



Welcome to
Veritas
Charter School

HE WHO HAS
EARS TO HEAR,
LET HIM HEAR.



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CLASSICAL ~~CHRISTIAN~~ SCHOOLS

What happens
when Christianity
is silenced?

That airliner you flew on last month had 5000 gallons of explosive jet fuel in the wings. Before you got on it, you must have trusted that the aircraft was working as designed. In the same way, with the exceptional power of classical education comes exceptional danger. The DNA of classical education—what makes it tick, what makes it work—is the cultivation of a *paideia* in pursuit of the *Logos*. This is a much bigger and more dangerous goal than preparing students for college. Why?

“What will justify your life?” is engraved over the entrance of Ridgeview Classical School, one of the most successful charter schools in Colorado. The mission of Great Hearts Classical Charter School in Arizona is to graduate “young men and women who possess a sense of destiny and purpose that is directed to the service of the greater good.” These, and countless other secular and public schools across the country, have discovered the strength of classical education to cultivate virtue. But how far can classical education be removed from God before it becomes something else?

In his new book *Making Sense of God*, Timothy Keller, *New York Times* best-selling author and pastor, recounts the story of a public school teacher who was frustrated with the various “character education” curricula that strictly forbade her to bring religious justifications for any of the values being taught.

For classical educators, this teacher expresses only the beginning of a much bigger problem. The assumption is that “character education” is a subject of its own that you teach, like math or literature. In fact, the root of ALL education is virtue.

TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

In February of 2013, in a high school class at one of the nation’s largest secular classical school chains, a discussion was held. It was very impressive, but an unusual turn of events shed light on a problem.

Earlier that week, in a class at a classical *Christian* school, juniors were discussing a passage midway through Dostoyevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*. The Christian discussion was rich with the teacher guiding

students through some deep stuff: the burden free will creates, the purpose of suffering in God’s creation, and a beautiful depiction of love as the ultimate conqueror. She framed the work in the theological system of the author, a deep and reflective Christianity.

The students engaged in a spirited discussion, seeking the truth—free to express their thoughts and opinions, but not limited by them. In this classroom, the *Logos* was the living person of Jesus Christ.

Back at the secular classical school, students gathered around a table to discuss, by some turn of fate, the same book, near the same passage! What fol-

Students gathered around a table to discuss, by some turn of fate, the same book, near the same passage! What followed said volumes.

lowed said volumes. The teacher began the discussion and then stepped back. Mormon and Roman Catholic views, along with a variety of indiscernible positions, were suggested by students.

There the discussion remained—an exploration rather than a destination. The teacher could not step in and guide spiritually because he was forbidden to advocate for “religious” ideas. The discussion could only

Education is not a subject, and it does not deal in subjects. It is instead a transfer of a way of life.

—G.K. Chesterton

change topics, not delve deeper. Christian theology was out. And, without theology, philosophy is neutered. All that was left for the students in the class was to pool their youthful “wisdom” and wander through questions about ultimate meaning with their 17- and 18-year-old peers.

THE DESTINATION & THE PATH

It seems that non-Christian classical schools know they’re about something big—something eternal. Many teachers and administrators at these schools would prefer to openly discuss God as the source of morality and truth, but the length of their chain keeps them from the true power of classical education. The danger of these schools, cut off from the truth system of Christ, is that they will create a destination (called *paideia*) with no path to it. They cannot view the world rightly because the path (the *Logos*) is unknowable. This can cause a devastating wobble in the lives of kids. To understand why, we must first understand the centerpiece of classical education: the *Logos*.

Perspective

Join an 18th century American family in their education decision for their child. First, they would ask “what can we do ourselves” (homeschool). This typically meant that their children would be educated by dad or mom, or at a local equivalent of a co-op until about the age of 8. Then, at about 9 years old, “Who can we afford to hire to educate beyond our ability at home?” Sometimes, this was a tutor. Sometimes a nearby classical Christian school. Sometimes, it meant a classical Christian boarding school. Notably absent was any discussion of a non-Christian school. Why? Because all education was for living the good (virtuous) life, not for earning a living. Earning a living was just as important in 1750 in America as now. Maybe more so. But parents realized that a good education led to many other opportunities. It didn’t need to expressly pursue a job.



Veritas School, Newberg, OR

The Importance of Two Words

Paideia is like a worldview, but more than a worldview. *Paideia* is an ordered set of desires, a base of knowledge and beliefs, a collection of virtues, and a way of seeing the world that is cultivated into children. We absorb it more than we learn it. Ultimately, *paideia* translates into the way you live as an adult and is the destination of all classical education.

The original Greek purpose of intentionally shaping the *paideia* through formal classical education required the pursuit of something called the *Logos*. The *Logos* is the transcendent, divine ideal—like the ideas of justice, love, or reason—all of which are imperfectly reflected in our world. Our path to *paideia* is through a divine, perfect version of the *Logos*.

