CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:
DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW IN THE 21st CENTURY

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An Integrative Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Reformed Theological Seminary
In Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Religion)

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August 2006
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INTRODUCTION

American government education is in shambles. Our schools are expensive, violent, and drug-ridden. America now spends (adjusted for inflation) three times as much money per student as it did in the early 1960s. However, that spending has not resulted in improved performance and most Americans agree that the government schools of the nation are not performing satisfactorily. This is despite the fact that they believe (or they want to believe) that the government schools to which they send their children are doing a fine job. Many of those parents are Christians.

Yet, these Christian parents evidently do not understand that education is, as Douglas Wilson, founder of Logos School notes, primarily religious. Morality will be imposed upon the educational process. The question is, of course, which morality will be imposed? The answer is that there will be no single, concrete morality imposed. Instead, students will be presented with a variety of ethical and moral systems from which they may chose which is best for them.
Yet, without some sort of reference point, there is no true knowledge and understanding.\textsuperscript{1} However, American schools function in an environment of postmodern relativity and, in the process, strongly affect the worldview of those who sit in the classroom.

The response of many Christian parents has been to remove their children from the government school systems. Since 1989, conservative Christian schools have seen an increase of 46 percent in enrollment.\textsuperscript{2} This paper will emphasize the premise that this trend must continue. There are a number of fine alternatives available today. The one that will be discussed here will be the growing number of Classical Christian schools which not only properly educate children but also impart to them a strong Reformed Christian worldview.
Chapter One

History

Modernist “Progressive” Education

This nation was not begun in a vacuum. Its founders were very aware of the past and America “is linked to the Ancient past by many threads by a language that is permeated with Greek and Latin words and concepts; by rituals and confessions of the Christian faith, which arose in the ancient world and are still practiced and affirmed by Americans every week.”3 Early American schools were also not unaware of the foundation upon which this nation was built.

The instructors were usually ministers whose training was a combination of classical languages and literature and Protestant theology. In other words, they studied the Bible in its original Hebrew and Greek, and they read Homer's Iliad in Greek, Tacitus' histories in Latin, as well as studying John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion. For example, Moses Waddell, a Southern Presbyterian preacher and teacher (1770-1840), began studying Latin at age eight, and after six years of school, he had finished courses in Greek, Latin, and mathematics. After his conversion and entrance into the ministry, Waddell established, in a log building, a school with an enrollment of as many as 180 students a year.4
However, as the nation grew and developed, education in America changed radically. Horace Mann (1796-1859) and John Dewey (1859-1952) are considered to be the “fathers” of American government education. Mann believed that a common school would be the “great equalizer.” Poverty would completely disappear as increased intelligence opened new sources of natural and material wealth. He felt that through education, crime would decline sharply as would many other moral vices. He thought that there was no end to the social good, which might be derived from a common school.\(^5\) Mann’s understanding of the benefits of a common, centralized educational system can be seen in the following quote.

> In this Commonwealth, there are 3,000 public schools, in all of which the rudiments of knowledge are taught. These schools, at the present time, are so many distinct independent communities; each being governed by its own habits, traditions, and local customs. There is no common, superintending power over them; there is no bond of brotherhood or family between them. They are strangers and aliens to each other.\(^6\)

Modernist John Dewey believed that the educational model that had faithfully served Western society for so long was unnecessarily restrictive. He proposed that children should come to school to learn in a community in which they would have experimental experiences that would increase their capacity to contribute to democratic society.

The society that he envisioned was primarily humanistic and socialist. He was a major contributor and signer of the “Humanist Manifesto” of 1933. The signers of that document referred to the term *religious humanism* and issued a challenge in the name of naturalism to the supernaturalists whose beliefs were based upon revelation rather than reason and science.

As discussed earlier, morality, in one form or another will be part of the educational process. Progressives replaced Bible-centered morality with a “broader” view of morality. Dewey, in *Democracy and Education*, wrote that:
A narrow and moralistic view of morals is responsible for the failure to recognize that all the aims and values which are desirable in education are themselves moral. Discipline, natural development, culture, social efficiency, are moral traits--marks of a person who is a worthy member of that society which it is the business of education to further.  

The idea that man could replace God is as old as the Garden of Eden. Yet, it has been fully incorporated into the modern American educational system. Mann, Dewey, and the other modernist “progressives” who were fundamental in the establishment of American government education did not see man as a fallen creature born into sin. Evil, they thought, does not exist because of Satan or evil. Evil exists because of ignorance.

Thus, man is not in need of a divine savior; his savior is common education. It need not be Jesus who will usher in an era of peace, but man can do this himself through education for all. Our new religion and Messiah became education. If children are properly educated, they would have no need for evil vices.

Results of and Reaction to Modernist “Progressive” Education: Postmodernism

But, why has this not happened? Why indeed are more and more young people involved in evil vices instead of less? Many in the well-entrenched educational establishment would answer that America does not spend enough money on education. They believe that American governmental schools could achieve their man-given mandate if only they would be given enough money. Thus, according to many in the educational establishment, it is a lack of monetary resources that is at the root of the problem.

However, the facts do not support this conclusion. In 1988, the New York Public School system employed 6,000 administrative people in the central office. In the same city, with a
school system approximately a fifth to a quarter the size of the city system, the Catholic school system employed only 25 people in similar positions. In a study published in 1990, the Rand Corporation studied high schools in New York to determine how education for low-income minority youth could be improved. It looked at 13 public, private, and Catholic high schools in New York City that enrolled minority and disadvantaged students. Of the Catholic school students in these schools, 75 to 90 percent were black or Hispanic. The results are speak for themselves.

- The Catholic high schools graduated 95 percent of their students each year, while the public schools graduated slightly more 50 percent of their senior class.

- Over 66 percent of the Catholic school graduates received the New York State Regents diploma, which signifies completion of an academically demanding college preparatory curriculum, while only about 5 percent of the public school students received the same distinction.

- 85 percent of the Catholic high school students took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), compared with just 33 percent of the public high school students.

- The Catholic school students achieved an average combined SAT score of 803, while the public school students' average combined SAT score was 642.

- 60 percent of the Catholic school black students scored above the national average for black students on the SAT, and over 70 percent of public school black students scored below the same national average.

Clearly, it is not a lack of money that has created the problem America’s schools. It is, as Doug Wilson has stated, a religious problem. John Dewey and other progressive educators influenced the schools of America to teach students that values and morality come from many sources and may even change over time.

As students were taught that truth was relative and not fixed, generations began to lose the optimism that was characteristic of modernism. After two world wars, Korea and Viet Nam, there was less optimism that man had the ability to usher in the type of peace and prosperity
that modernism and progressive education offered. The bright future of democratic equality that was promised by the progressive educators failed to materialize.

The period that followed, beginning in roughly the late 1960s is called postmodernism. Postmodernism has been described as modernism with the optimism taken out. The origins of postmodernism are found in the philosophies of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, and Freud. On some points, particularly its attitude to truth, it is similar to New Age thinking. As a way of thinking it can hardly be described as a “worldview,” since one of its tenets is that there is no longer any one “big” story that is able to make sense of individual stories.

