

The CLASSICAL LUTHERAN EDUCATION JOURNAL is dedicated to providing a variety of helpful resources for Lutheran educators and parents who are laboring in the noble enterprise of nurturing and educating God's children.

In this volume, we begin with Dr. Steven A. Hein's compelling explanation of the origins and dangers of progressive education, as presented in two-part sessions at CCLE XI in Sheridan, Wyoming. Next, Dr. E. Christian Kopff, CCLE XI's brilliant plenary speaker, summarizes his sessions on classical Christian education's effects on the modern world, specifically with respect to the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the American Revolution.

We also debut here the preliminary research of Mr. Anthony Splittgerber, as he seeks to compare and contrast academic achievement between students in classical Lutheran schools and non-classical Lutheran schools.

Dr. Gene Edward Veith, in his article entitled, "The Book Classical Lutheran Educators Have Been Waiting For," offers us a rich and insightful discussion on the recently-released work by Dr. Thomas Korcok, *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future*.

And for the Lutheran Homeschool, Kathrine Bischof presents a thought-provoking review of Anthony Esolen's book, *Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child* in her article, "What Has Imagination To Do with Classical Education?"

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**A Politically Incorrect Review of American Progressive Education: What was it intended to be and do?**

by Dr. Steven A. Hein

It was largely utopian visions and the belief in a progressive social democracy that molded a new vision of the good life in early 20th century America. Progressively throughout the century, personal material wealth and consumption were marketed and bought

as the epitome of the good life. A well socially-engineered, but poorly educated adult labor force was more conducive to these utopian ends - both as efficient workers and optimum consumers - than thinking, well-educated men and women who prized liberty as their ultimate social condition. Hence an alliance among major industrialists, government officials, and educators led to the replacement of what we call classical education with modern progressive schooling. The rise of compulsory government-sponsored, progressive schooling and its dumbing-down of education in America were conceived and advanced on the highest levels of central planning to sustain and further these utopian ends.

Very few of us today are aware of the history of education in America. It is commonly thought that whatever innovations have come over the centuries and decades, they have been conceived and implemented with the goal of improving pedagogy to enable the learner to learn more and to learn more efficiently. Regardless of how the track record at any particular place or time is perceived, it is generally thought that the experts who have formulated innovations in the curriculum and methodology have done so with the goal of improving education for all our children – that is, making them better educated. Unfortunately this is not, and has never been, the case with compulsory, government-administered progressive American education whose beginnings can be traced to the middle 1800s in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The following overview has been gleaned largely from the well-documented treatment by educator John Gatto in *The Underground History of American Education*.

Our objective is to explore the factors that gave rise to progressive education in this country and to understand and appreciate its goals,

methods, and results, especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our CCLE conference this year had as its theme the exploration of this most basic question: *Why educate? What are the goals and objectives that education is directed to accomplish with our children?* Only when we understand our educational goals and objectives are we in a position to evaluate any given approach. It is concerning this basic question that the roots of progressive education in our country, and indeed throughout the Western world, made a radical change during the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century beginning in Prussia. When the Prussian army went into a flawlessly executed battle engagement, after days of forced march to save Wellington from certain defeat by Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo, a surprised western world took note. Prussia's understanding of how to train, manage, and execute a large military contingency to achieve a singular objective with coordinated precision, as set forth by field commanders, was quickly understood as to its applications of employing a grand labor force to push the industrial revolution into a new age of mass production.

*The greater population of the country would have to be socialized and schooled to become an efficient, effective mass labor force to produce the goods and then consume them in pursuit of a better life of material living.*

First in Prussia, then in England and the United States, industrialization produced an enormous upheaval in

national identity and purpose. Visionary industrialists, government officials, and educators began to understand the tremendous possibilities for mass production fueled by coal and later petroleum. Industrialization brought with it dreams of a utopian existence of endless material advances in the standard of American living. Coal and petroleum could fuel the production and operation of machines, factories, and assembly lines that could - with a rightly trained, efficient, mass labor force - crank out an endless array of inexpensively produced goods and gadgets that would eradicate poverty and disease, and that would also produce such a standard of living for all unheard of in the history of the world. It is important to understand the advantages envisioned and achieved for a mass society by the successful schooling and social adaption of a mass labor force during the hundred years from 1880s through the 1970s. In short, it was the physical comfort for all – food, shelter, cars, and TVs – with relative personal security, a predictable world with great freedom from anxieties of the unknowns in life.