Since we can't fully experience divine justice or infinity or reason directly, we use words to describe them. This is why *Logos* is often translated “word” in English (as in John 1). The closer we can get to understanding the *Logos*, the better we can understand classical education.

The Classical World

The Apostle John lived and ministered in Greek education centers. In John 1, this shows as he writes, “In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God ... And the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory ... grace and

Charter Schools in the News

Recently, a Minnesota classical charter school made headlines with the transgender issue.

Classical charter schools have been viewed as a conservative alternative to public schools that are more affordable than classical Christian schools....

A Kindergartener who claimed to be transgender has now forced, through a complaint with a regulatory agency, a classical charter school to add curriculum on gender identity. We think few public schools would be under that much regulatory pressure...¹

In another headliner, an Idaho classical charter school lost their battle with the state over the use of the Bible as a historical text.

A defunct Idaho charter school exhausted its appeals Monday in a legal battle with state officials who barred the use of the Bible and other religious texts as a historical teaching tool in the classroom.

The founders of Nampa Classical Academy tangled with state officials over the use of the Bible and other religious texts shortly after opening in August 2009 with more than 500 students...²

The U.S. Supreme Court banned ceremonial school Bible readings in 1963 but said “the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities” so long as material is “presented objectively as part of a secular program of education.” However, at least 37 states have state constitutional prohibitions (called Blaine Amendments) that go even further in forbidding religious teaching of any kind in both public and charter schools. One of these amendments was used to close the charter school in Idaho.





truth came through Jesus Christ.” John is speaking into a classical world that had a strong idea of the importance of the *Logos*, but was lost in the futility of truth without Christ.

You may not be aware that in Ephesians 6, Paul tells fathers to raise their children in “the *paideia* of the Lord.” Our instructions for education are pretty clear—cultivate in children the *paideia* of the Lord by pursuing the truth that is Jesus Christ (the *Logos*).

Christian parents who fail to realize this foundational issue often see non-Christian classical schools as “the next best thing.” So, they choose a classical private prep school, a magnet school, or a charter classical school. They reason that any classical school is better than the alternative. True, classical schools have proven to be more effective at many things than their conventional counterparts—but there’s a reason for this, and a danger in it.

BREACHING THE CORE

Without Christ, classical education’s core questions—“what is truth?” and “why am I here?” and “how shall I live?”—

What way of life
do you want to
transfer to your
children? What
Truth do you want
them to know?

“For the Greeks, the greatest work of art was a man or woman, and education was the means of moulding human nature in accordance with an ideal.”

—Dr. David Naugle,
Dallas Baptist University,
The Greek Concept of Paideia

cannot be answered truthfully. Jesus Christ is not a part that can be safely extracted from classical education and taught at home. He’s integral to the nature of the thing. If He is removed, we run the risk of creating the ugliness of a person without a face, a soul without love, a truth without the author of truth.

In this context, non-Christian classical schools, like old-line private schools or newer charter schools, have an even bigger problem. They buy wholesale into education as the “cultivation of virtue.” But, now they’ve created a taller ladder and they have no wall to place it against—a destination without a path.

They might argue this is the goal, and that parents can fill this hole at home

Charter Schools at a Glance

On June 4, 1991, the first charter school law in the country was signed into law in Minnesota. The first charter school, City Academy in St. Paul serving many homeless and low-income students, opened in 1992.

Over the following 25 years, the charter movement has expanded to include 43 states plus the District of Columbia, 6,700 schools, and over 2.5 million students—about 5 percent of the total K-12 public student population.

BECAUSE THEY ARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CHARTER SCHOOLS:

- Are open to all children.
- Are funded by local, state, and federal tax dollars based on student enrollment.
- Are typically required to meet all state and federal education standards.
- Cannot teach religious content.

According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, “Charter schools are unique public schools that are allowed the freedom to be more innovative while being held accountable for advancing student achievement.”



A worldview can be replaced only by another worldview.

—Nancy Pearcey

and at church. But can they? Again, this assumes faith is separate from the real world—faith is a personal thing to be done at home while math, science, literature, history, philosophy, theology, logic, rhetoric (and even daily life) are subjects we can “do” without reference to the author of Truth.

As the humanist Charles Potter said, “What can theistic Sunday-schools, meeting for an hour once a week and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teaching?”

For that matter, if classical Christian schools forget the true purpose of education and become college preparatory schools or simply “safe-havens,” we will join other schools in their dilemma.

Jonathan Edwards observed, “Truth is the agreement of our ideas with the ideas of God.” G.K. Chesterton said that “Education is not a subject, and does not deal in subjects. It is instead a transfer of a way of life.” What way of life do you want to transfer to your children? What Truth do you want them to know? ■

Perspective

For Christian families, we encourage every effort toward true classical Christian education. We at the ACCS realize that private education is out of reach for many. And we work daily to help make it available to more Christians.