Thus, each person constructs his own reality and his own version of truth. Reality and truth are no longer objective standards but are subjectively created by the individual. Reason and logic are replaced by feelings while truth is replaced by “preferences.”

Emotions, feelings, intuition, reflection, magic, myth, and mystical experiences are now what governs the mind of man. “I know” has been replaced by “I feel”. The postmodern aversion to truth is well expressed by Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind*:

> The danger...is not error but intolerance. Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to [teaching]. Openness - and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and the various ways of life and kinds of human beings - is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and of culture teaches that all the world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think that you are right at all.10

It is clear then that the problems with American schools go much deeper than academics. While the academic results speak for themselves, the “social engineering” that the government schools engage in is much more insidious. It is important to understand that government schools are not “value neutral.” As they promote “diversity,” they also promote
homosexuality. As they promote “freedom of choice,” they also promote abortion. As they promote “free speech,” they also promote pornography.

American government schools, in conjunction with the NEA and the ACLU and many other organizations are attempting to remove every aspect of Christianity from schools. The “big lie” that the U. S. Constitution mentions a “wall of separation between church and state” is so well-entrench that it appears impossible to correct it. Most Americans believe that the “separation clause” is in the Constitution.

Even what Thomas Jefferson meant when he wrote those words in 1802 has become totally obscure. Jefferson was merely assuring a Baptist congregation in Connecticut that the United States would not establish a state religion such as the Church of England in Great Britain. The use of the word “wall” was used to protect the church from the state. The United States Constitution assures citizens freedom of religion and not, as we are told today, freedom from religion.

The supposed wall is being used in more and more government schools to “cancel” Christmas. Even the word “Christmas” is often banned and must be replaced by December, Holiday, or Winter. A former Christmas Concert has become the Winter Concert. The White House Christmas tree is now a Holiday Tree. Frosty the Snowman is fine; White Christmas is not.

Schools in California and elsewhere are attempting to acquaint children with Islam by having them don Islamic dress, recite phrases from the Koran, and mimic the fasting associated with the Muslim observance of Ramadan. It is doubtful that a similar activity would take place on October 31 to teach children about the Reformation.

American schools, which began with the bright optimism of Mann and Dewey has given
way to the pessimism and “political correctness” that is common in schools across the nation today.

Classical Education

Early American schools were classical in nature and Classical education can be defined in many ways. Some define it as a “return to traditional Western education.” Others define it as the reading and study of the great books. Others refer to the Trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. Andrew Kern has defined classical education as “the cultivation of wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.”

All of these are true and properly define classical education. However, much credit for not only defining but also re-popularizing classical education must go to Dorothy Sayers (1893-1967) who wrote an article in 1947 entitled “The Lost Tools of Learning.” Sayers was the author of the “Lord Peter Whimsey” mysteries and a friend of both C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien.

Despite the fact that education was not her primary field of expertise, she felt no need to apologize since she noted that many people were compelled to comment upon topics in which they had no expertise at all. She was also quite sure that none of the reforms that she proposed would ever be put into effect. This is because parents, teachers, and the entire education establishment would have to put “progressive” ideas about education aside and return to a model that is 500 years old.

Yet, she was not proposing a return to the past for nostalgic or romantic reasons. As evidence, she noted the age at which young men attended university during the Tudor period and how early these same men were responsible for their own affairs. Today, young people
are encouraged to postpone the assumption of responsibility until much later in life and many never manage to do so properly. This has led to a 21st century American society where the lack of personal accountability has led to severe problems in fields such as law, politics, medicine, science, and, of course, education.

Sayers also notes that, while children today study more “subjects,” they do not seem to know any more than their medieval counterparts. As evidence, she notes the high degree of literacy in Europe and, at the same time, the low level of awareness and the ability to think among the population at large.

She also discusses the inability of the average person to properly debate an issue or to make any sort of a logical argument. Most people, Sayers tells us, promptly forget much of what they learned in school and that is to be expected. What is distressing, however, is that people are unaware of how they learned what they used to know. Because of this, they are unable to learn a new subject or task on their own.

Thus, school “subjects” remain just that – separate areas of learning that have nothing to do with other “subjects.” There is no real knowledge gained when the goal of education is merely to master an individual subject and its corresponding facts.

Since these facts are soon forgotten and the student never learned how to learn, there are no skills and abilities that can be transferred to other fields of learning. Sayers points out the fact that schools often are successful in teaching subjects but fail in teaching students how to think.

This has proven disastrous in the United States for generations as the teaching of reading through the study of phonics was abandoned in favor of the “whole language” method of
reading. This method, which was introduced in the 1950s and popularized in the Scott Foresman readers, encouraged Dick and Jane to see Spot run.

This method, also known as “look-say” or “sight reading” teaches children to guess at words by looking at the pictures on the page, to memorize a few dozen frequently used words, to skip over words they do not know, to substitute words that seem to fit, and to predict the words they think will come next.

But reading is not guessing. Unless a student can “sound out” words through an understanding of phonics, he will only be able to read and understand words that he already knows. This is the point that Sayers made in the first part of “The Lost Tools of Learning.” America government education teaches the “subject” of reading instead of teaching children how to read.

Medieval schools divided the syllabus into the two parts of the “Trivium” and the “Quadrivium.” The Quadrivium was built upon the foundation of the Trivium and included the study of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Finally, a student would then be ready to move on to philosophy or theology. Sayers focus is upon the Trivium, which is divided into three sequential part or stages: Grammar, Dialectic (or Logic), and Rhetoric.

While Sayers admitted that she was not an expert in child psychology, she assigned the following names to the three stages of the Trivium: the Poll-Parrot, the Pert, and the Poetic. In the Poll-Parrot stage (roughly Kindergarten through sixth grade) learning by memorization is easy while the process of reasoning is difficult. She called this the Poll-Parrot stage because young children love to share what they have learned through recitation by singing songs and jingles, rhyming words, and other methods.
Sayers notes that the Pert stage (roughly seventh through ninth grade) characterized by contradicting, answering back, and the enjoyment of correcting others (often one’s parents). In many situations, this questioning may be interpreted as being overly challenging or disrespectful. However, a properly trained and talented teacher will actually find this stage very exciting. A good teacher will understand that, at this stage, the student wants and needs to go beyond the mere memorization and recitation of facts.

Sayers called the Poetic stage, the “difficult age” and it coincides with the onset of puberty. Students at this age are generally self-centered and have a strong desire for self-expression. During this stage, students often feel that they are not understood and are restless and wish to be independent. At the Poetic stage students should show the beginnings of creativeness and the start of a synthesis of what is already known.

The initial Grammar stage then is the time of building the foundation of learning just as learning grammar is the foundation of learning a language. This stage generally encompasses the grades one through four and takes advantage of the great degree of information that a young mind can readily absorb. While memorization is not enjoyable at older ages, that is not the case with this age group. Thus, facts can be easily learned and will create the foundation for the deeper thought and self-expression that will come later.