*For the masses, education for free thinking was seen as a clear threat and liability to realizing the collective utopian visions for reasons that we will make evident.*

In order for such a vision to be realized, a trade off would be needed. The greater population of the country would have to be socialized and schooled to become an efficient, effective mass labor force to produce the goods and then consume them in pursuit of a better life of material living.

Granted, the work would be largely strenuous, repetitive, and mindlessly boring – but it would promise job security, nice wages, and a chance to advance into a higher material standard of living. To provide for such a mass labor resource, an alliance between large corporate industrialists and Government would be necessary to raise up a compulsory schooling system. Designed to overturn the traditional task of educating our young for liberty and freedom, in order to enable them to make for themselves a life and career of their own choosing, this system would train students for social integration into a mass workforce for coordinated labor as prescribed, supervised, and evaluated by the production goals of higher management. The old enterprise of educating for critical and creative thought, problem solving, and communication would be retained partially, but not for the masses. Such education would become an elitist enterprise for only the brightest and best-connected children, a small minority who could take their places in government, the professions, and upper corporate management. For the masses, education for free thinking was seen as a clear threat and liability to realizing the collective utopian visions for reasons that we will make evident.

If the Christian vision is a life lived under the grace of the Savior Jesus Christ, a life of being a good steward, and a life serving Christ in the needs of one's neighbors, then the utopian vision responsible for compulsory government education conceptualized salvation as economic justice for the collective material betterment of mankind. No greater condition for man could be conceived. The good life was understood as a life of production and consumption, with an increasing array of material goods (add entertainment during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to unprecedented

standards of worldly living. The visions that brought us compulsory progressive education were often fueled with a religion-like zeal; but both the zeal and vision were decidedly rationalistic, shaped by Social Darwinism, Unitarian or atheist presuppositions, and thoroughly this-worldly. To accomplish the vision, the mental diet of Children would have to undergo a radical change, and uniform compulsory government schooling could best accomplish this. The following elements would have to be neutralized or removed from the nurture of children. Note these carefully:

1. *Facility in the language skills that enable critical thinking and speaking with others for persuasive interaction must be eliminated in all but the most gifted children who would need these skills for upper management, the professions, and state governance.*
2. *The traditional narrative of American history, that which connects the founding fathers and documents to the significant events of our nation's history so as to distinguish what it means to be American, would have to be deconstructed.*
3. *The traditional historical narrative would have to be substituted with a "social studies" regimen of simple uninterpreted facts, together with contemporary social values based on the materialist/consumption vision of the "good life."*
4. *Academic content of a formal curriculum which familiarized*

*students with serious literature, philosophy, and theology would need radical dilution in order to dampen any interest in economics, politics, or religion (esp. historic Christianity).*

5. *Replacement of phonics with whole language sight-word reading would be needed to remove the code-cracking drills that would otherwise allow self-mastery of reading skills for anyone.*
6. *Willing and unwilling students would need to be schooled and leveled off together, stratified by age.*
7. *Enlargement of the school day, days of the week, months of the year, and years in life spent in school would be necessary to retard the labor force, neutralize the drive and competitive spirit of young teen-aged children, and reduce the out-of-school influences on child formation in order to reduce useful knowledge for independent livelihoods.*
8. *Oversight from parents, church, community leaders, and students themselves would need to shift to bureaucratic school officials progressively more remote from the student's local world.*
9. *Progressive hostility would need to be expressed toward interpretative meanings shaped by religion.*

(adapted from J. Gatto, *Underground History of American Education*, pp. 169-70)

*The goal was not to raise up educated citizens with intelligent, critical interaction with their lives and world, but rather to build a mass industrial labor force schooled for conformed efficiency.*

Is this not simply educational reform intended to do things better? The new compulsory progressive education became a wholesale repudiation of the goals and means of traditional education, in an exchange for a scientifically designed mass schooling program. The goal was not to raise up educated citizens with intelligent, critical interaction with their lives and world, but rather to build a mass industrial labor force schooled for conformed efficiency. In the envisioned labor force, a traditionally educated person posed a threat to labor management and to cost-effective production. *Inculcating knowledge teaches workers to be able to perceive and calculate their grievances; thus, they become formidable foes in labor issues.* Moreover, The Report of the Senate Committee on Education in 1888 reported the following conclusion: *We believe that education is one of the principle causes of discontent of late years manifesting itself among the laboring classes . . . .* (Gatto, p. 153) The NEA came into existence to organize and shape the means and goals of molding and maintaining a teacher resource

committed and equipped to implement the progressive program. The NEA's 1918 Report, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, decreed that *specified behaviors, health, and vocational training were the central goals of education, not mental development, not character, not godliness.* (Gatto, p. 108)