We encourage and welcome our Christian public and private school counterparts who are called to minister in these environments and to serve where they are planted. We desire that classical Christian schools will create the best workers and the brightest lights to join in



Socrates

VIRTUE DOES NOT COME FROM WEALTH, BUT ... WEALTH, AND EVERY OTHER GOOD THING WHICH MEN HAVE ... COMES FROM VIRTUE.

Aristotle

HENCE WE OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UP IN A PARTICULAR WAY FROM OUR VERY YOUTH, AS PLATO SAYS, SO AS BOTH TO DELIGHT IN AND TO BE PAINED BY THE THINGS THAT WE OUGHT; FOR THIS IS THE RIGHT EDUCATION.

EDUCATING THE MIND WITHOUT EDUCATING THE HEART IS NO EDUCATION AT ALL.

Plato

THE OBJECT OF EDUCATION IS TO TEACH US TO LOVE WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL.

NO MAN SHOULD BRING CHILDREN INTO THE WORLD WHO IS UNWILLING TO PERSEVERE TO THE END IN THEIR NATURE AND EDUCATION.

the work of telling the story of redemption to our fallen world.

Truth is the agreement of our ideas with the ideas of God.

—Jonathan Edwards

On the cover: “Schools Without Chests” references *The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis, Chapter 1, “Men Without Chests.”

In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise.

Cair Paravel Latin School, Topeka, KS



EDUCATION AND THE ART OF PASTRIES

A study in
American
innovation

One key evidence that our educational system may indeed be broken is the meteoric rise of innovation-based charter schools.

In 1996 there were approximately 500 of these schools spread over 16 states. Today, all but eight states have joined the movement, as nearly 7000 charters currently serve 2.2 million students, and even this falls far short of the demand.

Families are attracted to these schools for an array of reasons. Statistically speaking, the leading one is *innovation*.

Well over half use “non-traditional” pedagogies in the attempt to reverse the depressing trends that have defined American education for the last 30 years.¹

There is much to celebrate here; not least of which is that American entrepreneurial spirit that always seems to find a way to “get ‘er done”—with or without the government’s help.²

There is also much to cause concern. As any entrepreneur will tell you, many new ventures do not succeed. Investing in a mousetrap manufacturing company may indeed be a chance worth taking, if one truly believes they have discovered a better way to make a mousetrap. However, schools are dealing with a much more

precious commodity—namely, our children. Here, innovation is a bit scary.

Another thing that almost any entrepreneur will tell you is that there are essentially two ways to ensure a venture’s success. The first is to go forward with breathtaking innovation. The second is to go backwards with painstaking patience. Only wisdom can determine which course is better.

For example, if *technology* is your industry, then go forward with all the innovation you can muster. You’ll need it.

But if your goal is to open a Pâtisserie on Main St., then wisdom says you must go back, with painstaking patience, to discover how the best pastries in Europe have always been made.





Both paths depend on discovery and innovation—but they move in very different directions.

With regard to our children’s education, it is sometimes difficult to decide which direction to take, and since you are reading this article, you are undoubtedly sympathetic to the reports that traditional, government education has fallen on hard times. Perhaps you have even taken this option off the table completely. So what now? Clearly a decision this big calls for wisdom.

We want to suggest something that may sound blasphemous to the modern ear, and it is this: When it comes to the education of our children, *it may be wise to steer clear of innovation*. Why?

The answer is embedded in our earlier analogy. Schools are much more akin to *Pâtisseries* than they are to *Tech Companies*, and our children (to really stretch

the analogy) are more like *croissants* than *computers*.

What we mean is this: What makes a computer great today, is no real indicator of what will be successful tomorrow, and in five years, the game could totally change. “Innovation or Cremation” is Silicon Valley’s unspoken mantra.

A croissant, however, is not so unpredictable. The same flaky goodness that helped Charles Martel defeat the Moors at the Battle of Tours is still avail-

There are two educations.
One teaches how to make a
living and the other how to live.

—John Adams

able down the street at our local French bistro. As long as butter, flour, and eggs

remain the same, we have, at our fingertips, the blueprint for deliciousness.

In the same way, schools are working with a very stable medium—one not nearly as fussy as software. In other words, the constituent nature of adolescents is exactly the same today as it was 1000 years ago. Therefore, what worked in the past must work today. And it does.

At the heart of a *Classical Christian Education* is the historical understanding that at one point our civilization really did know how to educate students, and that, as far as the education of our children goes, the best way forward is undoubtedly backwards.

***Soli Deo Gloria.* ■**

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1 Ted Rebarber. edreform.com. Center for Education Reform. 7 Sept. 2014. Web. 4 Dec. 2015. < <https://www.edreform.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014CharterSchoolSurveyFINAL.pdf> >.

2 Of course I realize that charter schools are publicly funded. I am referring rather to the entrepreneurial spirit that compelled those public funds to be disbursed to charters in the first place.