One common dominator in classical Christian schools at this stage is the teaching of Latin. A common question about this aspect of classical education is: why teach a “dead” language? However, Latin is not really dead. It lives on in English and the Romance languages. Over sixty percent of the English language has its roots in Latin. An understanding of Latin will enable a student to speak, write, and understand his own language properly.
In addition, since over eighty percent of the Romance languages of Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and French have their roots in Latin, learning these languages will come easily once an understanding of Latin has been gained.

Another benefit is the broadened cultural perspective that comes with studying Greco-Roman civilization as part of the study of Latin. This, of course, will be of great benefit when studying the New Testament. Also, this civilization greatly influenced American culture, so that to be ignorant of Greco-Roman civilization is to be ignorant of one’s own roots.

In addition to Latin, students in the Grammar stage study English, history, geography, science, mathematics, and what Sayers calls the “mistress science,” theology. Theology is to be taught, not so much as something to be completely understood at this stage, but with a focus upon memorization. However, for future study and understanding, it is important that young students are aware of God, creation, man, sin, and redemption. In addition, a number of creeds, catechism questions and answers, and the Ten Commandments can be memorized.

Sayers realized that without an understanding of theology, all education would leave a series of “loose ends.” It is theology that brings a synthesis to the learning process. This, of course, is in marked contrast to the government schools in which there is an attempt to teach a non God-centered theology based upon democracy, equality, and diversity. In this theology no one is right because everyone is right and no true knowledge can be said to exist in an objective sense.

Thus, at the Grammar stage, government schools attempt to teach many of the same “subjects” as classical schools and this is precisely the problem. Most government schoolteachers view this curriculum as simply a number of unrelated subjects instead of the basic foundation upon which all further learning, reasoning, and understanding will be built.
It is in the second stage of the Trivium that a clear distinction between standard and classical education can be seen. In the Dialectic stage, the use of reason and logic become the fundamental tools of learning rather than memorization. Students arrive at this stage with the ability to speak and write. Now, they can take those skills, couple them with what they have learned already, and begin to discuss, dispute, prove, and disprove.

Sayers discusses the fact that many educators may be unwilling to encourage students to debate with each other and their elders or to disprove what another is saying since that may render them intolerable. Yet, she somewhat humorously reminds us that students of this age are intolerable anyway and that their natural inclination toward argumentation might as well be put to a proper use.

Finally, in the *Rhetoric* stage, more freedom is allowed to specialize in those areas where a student has interest. Also, while the student has explored a number of areas in the dialectic stage, it will be clear by now that all knowledge is connected and this fact will be clear because of a continued study of the “mistress science” of theology.

At the end of “The Lost Tools of Learning,” Sayers writes that Great Britain (and this applies to the United States as well) has been living on the educational capital of the past. Yet, people cannot live on capital forever and the West has not been properly investing in the education of its children. If it is true that education consists primarily of teaching people how to think for themselves, the American governmental education system has not been successful.
Chapter Two

THEOLOGY

Many Classical Christian schools publish a statement of faith that summarizes classical orthodoxy within an understanding of Reformed Theology. An example is The Geneva School in Orlando, Florida, which has the following on their web page:

We embrace and adopt both the essential truths of orthodox Christianity, as articulated in the ecumenical councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Chalcedon, and the system of doctrine expressed in the creeds of the Protestant Reformation, including the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second London Confession of 1689, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and the Westminster Confession of Faith.¹⁴

The headmaster of The Geneva School, Robert Ingram, was in a leadership role at R. C. Sproul’s Ligonier Ministries for almost 10 years and was also a pastor within the Presbyterian Church in America for many years.

The Geneva School along with a majority of Classical Christian schools not only properly educates children but also imparts to them a strong Reformed Christian worldview. This chapter will discuss both Reformed Theology and biblical worldviews because the two work hand-in-hand.
An understanding of a sound approach to theology will be the foundation for a strong biblical worldview. This, in turn, will enable the graduate of a classical Christian school to hold fast to sound, solid beliefs as they begin their years at college and a career.

**Reformed Theology**

It is certainly true that there are many churches and denominations that clearly teach the entire Word of God. It is not the intention here to imply that one cannot be saved unless one is a member of a Reformed church. That is not true. The intention here is to point to a system of faith and theology that most closely follows the Word of God and which is the foundation of many Classical Christian schools.

The term “Reformed” is an historical term that is over 500 years old. It refers to a period when the church underwent a Reformation in order to return Christianity to the authority of Scripture. Led by Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, the Reformation churches separated from the errors of the medieval Roman church and began what is today known as Protestantism.

Initially however, Martin Luther attempted to convince the Roman church that man was saved by God's grace alone through faith alone. He believed that all Christian teachings and doctrines should be based upon Scripture alone. Coupled with the works of Calvin, these theologians recognized from the clear teaching of Scripture that God is a sovereign God.

They believed that God was not an uninterested observer but was active in all of nature and the affairs of man and that *He who keeps you will not slumber* (Psalm 121:3). They
taught, as did the apostle Paul, that *in Him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28). They were aware that God ruled over His creation sovereignly and that all events came to pass by God's design, for everything is done *according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will* (Ephesians 1:11).

Does the Creator of all have the right to do whatever He wants with the peoples of the earth? The Reformers believed not only that He had that right but also that He exercised His will righteously and that this principle was clear in Scripture. *All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’* (Daniel 4:35)

His sovereignty was especially realized in the salvation of the elect. The teaching of the French reformer John Calvin emphasized the sovereignty of God and his work is often summarized in the somewhat simplified “Five Points of Calvinism.” The simple acronym “TULIP” briefly explains these five points.

- **Total Depravity**: Man in his fallen, sinful state, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1Cor. 2:14). God's own assessment of the descendents of Adam's fallen race was *that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). All the “good” that man thinks he does throughout his life is but filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

What was true of King David is also true of us all. We were *brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me* (Psalm 51:5). Natural man is not sick; he is spiritually dead. The Apostle Paul reminds Christians of their past when he clearly says, *And you He made*
alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the
course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works
in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of
our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of
wrath, just as the others (Ephesians 2:1-3).

- **Unconditional Election**: God has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,
  that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4). This means
  that those who will be saved are those who have been chosen to be saved by the sovereign
  Lord: *I will have mercy on whom I have mercy* (Romans 9:15). He does not base His election
  on any condition within man, *lest anyone should boast* (Ephesians 2:9).

- **Limited Atonement**: Christ's atonement is specifically for His chosen people: *I lay down
  my life for the sheep* (John 10:15). He did not shed his blood for those who would not come
to Him. He has not paid the price for their sin. This they must do on their own. *I pray for
  them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours*
  (John 17:9).

- **Irresistible Grace**: Those whom He has chosen will surely come to Him. *My sheep hear
  My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me* (John 10:27). *All that the Father gives Me
  will come to Me…* (John 6:37). God sends his Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of his elect: *I
  will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you* (Ezekiel 36:26). *No one can come to Me
  unless the Father who sent Me draws him* (John 6:44).

- **Perseverance of the Saints**: *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no
  one can snatch them out of my Father's hand* (John 10:29). Salvation is not merited by
anyone nor is the election of His true sheep earned by the believer, for *He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus* (Philippians 1:6).