The strategy of gradualism effectively transformed American education into a monolithic compulsory, government-administered school system. The movement began in the east, especially in the cities of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, in the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, traveled to the states in New England, moved to large cities like Chicago in the Midwest and to other larger urban centers, and finally to the rural states and regions of the country by the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gradualism also progressively changed compulsory education laws. Dean of Education at Stanford, Elwood Cubberley, explained the strategy of gradualism in *Public Education in the United States* (1934):

*At first the laws are optional . . . later the law was made state-wide, but the compulsory period was short (ten to twelve weeks) and the age limits low, not to twelve years. After this, struggle came to extend the time often little by little . . . to extend the age limits downward to eight and seven and upwards to fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen; to make the law apply to children attending private and parochial schools, and to require cooperation from such schools for the proper handling of cases; to institute state supervision of local enforcement; to connect school attendance enforcement with the*

*child-labor legislation of the State through a system of working permits.* (Gatto, p. 101)

The goals of progressive education, the institution and expansion of compulsory schooling, and restrictive child labor laws were all designed to achieve the same result – to intellectually dumb down, yet produce an efficient mass labor force, all while guarding against the greatest threat the utopian industrialists feared: *overproduction*, or what is more commonly called, *competition*. Shaped by a cartel of rich, visionary industrialists such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, and Henry Ford, the utopian program was fueled by those who feared risking the great capital of their enterprises' harnessing of coal, petroleum, and steel to a population of young educated and idealistic entrepreneurs. Imbued and equipped with a good education, entrepreneurs would be willing and able to build better and cheaper mousetraps or Model T horseless carriages that did not need a new model each year. If supplies increased, prices would drop, and capital could not be protected.

In the older, largely agrarian economy, parents toughened the minds of their own children through education in serious literature, writing, debate, and competence in managing numbers. Education began in this manner in young childhood to foster the early desire and appreciation of independence and creativity. But such an educated young person was just what was feared. The new utopian vision included curtailing the labor of young people, keeping them in schools for longer days -- and longer years of their development – as this would deprive them of an educated, creative mind and the means to apply it in the market place during their most energetic and idealistic years. (Remember the shorter life expectancy for Americans

100-150 years ago.) Prior to coal-fired mass production, the notion of using one's education to enter one's own business enterprise was seen as the most positive exercise of freedom and liberty for American youth. During colonial days in America, if a young man had not established a successful business as an entrepreneurial tradesman by the ages of 13 or 14, he was considered a failure and would probably have to become what was considered the most derogatory work classification at the time – *a common laborer*.

The connection was both simple and inescapable. Adam Smith's understanding of a market run by self-regulating competition would be the death of the planned managed economy. The presence of independently minded, well-educated Americans had to be curtailed. Excessive overproduction of brains was understood as the root cause of the overproduction of virtually anything and everything. When some raised doubts in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, James Bryant Conan (President of Harvard, 1935-53) wrote a defense of the new program in *The American High School Today*. For Conan, progressive education was a triumph of Anglo/Germanic pragmatism as it brilliantly curtailed the American entrepreneurial spirit for perfectly justifiable reasons. If capital investments were vulnerable to millions of young, self-reliant, educated, and resourceful entrepreneurs, no one would risk the huge amounts of capital necessary to create or sustain the new commercial/industrial/financial machine of mass production. The whole enterprise would have never begun, or would have soon collapsed. (Gatto, p. 321) Consider John D. Rockefeller's 1906 General Education Board document, Occasional Letter Number One:

*In our dreams . . . people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands. The present educational conventions [intelligent and character education] fade from our minds, and unhampered by tradition we work our own good will upon a grateful and responsive folk. We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers, or men of learning or men of science. We have not to raise up from among them authors, educators, poets or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters, musicians, nor lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, statesmen, of whom we have ample supply. The task we set before ourselves is simple . . . we will organize children . . . and teach them to do in a perfect way the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way . . . . (Gatto, 45)*

#### *A Closer Look at the Impact of Progressive Education on Reading*

There has been a consensus down through the centuries – unchallenged by progressive schooling proponents – that attentive reading of tough-minded writing that wrestles with central challenges of human existence is the best, fastest, and cheapest way known for learning to think analytically and independently. Serious reading with rigorous discussion of content requires the development of critical thinking, articulate speaking, and the mastery of human language. Learning how to read and argue form the foundation of a solid education for a learned and literate citizenry. Nowhere was progressive schooling more devastating than in the area of reading. In 1812, prior to progressive education, barely four in a thousand Americans could *not* read proficiently. The key to retarding

intellectually its future mass labor force would be to restrict its ability to read. This would be accomplished by changing how reading would be taught, and also by changing what would be read.

