is, of course, difficult. Many parents are initially attracted to the idea of a classical education because they know that they were shortchanged in their own education; they want their children to be taught in a way that they were not. The problem with this is a problem common in all forms of conversion, including academic conversions—one is turning away from the familiar to embrace the unfamiliar. The word conversion comes from the Latin *converto*, which means “I turn around.” Turning around, turning away from the familiar to the unfamiliar can be rather unnerving at times.

One may be disquieted by what passes for education today without really understanding what education ought to be. Coming to that fuller understanding is a *process*, and in the early stages of that process thinking parents will feel as though their efforts are little more than a farce. Your friends may be asking, “Who do you think you are?” If they are polite enough not to ask in a loud voice, you may still be supplying the question on their behalf.

The only way to answer such questions successfully is through a commitment to hard work over a long period.
of time. We are tempted to think it would be nice if education could occur on the Big Rock Candy Mountain. But it cannot, and as diligent parents, we are confronted with two areas which stand out with respect to the necessity of hard work.

The first is the necessity of reading and reading some more. A person can successfully sell someone else on a vacuum cleaner without reading, but he cannot sell someone else on books without reading. *Education is the process of selling someone on books.* Parents who will not read simply cannot be equipped to supply a classical and Christian education for their children. Tragically, even many Christians have been infected with the “affirmative action” approach to learning. We want equal results for unequal effort, but God did not create the world in this way. He is not mocked; unequal efforts will routinely bring us unequal results. This means that we cannot pursue a classical and Christian education as a fad; we are not purchasing intellectual hula hoops for the kids.

While the volume of reading is important, the quality of books read is far more important. Because of this, we conclude this book with suggested reading for parents. The books suggested will not all be “about” education, but they will all be directly connected to the task of bringing this kind of education to your children. And as you read these books, they will in turn suggest further reading. These lists included here are intended to mark the starting blocks, not the finish line.

The reason we recommend a particular book may not be immediately obvious, and many Christian parents may wonder if some are even worth reading. But for those who undertake the task, the reasons will soon become
The Necessity for Hard Work

obvious. Again, the lists are not exhaustive but only a good beginning.

Diligent reading is related to the second area where hard work is necessary—that is, in the area of instruction. Children need to be taught. Occasionally, a self-motivated and bright child will show the ability to become an autodidact—i.e. self-taught. But most children need to be led into an understanding of what they are being taught. The ability to learn on one’s own is normally the result of a good education, and not normally the cause of it. Jesus teaches us that a “disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Mt. 10:24).

This means that there must be consistent time set aside for instruction in the home, and the parental instructors must be prepared to provide that instruction. The reading mentioned above is a significant part of that preparation. Glibness, or an ability to “wing it” is no substitute for reading and study. And while it may be possible to “wow” the younger children, there will come a time when your older children will detect the fraud if you are not prepared. For example, in the area of literature, the students may read and enjoy books that their parents have not read, but they cannot be taught literature that their parents have not studied.

The last important note is certainly not last in order of importance. The Bible teaches that doctrine—teaching—must be adorned. If it is not adorned with a gracious manner and clean-hearted living, the child will likely either come to imitate the hypocrisy of the parents or turn away with disgust from everything given to him, including what was truly valuable. Neither direction is
one we should want our children to take. Consequently, the rigor of classical study must not be confused with the rigors of living in an unpleasant home. Consider exhortation from a father in a former century:

[A child’s] character is forming under a principle, not of choice, but of nurture. The spirit of the house is breathed into his nature, day by day. The anger and gentleness, the fretfulness and patience—the appetites, passions, and manners—all the variant moods of feeling exhibited round him, pass into him as impressions, and become seeds of character in him; not because the parents will, but because it must be so, whether they will or not. They propagate their own evil in the child, not by design, but under a law of moral infection. . . . The spirit of the house is in the members of the children by nurture, not by teaching, not by any attempt to communicate the same, but because it is the air the children breathe. . . . Understand that it is the family spirit, the organic life of the house, the silent power of a domestic godliness, working as it does, unconsciously and with sovereign effect—this it is which forms your children to God.¹

Ancient Texts

*The Aeneid* by Virgil
*The Antiquities of the Jews and Wars of the Jews* by Josephus
*The Annals and Histories* of Tacitus
*The Apocrypha*
*The Bible* should of course be read constantly.
*Epic of Gilgamesh*
*History* by Herodotus
*The History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides
*The Iliad and Odyssey* by Homer
*The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* by Plutarch
*Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius
*Metamorphoses* by Ovid
*Nicomachean Ethics, Rhetoric, and On Poetics* by Aristotle
*On the Nature of Things* by Lucretius
The plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes
*The Republic, Gorgias, and Phaedrus* by Plato
Early Christian and Medieval Texts