Much of what the reformers taught has been challenged by those who believe that God can be sovereign but has chosen to give up some of His control so that man's free will is not violated. These challenges are often based upon the beliefs of James Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch seminary professor. His followers are called Arminians and deny the teaching of Reformed theology, especially as it considers man's individual worth. They do not believe that man is spiritually dead, but that he is only sick with sin.

While Calvinism holds that man is saved by unconditional grace, Arminians teach that man is saved by grace based upon a condition. The condition is that people must develop in themselves a belief in God and must then reach out for God's grace. The Reformers taught that man has no power to save himself and it is solely God's Spirit that gives believers new life and faith. Arminians teach that man has at least enough worth to be able to meet the conditions of God's grace.

The Reformers sought to humble man and exalt God. This objective has been carried on from the beginning of time until now by those who desire to know the Lord of Hosts. Reformed churches believe that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Proverbs 9:10). They want to teach and share the word of God properly so that Christ's church may benefit from sound doctrine that exhorts a believer to a deeper appreciation of the God whom is to be served.

The Reformed Faith is so important today because many “Christian” churches and schools do not teach nor believe in the Bible. It is unfortunate to realize that many modern churches question such basic truths as the divinity of Christ, His virgin birth, and His resurrection. This
is not the case in the majority of Classical Christian schools, which have an orthodox biblical foundation. With this foundation in place, a biblical worldview may be developed.

**Theology and Worldviews**

In today’s relativistic world, many claim that, “it doesn't matter what you believe - it's just important to believe something.” No matter what the world would have one believe, sound doctrine is important. What one believes is critically important. In the Book of Acts, the Bereans received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

It is unfortunate that many Christians do not have a biblical worldview although, whether they know it or not, they have some sort of worldview. A recent Barna survey reported that only 4% of American Christians had a biblical worldview. Because most Classical Christian schools teach and embrace solid, orthodox theology, their students will be much more likely to develop a biblical worldview.

A worldview is the way one looks at everything about them. It is the way that one interacts with the culture and, perhaps more importantly, the manner in which the culture affects the person. The worldview of a person is vital because it affects the manner in which they think, speak, and behave in the world.

At the risk of sounding overly Pavlovian, an individual’s worldview is their “programming.” A computer cannot do what it is not programmed to do. Likewise, a person will respond to an event or a statement by using what he or she has been taught at school, at home, at church, and in society in general.

In the book, *Culture Wars, The Struggle to Define America*, James Davison Hunter
notes that there is a battle for the culture of America. This is a battle for the basic institutions of life such as the family, education, media and the arts, law, and electoral politics. He notes that, in the last fifty years or so, the battle has been clearly defined and two sides have emerged.

On one side is what he calls the “Orthodox” (i.e., Conservatives) and includes conservative Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. In the past, theological differences have kept these groups from joining in this manner, but now many see the value of putting aside some of those differences to form a common alliance.

The other side consists of what Hunter calls “Progressives” (i.e., Liberals). Here are found the pro-abortion groups, the gay rights groups, and those who would favor the American government becoming even more Socialist in nature.

The major difference between the two sides is that the Orthodox have a belief and a commitment to an external, definable, and transcendent authority - God. Progressives, on the other hand, tend to view moral authority as whatever subjectively feels right to each individual. There is no right or wrong except for what is right or wrong to the individual.

The beliefs of Classical Christian schools that adhere to the same beliefs as does the Geneva School are an example of what Hunter terms the Orthodox. These schools understand that there is right and wrong; good and evil and would attempt to instill this understanding in their students.

Hunter makes it clear that cultural conflict is ultimately a struggle for the domination of the basic institutions of American life. Should the schools be teaching children that there is no such thing as right or wrong? Should this a nation allow and, in some cases even fund, the murder of unborn children? Should America continue to remove any reference to God that
remains in public places? Should taxpayer money be used to fund indecent and blasphemous art, theater, and music?

Yet, the culture wars that America must face are not new. “When Christianity began, its conflict with the pagan government of imperial Rome was a conflict between an ideational and a sensate system.”

Harold Brown defines an ideational culture as one that sees spiritual truth and value as virtually the only truth and values that are worthwhile. He defines a sensate culture as one that is the exact opposite. That is, it is concerned only with things (usually material in nature) that appeal to or affect the senses. He believes that modern Western culture is in the final stage of the sensate system.

But, Christians need to ask, what is the church doing while this struggle is occurring all around it? Do those who sit in the pews on Sunday morning even know that it is happening or are they just along for the ride? A frog has been used to demonstrate the problem.

Take a frog and put it in a pot of nice lukewarm water and he will be quite happy. Now, if the temperature is very slowly increased, he will just sit there until he finally boils to death. But, take that same frog and toss him into some boiling water and he will do all that he can to leave that pot.

It is the same for American Christians who have lived through major cultural changes in this country in just the last 50 years. Where has the church and its people been? Has the church been that frog in the pot allowing the water to heat up around it and boil it to death?

Yet, all is not negative. Many American Christians are realizing that the culture in which most Americans live is not one which glorifies the God of Creation. Many churches are teaching classes on the development of worldviews and Classical Christian schools are built
upon a clear understanding of the sovereignty of God. Nevertheless, the popular culture that Americans face every day can be very seductive.

In his book, All God’s Children and Blue Suede Shoes, 19 Kenneth Myers takes a look at Christians and popular culture. In general, he sees popular culture as one of diversion, which prevents people from asking the fundamental questions about their origin, their destiny, and the meaning of life. This is part of the reason that so many Christians have an incorrect worldview.

Myers also notes that our culture offers us a very appealing picture. It offers us the illusion that we set our own standards, that we can chose, that we are the master of our own fate, that we deserve a break today, and that we are worth it. This is Liberalism at its core.

Myers believes that the challenge of living with popular culture may well be as serious to Christians today as persecution and plagues were for those living in earlier centuries. He notes that the erosion of character, the spoiling of innocent pleasures, and the cheapening of life that so often accompany modern life can occur so subtly that we believe that nothing has happened.

Myers makes the case that popular culture’s greatest influence is the way it shapes how we think and feel (much more than what we think and feel) and also how we think and feel about thinking and feeling.

Of course, that is not to say that what we think and feel is unimportant. There is a concern for the lyrics in rock music, the content of movies and television shows, or the violence of computer games. But, what is even more important are the habits that are developed through the exposure to these elements of popular culture. A constant exposure to modern culture may strongly affect the worldview of the unwary.
Popular culture, like the meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 10, is a part of the created order. It is part of the earth that is the Lord’s and thus it is something that is capable of bringing innocent pleasure to believers. But, not everything that is permissible is constructive.

What makes popular culture so dangerous is that it is taken as being so trivial. But, the point is that, while it is trivial, it is also extremely pervasive. It is everywhere and that is its most toxic quality. It forms the backdrop and the scenery for our daily life and it takes awareness and effort to not be mastered by it.

Many Christians often have trouble coming to grips with popular culture. Some simply try to avoid it. Others have tried to create a parallel culture complete with Christian rock bands and nightclubs, Christian soap operas and talk shows, Christian spy and romance novels, and even Christian exercise videos.