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The ancient Greeks made the astounding discovery centuries before that had advanced the ability to read and master language. They created letters to represent language sounds. Learning sight-sound correspondences is easy. The naming of sounds rather than things was an incredible breakthrough. Communicating abstractions in picture language requires, for most people, much more time and training. The Greeks created words with combinations of sounds, and they understood that proper syntactical writing would lead to construction of phrases and sentences capable of conveying even the most complex abstract ideas.

The Romans made it even easier by naming the letters closely with the sound of the letters. Christian missionaries adapted the Roman alphabet to English (not very easily) in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the rest, as they say, is history. For a long time there was not much to read in English, as Latin was the academic language of learning and academics. The King James Version of the Bible became the universal textbook in early American education. Learning the alphabet and its phonetic sounds, and then decoding words in the Bible, became the most popular way that children among all

social classes – rich and poor – quickly learned to read. As children learned to read and master the most complex sentences and vocabulary at the earliest of ages, they were constantly rewarded and motivated to learn more as they became more enlightened about the fundamental questions of human existence everyone is interested in: What is life? What is death? And, how the future can be secured by a loving and merciful Creator and Redeemer?

Not surprisingly, it was a German disciple of Rousseau who published the first look/say reading primer in 1791, through which students would learn words through pictures. (Gatto, p. 64) (I can remember my first reading lesson using pictures to teach word association – the method we now call *whole language or word instruction*. It was the first grade and there was the corresponding picture on a large easel with the words: *Look baby, see the water.*) Horace Mann and his wife Mary Peabody promoted this word picture reading method as Thomas Gallaudet had set it forth in his sight-reading program for the deaf. (Gatto, p. 67) Learning to read in this way (you certainly could not use phonics!) taught deaf children how to speak. The first line in the primer was *Frank had a dog; his name was Spot*. But Mann and later progressive educators sought to adopt the pictorial whole-language approach to teach reading to children who had no hearing difficulties and who already had considerable facility in spoken language. He battled the Boston School authorities until his death in efforts to bring Gallaudet's whole language approach to reading to Boston. Said Mann, *I am satisfied our greatest error in teaching children to read lies in beginning with the alphabet*. (Gatto, p. 69) It wasn't until the crusade for whole language by Francis Parker and other reading antagonists in the 1880s that the push succeeded with the help of a

psychologist, James McKeen Cattell. Cattell conducted an experiment with a contraption called a *tachistoscope* that allegedly proved *we read whole words and not letters*. It was not until 1965 that anyone bothered to check his experiment and discovered that he was dead wrong. People read letters, not words. Indeed, reports Gatto, there were 124 legitimate studies performed from 1911 to 1981 attempting to prove Cattell and other whole-word advocates right. None of the studies confirmed whole word reading as effective. (Gatto, p. 70, 73)

Nevertheless, the progressive adoption of the whole language approach to reading promised just the needed wholesale approach to retard children's learning, and it also eventually provided the financial bonanza to textbook publishing companies that led to the famous (or infamous) *Dick and Jane* reading series. (Anyone remember it?) Now, for several generations of reading, it would be; *Dick who had a dog named Spot*. By 1920 sight reading had begun to replace phonics as the standard method of teaching reading in American government-sponsored education, and by the 1930s the *Dick and Jane* series was becoming the most popular whole-language reading series.