Aquinas: Selected Writings edited by Robert Goodwin
Confessions by Augustine
Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius
Cur Deus Homo by Anselm
The Didache
The Divine Comedy by Dante
Ecclesiastical History by Eusebius
The Koran
Letter to the Corinthians by Clement
On the Incarnation by Athanasius

Modern Texts

The Bondage of the Will by Martin Luther
Christianity and Liberalism by J. Gresham Machen
Commentary on Galatians by Martin Luther
A Defense of Virginia and the South by R.L. Dabney
Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion by David Hume
The Foundations of Social Order by R.J. Rushdoony
Hamlet, Macbeth, and Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare
Historical Theology by William Cunningham
The History of Christian Doctrines by Louis Berkhof
Idols for Destruction by Herbert Schlossberg
In Praise of Folly by Erasmus
Lectures in Sacred Rhetoric by R.L. Dabney
Magnalia Christi Americana by Cotton Mather
Meditations on First Philosophy by Descartes
Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan
Pilgrim’s Regress by C.S. Lewis
Postmodern Times by Edward Veith
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
The Prince by Machiavelli
Appendix A: Beginning Reading Lists

*The Twilight of Idols* by Friedrich Nietzsche
*Utopia* by Thomas More
*The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith

**On Education**

*The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis
*The Christian Philosophy of Education Explained* by Stephen Perks
*The Discarded Image* by C.S. Lewis
*An Experiment in Criticism* by C.S. Lewis
*The God Who is There* by Francis Schaeffer
*Logos Elementary and Secondary Curricula* by Logos School, Moscow, Idaho
*The Lost Tools of Learning* by Dorothy Sayers
*On Christian Doctrine, Book IV* by Augustine
*On Secular Education* by R.L. Dabney
*The Paideia of God and Other Essays on Education* by Douglas Wilson
*Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* by Douglas Wilson
*Repairing the Ruins* edited by Douglas Wilson
*The Seven Laws of Teaching* by John Milton Gregory
*The Well-Trained Mind* by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer

**On Literature and Reading**

*Ascent to Love* by Peter Leithart
*The Book Tree* by Elizabeth McCallum and Jane Scott
*Brightest Heaven of Invention* by Peter Leithart
*Heroes of the City of Man* by Peter Leithart
*How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler
*How to Read Slowly* by James Sire
*Invitation to the Classics* edited by Os Guiness
*Miniatures and Morals* by Peter Leithart
On Logic

The Art of Reasoning with Symbolic Logic by David Kelley
A Concise Logic by William Halverson
Introduction to Logic by Leonard Copi
Introductory Logic by James Nance and Douglas Wilson
Intermediate Logic by James Nance
Logic by Gordon Clark
A Rulebook for Arguments by Anthony Weston

On Rhetoric

Ad Herennium traditionally attributed to Cicero
Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student by Edward Corbett
Defense of Classical Rhetoric by Brian Vickers
Institutio Oratoria by Quintilian
Lectures in Sacred Rhetoric by R.L. Dabney
Rhetoric by Aristotle
Rhetoric in the Classical Tradition by Winifred Horner

On Worldview Thinking

Angels in the Architecture by Douglas Jones and Douglas Wilson
Back to the Basics by Hagopian, Wilson, Jones, and Wagner
Building a Christian Worldview by W. Andrew Hoffecker
The City of God by Augustine
The Defense of the Faith by Cornelius Van Til
Doctrine of the Knowledge of God by John Frame
A House for My Name by Peter Leithart
Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin
Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis
Plowing in Hope by David Bruce Hegeman
Through New Eyes by James Jordan
War of the Worldviews by Gary DeMar
The following resources may be useful in learning more about classical and Christian education. Some have different emphases and perspectives than others, but all can be helpful.

American Classical League  
513-529-7741  
www.aclclassics.org

Association of Classical and Christian Schools  
208-882-6101  
www.accsedu.org

Canon Press  
800-488-2034  
www.canonpress.com

Classical Christian Schooling Digest  
www.ccsnet.org

Classical Christian Homeschooling (Fritz Hinrichs)  
www.classicalhomeschooling.org
Classical Christian Homeschooling (Christine Miller)
www.classical-homeschooling.org

Classical Conversations
910-687-0288
www.classicalconversations.com

Escondido Tutorial Service
www.gbt.org

Greenleaf Press
615-449-1617
www.greenleafpress.com

Logos School Materials
866-562-2174
www.logosschool.com/materials

New Saint Andrews College
208-882-1566
www.nsa.edu

Schola Classical Tutorials
208-301-2637
www.scholatutorials.com

Veritas Press
800-922-5082
www.veritaspress.com

The Well-Trained Mind
www.welltrainedmind.com