This is not to say that all of this is bad. But, have not many Christians succeeded in being of the world, instead of in the world? Perhaps the most important question to ask about this issue is: are there any permanent standards by which we can compare one civilization to another? If so, then Christians must squarely face the problem of “cultural relativism” which is rampant in American society.

Cultural relativism is perhaps the most dominant assumption of modern American culture and of Liberalism. It asserts that no one culture is superior to another and within a culture; all forms of cultural expression are equally valuable and worthwhile.

It is taken to extremes in our educational institutions where any culture (that is, except our own Western culture) is valued highly. That is because, according to many in the educational establishment, repressive dead white males dominate the history of Western
culture. A recent study of high school history textbooks show that Martin Luther King is mentioned much more than George Washington. In fact, in the name of “multiculturalism” there is a move to remove the name of George Washington from everything. Why? Because Washington owned slaves.

A few years ago, the New Orleans school board decided to eliminate from the city's schools the names of anyone that owned slaves or “did not believe in equal opportunity for all.” There was even a move to change the name of George Washington Elementary School as well because, as some said, “to African-Americans, George Washington has about as much meaning as David Duke.”

Yet those who have views such as this do not let the facts get in their way. George Washington was truly the father of our country in many ways and it is unfortunate that the truth cannot be taught today. All through his life, Washington, like the other founders, worked behind the scenes to end slavery while striving to keep the nation together.

Despite being a Southerner, he attacked the institution that was closely tied to his interests. “There is not a man living,” he wrote, “who wishes more sincerely than I do to see a plan adopted for the abolition of slavery.” That statement will not find its way into many American history texts.

Obviously then, cultural relativism is a great obstacle to clear thinking. But, it is also one of the greatest enemies to the development of a proper Christian worldview since it claims that all religions are the same and that no religion can make any claims about having the truth. Further, since there is no such thing as absolute truth, the claims that Christians make about the Bible cannot possibly be true.

Yet, there is a bright side here as well. Cultural relativism and political correctness has
become so common that few are able to avoid it and many believe that these concepts have
gone beyond the limits of common sense. When the Easter Bunny must be called the Spring
Bunny, even a person with an unexamined worldview will take notice and often take action.
In communities across the nation, people are standing up and demanding that Christmas and
Easter retain their proper names.

A proper worldview that was developed through proper teaching and study will enable a
person to clearly discern these types of situations and be able to deal with them appropriately.
A graduate from a Classical Christian school who has a solid understanding of Reformed
theology will have the proper foundation to do this.

Yet, relativity and postmodern thought remains common in most American institutions.
How did this happen? Much of the reason is that individuals who believe that truth is relative
dominate the nation’s major institutions. Education, politics, and sadly, the church are often
major relativistic organizations.

Yet, as influential as they are, it is not these institutions that dominate American life.
Popular culture dominates American life and forms the worldview of this nation. Its most
powerful tool is television. Television is not simply the dominant medium of popular culture;
it is the single most significant shared reality in our entire society.

Christendom was the term used to define the region that was shaped and dominated by
Christianity. Not all people in those areas were Christians, but they knew about it and were
influenced by it. In addition, all institutions, including government, had to deal with it.
Today, there is only one thing that has that kind of power to culturally unify an entire nation
and much of the world: television.

It is the form of television (the way that it communicates) that really determines what is
(and just as importantly, what is not) communicated. The dominant form of communication in our culture is visual rather verbal. (Since a large percentage of the population is illiterate, this is not surprising.) More people rely on images for information today than ever before and this is due, in large part, to television. This is much more significant than at first may be thought.

Both images and words are tools to communicate knowledge, but there are two types of knowledge being communicated. Images communicate immediately and appeal to our feelings and emotions.

But, words communicate through abstraction and analysis. A person must think when words are used for communicating because something communicated in words can be judged true or false. An image cannot be true or false; it is reality. After all, is it not true that “seeing is believing?”

A culture that is more deeply rooted in images than in words will find it very difficult to have any commitment to truth because truth is a concept that requires language. Words give people commands, rules, and laws. Images primarily convey feelings. They don’t involve thinking and reasoning and this is how truth is discovered.

There is spiritual value here as well. In Philippians 4:8, Paul tells us, *Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.* Paul is telling us all to discipline our minds and hearts to reflect on excellence in all things.

Beethoven is excellent; Brittney Spears is not.

It is important to note that Paul does not say that Christians should reflect on what we *think* is lovely or whatever we *feel* is admirable. We are to think about what is objectively
true and noble and right. One of the biggest problems with popular culture is that it is so subjective. The only tool used to judge the value of something is how well it sells. Brittney Spears sells; Beethoven does not.

That is why education is so important to Christians. Yet, a student who spends his educational career in the government-controlled school system will likely develop the incorrect worldview that has been described here. To many American parents, that is not a problem since that is the same worldview that they hold. They see no reason that their children should not be as thoroughly postmodern as are their parents.

But, what about Christian parents? Do they want their children to have the same worldview as non-Christians? When asked, most Christian parents would answer “no” to this question. Yet, many do little to prevent it from happening.

It is unfortunate that a majority of American’s who claim to be conservative, born-again Christians are operating in a “stealth-mode” and live “under the radar” of their neighbors and even their own children. This is seen in the studies that George Barna\textsuperscript{21} conducts on a regular basis.

- Only 44% of born-again adults believe in absolute moral truths.
- Only 8% of born-again Christians tithe to their local church.
- Born-again Christians are 3% more likely to divorce than other people.
- Born-again Christians spend 7 times more time on entertainment than on religion

An apple does not fall far from the tree and it is true in matters of faith as well.

- Only 44% of born-again teens say they are absolutely committed to their faith.
- Only 9% of born again teens believe in moral absolutes and just 4% of the non-born again teens believe that there are moral absolutes.
- Just 10% of Christian teens believe that copying CDs for friends and unauthorized music downloading are morally wrong, compared to 6% of non-born again teens.
Barna has many more statistics available that are equally shocking. But the point is made. The majority of American Christians do not have a Christian worldview. That needs to change and having a proper understanding of God and man’s relationship to Him is essential.

That the change is being made and can be seen throughout the nation as liberal, mainline churches are losing members to conservative churches. In addition, parents are increasingly removing their children from government schools and placing them in Christian schools or schooling them at home. These changes are very positive signs and point to the fact that many are now truly understanding that the family has the ultimate responsibility for educating its children.
Chapter Three

BIBLICAL STUDIES

*Train up a child in the way he should go,*

*And when he is old he will not depart from it.*

(Proverbs 22:6)

All education must begin at home, in the family. Ultimately, it is not the job of the state or the church to provide for the education of a nation’s children; it is the role of the family to teach their own children. Parents who take seriously their role as the supervisors of the education of their children will enable their children to live a life that glorifies God.

The beginning of all knowledge and wisdom is God Himself (Proverbs 9:10). Upon this foundation, all other knowledge can be built. Thus, the first priority in the education of a child is to develop a knowledge of God. This knowledge is gained from a child’s parents long before the first year of school. *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up* (Deuteronomy 6:7).
A person can have no knowledge, even of himself without a knowledge of God. Calvin stated that all sound knowledge consists of two parts: “the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” Thus, it is also true that we can have no knowledge of God without a knowledge of self. John Frame notes that in the Institutes, Calvin “begins not with a discussion of scriptural authority or of the doctrine of God, as most Reformed theologies since Calvin, but with a discussion of the ‘knowledge of God…For Calvin, ‘knowledge of God’ was a foundational concept, a concept by means of which he intended to bring all of his other concepts into focus, a concept by which he sought to make all his other concepts understood.”

This knowledge of God cannot be gained in the government school systems. It may even be difficult to gain this knowledge in some schools that call themselves Christian. The true knowledge of God can be best gained only within a proper understanding of the covenant.

God graciously called those whom He chose before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4). God’s covenant with His people has not changed and it applies to believing parents and their children: and I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you (Genesis 17:7).

In New Testament times, it is the sacrament of Baptism that is a sign and seal of the covenant: For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call (Acts 2:39). Because children are part of the covenant, it is the duty of Christian parents to ensure that their children are properly educated about our covenantal God.
The primary means that God has given to man in order to gain this all-important knowledge of Him is the Bible. The Bible is God’s written Word given to mankind: *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:21). Further, it reveals all the doctrine, rebuke, correction, and guidance that is needed for godly living (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The entire book of Proverbs is God’s book of wisdom given to His people and He tells us in Proverbs 19:2 that, *it is not good for a soul to be without knowledge.* Yet, knowledge gained in a vacuum as part of a disconnected series of “subjects” is of little use. As noted earlier, Dorothy Sayers, in advocating a return to Classical education was aware that, without an understanding of theology, all education would be a series of unconnected loose ends. It is the understanding of God that brings a synthesis to the learning process and which is found in Classical Christian education.

It is only in this synthesis that “subjects” can come together to develop wisdom and create understanding. *Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding* (Proverbs 4:7). Indeed, the Bible commands us to emphatically seek understanding in Proverbs 2:3-5, *Call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.*

John Frame, in the *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God,* demonstrates in a series of steps that real knowledge cannot be had unless one knows God and is worth quoting here.

1. All unbelievers know enough truths about God to be without excuse and may know many more.
2. But, unbelievers lack the obedience and friendship with God that is essential to “knowledge” in the fullest biblical sense.
3. The unbeliever’s disobedience has intellectual implications. First, it is itself a stupid response to God’s revelation.
4. Second, disobedience is a kind of lying. When we disobey God, we testify to others and ourselves that God’s Word is untrue.
5. Third, disobedience involves fighting the truth.
6. Fourth, lying and fighting the truth involve affirmations and falsehoods.
7. Fifth, these falsehoods conflict may conflict with true beliefs that the sinner holds. At some level, every unbeliever holds conflicting beliefs.
8. Sixth, these falsehoods affect every area of life, including the epistemological. Thus, the unbeliever has false notions even about how to reason – notions that may conflict with true notions that he holds.
9. Seventh, the believer and the unbeliever differ epistemologically in that for the believer the truth is always dominant over the lie and for the unbeliever vice versa.
10. Finally, the unbeliever’s goal is an impossible one – to destroy truth entirely, to replace God with some alternative deity. 

To Frame, a presupposition is a belief that takes precedence over another and therefore serves as a criterion for another. An ultimate presupposition is a belief over which no other takes precedence. For a Christian, the content of Scripture must serve as his ultimate presupposition. 

The unbeliever also has a presupposition, although he probably has not been educated well enough to be able to explain it clearly. In addition, that presupposition includes the existence of God. As Pauls tells is in Romans, man supresses that knowledge; Frame refers to this as lying and he is correct.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen* (Romans 1:18-25, NASB95).
Most today in the United States would acknowledge that God exists. However, the knowledge of God has been suppressed and twisted to such a degree that today, in our postmodern world, God can be whatever we make Him to be.

He can be the God who only loves, but does not judge. He can be the God who is distant and does not involve Himself in our day-to-day affairs. Or, He can be the “cosmic Santa Claus” God who winks at our sin and gives us the things for which we ask.

But, the God of the Bible has clearly revealed Himself as Lord. As Frame notes in The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, the message of the Old Testament is: “God is Lord,” and the message of the New Testament is, “Jesus is Lord.” Knowing God as Lord also means acknowledging His control, authority, and personal presence.

But, the key here is that God can be known. Man can learn about God. While it is true that God is incomprehensible, it is also true that He is knowable. He is not only knowable, but He is known by all. While we do not know God exhaustively (as He knows Himself), we do know Him truly, on the basis of His revelation.

Our knowledge of God determines and dictates how we know anything else. To know God is to presuppose Him as Lord. A fundamental “building block” in our knowledge is that God exists and that He has revealed Himself in both the world and the Bible.

Just as the Ethiopian eunuch found in the eight chapter of Acts, everyone needs to be taught about God. The man was reading from Isaiah, but was unable to understand what he was reading. It was not until Phillip started at that point in Isaiah and taught the man about Jesus that he believed and “went his way rejoicing.” If Christian children are not properly educated about their God, they will not be able to go their way rejoicing because all else that they have learned and even their life itself will have no meaning. Education begins and ends
with God:

“Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you— ‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’ Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

Education is much more than “school.” It is the process of gaining knowledge and wisdom to the glory of God. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12).
Chapter Four

A SOLUTION

Many fine non-governmental educational solutions exist today. The one that will be discussed here will be the growing number of Classical Christian schools which not only properly educate children but also impart to them a strong Reformed Christian worldview.

As one grows up, it is often possible to look at the older generation to see what he or she may become if they follow a certain path. Sadly, few learn from the mistakes of their elders. Our lack of an understanding of Western history has made us, as a nation, unable to look to the past to see the successes and failures of other nations so that we may learn from them.

Yet, America does not have to look to the past to see the path that it is upon. America only has to look across the Atlantic to see what we soon will be. Our future can be seen in the regular editions of *Le Monde*, *The Times of London*, or *Der Spiegel*.

It is rare that a culture can see its own future unfolding before its very eyes. Yet, that is what is happening today. Americans do not have to look to the past or the future to see what this nation will become if it does not change. America will follow Europe and move into a post-Christian stage if there is not a change made in the basic culture of this nation.
However, if the basic educational foundation of this nation continues to indoctrinate its students in the manner that has been discussed here, a new foundation must be built and the old one left behind. That foundation, just as the foundation for a building, must start at the beginning. If a student does not gain the proper worldview by the time that they enter college, they will find it very difficult holding on to what they believe. A Classical Christian school is an excellent way to gain this proper foundation.

The Logos School and the ACCS

Douglas Wilson and a few other faithful people founded the Logos School in 1981 with eighteen students in Moscow, Idaho. The school attempted to follow the basic classical outline as summarized in “The Lost Tools of Learning.” In 1991, Wilson wrote a book entitled, “Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctively Christian Education” that described the educational philosophy of the Logos School which in turn was based upon Sayer’s article.

In the book, Wilson asserts that it is not the role of the government to educate America’s children; it is not even the role of the church or any other organization. It is the role of the family. Once parents see the school to which they send their children as only as supplement to what is taught at home, the situation that exists today will be improved.

All too many Christian parents who send their children to government schools are surprised when the process is complete that they have become pagans. The parents take their children to church and Sunday school. So, what can be the problem?

Other parents are excited when their Christian children manage to survive their experience in public schools. Douglas Wilson survived that experience and writes, “have our
expectations for education fallen so low that we are now excited when our children *survive* it?"^27

What helped Wilson to survive was the fact that his parents’ teaching at home had a major impact on him. His parents would discuss issues around the dinner table and he was encouraged, within a Biblical framework, to develop an independent mind.

As Wilson sees it parents have only two options:

The first is to neutralize the false teaching, which means that parents have to spend at least a few hours every night countering what the children learned in school. This is difficult because the parents don’t know exactly what the children learned that day. The children are not yet trained to come back and report on what was unbiblical in what they learned. Responsible oversight is extremely difficult.

The second is a private school. But, there is a temptation for Christian parents to use private schools as an abdication of responsibility, albeit and abdication about which they can feel good. At Logos, we have many parents who take their responsibility for educating their children very seriously indeed. But, sadly we also have parents who give is nothing more than their children and the tuition money.

In contrast, parents *should* see the work of the Christian school as a supplement to their own teaching, enabling the parents to be even more effective in *their* time with their children. The *parents* are the ones given charge to educate, train, and instruct their children. That responsibility cannot be handed over to an institution. The Christian school has no more business usurping the authority of parents than does the state."^28

The Bible tells us that it is primarily the responsibility of the family and, as noted earlier, there is great reason for optimism due to the rapid growth of private Christian schools of all types, especially Classical Christian schools.

The Logos School is part of an organization that was created in 1991 in response to Wilson’s Book, “Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning” and has helped to spearhead the resurgence in Classical Christian Education. The Association of Classical Christian schools exists to “promote, establish, and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in the light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.”^29
What makes the ACCS different from other “Christian” organizations is its understanding of what it means to be a Christian. The ACCS understands that it and its member schools are first and foremost Christian. They have a rather standard, conservative confession of faith, which is completely acceptable. However, on the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of the website the organization details the presuppositions that underlie their theory of classical Christian education. It will be quoted at length here because of its foundational importance.

**Sovereignty:** God is sovereign. He possesses absolute authority over all things. He has created all things, sustains all things, and governs all things. He is the fountain of all being and truth. He works all things together for His own glory.

**Antithesis:** The principles by which believers live are squarely opposed to the principles by which unbelievers live. The Scriptures are clear that we are to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Thus, to provide a God-centered and truly Christian education, it is necessary to break completely free from the educational philosophies that surround us. We must build from the ground up, with the Scriptures as the foundation, both our educational philosophies and the framework in which we understand and present all subject matter.

**Worldview:** Christianity is more than a set of propositions supported by proof-texts. It is rather an entire system of thought. A worldview shapes our perspective and interpretation of everything in the world. Christianity must be viewed as a whole and not just as a collection of discrete elements. The Christian worldview is the “lens” through which we see, understand, and teach all things. It is antithetical to all other worldviews and thus, requires that we present all ideas and concepts as part of a larger whole defined by Christian truth.

**Neutrality:** Because God is sovereign over all of His creation, there is no aspect of creation that does not reflect His glory and truth; hence, there is no place, subject, or issue that is neutral and that does not point to the Creator of all.

Knowledge begins with the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7). Note how that fear and reverence is built into the presuppositions of the ACCS. First God’s sovereignty is acknowledged. It is not the NEA, or the Department of Education, or even the family that is in charge of education; it is God alone. Without that acknowledgement, an educational system as well as a society will fail.
Those who hold to that belief will naturally find themselves in antithesis with the majority of those around them and this must affect our educational efforts dramatically. Cornelius Van Til wrote that, “Christian teachers know that not a single ‘fact’ can really be known and therefore really be taught unless placed under the light of the revelation of God.”

Thus, in a world of artificially created “gray areas,” there is no neutrality for the Christian. Right and wrong, truth and that which is false, goodness and evil all exist and are at odds with one another. This understanding and acceptance of God’s sovereignty coupled with our antithesis with the world around us is the foundation for a Christian worldview. This worldview is also the foundation for the family, the church, and the educational system of a society. Armed with this understanding, a Christian family must ensure that their children are properly educated.

A Proper Response

The Puritan John Milton wrote in “Of Education,” that it is the end of education to “repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him, as may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection.”

Milton was right. But it is now not only the ruins of our first parents that must be repaired; it is the ruins of our governmental education system that must be repaired. Or should every Christian abandon that system?

An argument for keeping Christian children in the government schools has been that the Christian children can be a moderating influence upon the other students. Another argument
is that Christian children may be able to witness to their non-Christian classmates. In an article entitled, “Christian Children in Public Schools – Missionaries or Prey?” Peter Storz argues from the perspective of the “myth of unilateral influence.” It is difficult to imagine a Christian child influencing his peers while remaining uninfluenced by those same peers. Most young Christian students are not well versed in Apologetics and will find it difficult to affect fellow students.

Moreover, the influence upon Christian children is not merely from their peers. If that were the case, government schools would be a better place for Christians. Children are taught about the “fact” of evolution and the “myth” of creation. They are told that homosexuality is as acceptable as heterosexuality and, in some cases, is actually preferable. They are taught that truth is subjective and that to believe otherwise is a demonstration of intolerance.

A soldier is not sent into battle until he is properly trained and equipped. To do any less would be unthinkable. Few Christian children are properly equipped to do battle with their peers, their teachers, and the entire school bureaucracy. Once a student has been properly educated and has developed a well-considered worldview, he or she will be able to face the challenges that they will face when they go to college.

Yet, to be able to face those challenges a student needs to be able to develop logical and reasoned arguments. A student must be able to effectively communicate those arguments as well. These skills are best gained in Classical Christian schools where students are taught less what to think and more how to think.

Classical education enables a person who has been properly trained in rhetoric, logic, and language, the ability to make arguments that make sense rather than resorting to sophistry. We live in an age that is focused upon what we can see and we are too often impressed more
by good looks than a well-considered argument.

A Classical Christian education will not only enable someone to make a sound, logical, and reasoned argument that is in accord with the Word of God. One cannot put a price upon the value that sort of education although there is a price to be paid in order to gain such an education.

Financial Concerns

How can this price be paid in 21st century America where both parents (if there are two parents) must work to make ends meet? Here again, culture and worldview plays a major role. Americans have slowly become used to living in a welfare state where two-thirds of the federal budget is used to pay the cost of entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. In 2004, federal spending for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid was over $1 trillion.33

Assuming a national population of 297 million people this would mean that these three programs alone cost every man, woman, and child in the United States $3367 in 2004. A family of four could certainly make good use of over $13,000 that is often wasted through bureaucratic inefficiency, waste, or fraud.

Of course, it is political heresy to suggest that caring for the retirement needs or the medical needs of its citizens is not the proper role of government. Further, who would dare to suggest that it is not the job of the federal government to educate the children of this nation, but that it is the role (and the right) of the family to do so?34

Nevertheless, the federal government will not take a smaller role in the education of America’s children. At the risk of sounding pessimistic, it is a fact that the power base of
elected officials is based upon promising voters more and more each election. One can only imagine a presidential candidate promising that, “if elected, I will allow you to provide for your own retirement, pay for your own medical needs, and educate your children as you see fit.”

However, despite the fact that some states continue to interfere, Americans still have to the right to education our children as we see fit. The difficulty, quite often is a financial one. Since the government schools are “free,” why pay tuition to a private school that does not have a large gymnasium or a pool? Besides, many parents would be forced to limit their discretionary spending if tuition is paid to a non-governmental school. While it is true that federal spending on entitlements alone cost an average family of four over $13,000 per year, many families chose to send their children to government school for the wrong financial reasons.

Another argument that is often used by families to allow their children to remain in government schools is that private education is too expensive. At one time, this argument may have been more persuasive than it is now. Today, the option of homeschooling can drastically reduce the cost of educating Christian children. Not long ago, homeschoolers were viewed as “kooks.” This is no longer the case and in many solid, conservative churches, the majority of children are homeschooled.

Nevertheless, there still may be significant financial aspects especially in families with two incomes when faced with the prospect of the loss of one of those incomes. It is indeed unfortunate that the welfare state entitlement system in the United States has placed such a heavy tax burden upon its citizens. While it is possible to work and vote for tax relief, parents must decide now how they will educate their children.
If it is correct that it is primarily the role of the family to educate their own children, then it is wrong to allow the wish for a newer car, a bigger house, or the Caribbean cruise take the place of a proper Christian education. 

Further, some solid budgeting techniques along with more financial discipline will be of great help. Christians are as likely to be in serious debt problem as everyone else but there are many sources of help available such as debt counseling services and the training offered by organizations such as Crown Financial Ministries.

Also, all too many families never “do the math” when a mother goes to work. Because of the extra costs involved, the net gain is often much smaller than expected. When one figures the increases in taxes (of all types), the cost of childcare, work clothes, food (lunches and the fast food dinners due to less time to cook), commuting, and any additional costs such as housecleaning, the second income is often far from worth the effort and the potential tragic consequences.

Costs versus Benefits

Yes, there are costs, but the benefits of a Classical Christian education far outweigh the costs. A Classical Christian education seeks to “instill in its students an enduring love for learning, a commitment to serve others, and a dedication to the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty forged from historic Christianity.”\textsuperscript{35} Is there a Christian parent who would not want this for their child? There is no educational system available today that can accomplish these goals with the exception of Classical Christian education.

For too long, American education has consisted of teaching students subjects rather than helping them acquire the tools which will enable them to become lifelong learners. Dorothy
Sayers ends her essay, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” by writing, “the sole true end of education is simply this; to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain” 36

If American parents truly desire that their children develop the skills and abilities to become lifelong learners and, at the same time, gain a saving and true knowledge of God, they will find that they can give no greater gift to their children than a Classical Christian education.
CONCLUSION

Douglas Wilson quotes from R. L. Dabney’s book “On Secular Education” to note what should be clear to all American Christians today.

In the late nineteenth century, long before all these symptoms appeared, R. L. Dabney, a prophetic theologian, predicted the complete secularization of public education in America. His prediction was based in principle and has come to pass with depressing accuracy. He said, “Christians must prepare themselves then, for the following results: All prayers, catechisms, and Bibles will ultimately be driven out of the schools.” How could he have known this when he did? The answer is that he had a Biblical worldview, which he applied to the question of education in a pluralistic America.37

American Christians must act now to protect their families. At present, parents still have the freedom to do so. However, in many areas of the country there are attempts to limit that freedom. Homeschoolers are particularly vulnerable in this area. Many school districts routinely violate the law and make illegal and unconstitutional demands on homeschool families. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) exists to protect the right of its members who homeschool. The web site of the HSLDA (http://hslda.org/) contains many examples of unfair and illegal treatment of homeschoolers at the hands of local and state authorities.

It is quite likely that there will be a day in America when Christians will not only have to
oppose, but violate the laws of this nation. In Sweden, the “hate crimes” law which was passed in 2004 makes it illegal to preach against homosexuality or to quote the Scriptures which condemn its practice. A judge on the Court of Queen’s Bench in Saskatchewan, Canada ruled that a man who placed Bible verses that dealt with homosexuality in a newspaper advertisement was guilty of inciting hatred against homosexuals. Those who would say that, “it can’t happen here” should think otherwise.

At both the state and the federal level, there are moves to pass laws that would make sexual deviancy a protected and privileged class and to make speaking out against that deviancy a hate crime. If such laws are enacted, a teacher in any type of school could be arrested for saying that homosexuality is immoral.

Is it too much of a stretch of the mind to imagine a time when Christians are forced to attend the government schools so that there is no possibility that they would be taught that homosexuality or abortion are immoral? The culture war that is taking place in this nation shows no signs of abating and is, in fact, escalating.

Christians of this nation must be taught by their churches and schools that they truly need to be “in” and not “of” the world. There are signs that this truth is having an impact as liberal churches are rapidly declining in attendance and membership while conservative churches are growing.

Yet, even in the conservative churches of America, there appear to be few who are fully aware of the culture war that is taking place around them. That war may come to a point where Christians may have to decide if they will obey God or Caesar. Francis Schaeffer wrote that:

If there is no final place for civil disobedience, then the government has been made autonomous, and as such, it has been put in the place of the Living God,
because you are to obey it even when it tells you in its own way at that time to worship Caesar. And that point is exactly where the early Christians performed their acts of civil disobedience even when it cost them their lives.\textsuperscript{38}

If American Christian children are not properly educated so that they develop a strong Christian worldview, they will be that frog sitting in the pot of water and will find themselves boiled before they know it. Former Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, Judge Roy Moore, took Schaeffer’s words to heart and paid the price for it. He believed that he had a constitutional right to have the Ten Commandments posted in his courtroom and was removed from office for defying a federal judge’s order to remove the Decalogue.

It is time for Christians to move from the sidelines and onto the field. One cannot be a spectator in a world-wide war. The sides are clearly drawn and neutrality is not an option. However, one cannot chose sides without a proper education. Christian parents have the responsibility to properly educate their children and the time to take that responsibility seriously is now.

The words from Revelation 3:2 that Schaeffer used to close “\textit{A Christian Manifesto}” are appropriate here for all American Christians: \textit{Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God} (NASB95).
NOTES


2 HeartStrong, Inc Page <http://www.heartstrong.org>. This statistic is available all over the Internet. In this case, it was found on the “HeartStrong” website which is a site for “GLBT’s from religious schools.” The mission of the organization is “to provide outreach to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and other persons adversely affected by the influence of all denominations of religious educational institutions. HeartStrong is also committed to educating the public about the persecution of GLBT’s and others at religious educational institutions.”


18 Brown, 9.


20 All Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).


24 Frame, 58-59.

25 Frame, 45.

26 Frame, 47.


28 Wilson, Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning 51.

29 The Association of Classical Christian Schools Web Page
<http://www.accseedu.org/>.

30 The Association of Classical Christian Schools Web Page.

It is interesting to note that things have turned around so much that many home school families have to litigate in order to have the “right” to properly educate their children at home!


Wilson, Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning 42.

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*Work cited in text.