*Instead of reading about the great Noachian flood, the battle between David and Goliath, and the crucifixion of Jesus, children learned a few dozen words repeated - ad nauseum – with a color picture on each page.*

Over the course of twenty years, the series was progressively dumbed-



down further. In 1930, although the *Dick and Jane* pre-primer taught only 68 sight words in 39 pages of story text, with one illustration per page, for a total of 565 words, its Teacher's Guidebook had 87 pages. In 1951 (when I entered the world of Dick and Jane), the same book taught only 58 sight words. Yet it had expanded to 172 pages, 184 illustrations, contained a total of 2,603 words, and the Teacher's Guidebook had swelled to 182 pages – all this to teach 58 new words! *In 1930, the word "look" appears 8 times; in 1951, 110 times. In the early version, "oh" repeats 12 times; in the later version 138 times. In the first, "see" has 27 repetitions; in the second, 176.* (Gatto, p. 72) Contrast also the content of *Dick and Jane* with the content of the King James Version of the Bible. Instead of reading about the great Noachian flood, the battle between David and Goliath, and the crucifixion of Jesus, children learned a few dozen words repeated - *ad nauseum* – with a color picture on each page. The books explored such mind-emptying drivel as Dick and Spot go to the grocery store, Spot spills some milk, and Officer Friendly walks them back home.

The famous Dr. Seuss of *Cat in the Hat* fame put the mindlessness of all this before the public in an interview he gave in 1981:

*I did it for a textbook house and they sent me a word list. That was due to the Dewey revolt in the twenties, in which they threw out phonics reading and went to word recognition as if you're reading a Chinese pictograph instead of blending sounds or different letters. I think killing phonics was one of the greatest causes of illiteracy in the country. . . . Anyway they had it all worked out that a healthy child at the age of four can only learn so many words in a week. So*

*there were two hundred and twenty-three words to use in this book. I read the list three times and I almost went out of my head. I said, "I'll read it once more and if I can find two words that rhyme, that'll be the title of my book." I found cat and hat and said the title of my book will be "The Cat in the Hat." (Gatto, p. 73)*

In 1840, records from Connecticut and Massachusetts revealed that virtually everyone could read and at a very proficient level with almost no formal schooling (in terms of months in the year or years of one's youth). By 1940, one hundred years later, 96% of whites and 80% of blacks were literate. Just sixty years later, by the turn of the century, black illiteracy had doubled to 40% and white illiteracy had quadrupled to 17%. During these sixty years, education expenditures increased 400%. Meanwhile, between 1955 and 1991, student/teacher ratios decreased by 40%, teacher compensation increased by 50%, and the annual expense per student increased 350%. (Gatto, pp. 52-55)

In 1993, the National Adult Literacy Survey surveyed 190 million U.S. adults over the age of 16. Despite an average school attendance of 12.4 years, the following results emerged from these 190 million:

1. *Forty-two million Americans over the age of 26 could not read.*
2. *Fifty million Americans could recognize printed words on a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade level, but could not write simple messages or letters.*
3. *Fifty-five million Americans were limited to 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade reading levels. A majority of*

*this group could not figure out the price per ounce of peanut butter in a 20-ounce jar costing \$1.99, even when told they could round the answer to a whole number.*

4. *Only 30 million Americans possessed 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade level reading proficiency. This group (and all of the previous) could not understand a simplified written explanation of the procedures used by attorneys and judges to select juries.*
5. *Only 3.5% were deemed to have reading proficiency ready to begin college work, contrasted with 30% of all high school students in 1940.*
6. *96.5% of this American adult population was considered mediocre to illiterate where deciphering print is concerned – they must rely on others to tell them what things reported about their world mean.*  
(adapted from Gatto, pp. 61-62)

#### *Some Reflections*

In light of the question: *Why Educate?*, how might we assess the history of progressive government-sponsored compulsory schooling, especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century? In response to criticisms about the mediocrity of the American public school system, Walter Green protested *the myth of our failing schools* in 1998, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, on the following grounds:

*We just happen to have the world's most productive work force, the largest economy, the highest material standard of living, more Nobel prizes than the rest of the world combined, the best system of higher education, the best high-tech medicine, and the strongest military. These things could not have been accomplished with second-rate systems of education.* (Gatto, p. 151)

The paradox is that only by a second-rate educational system could these things have been produced - especially considering what was accomplished prior to 1980. The progressive's school system did create an effective and efficient mass labor force that harnessed the energy of coal and petroleum to produce a standard of material living never before reached in the history of the world. The program worked, especially given that the third world had yet to industrialize, and European western economies were decimated by two world wars during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. John Gatto notes Green's confusion between education and schooling. Our material prosperity, affluence, and power came about through schooling, not through first-rate education.

*The truth is that America's unprecedented global power and spectacular material wealth is a direct product of a third-rate educational system, upon whose inefficiency in developing intellect and character it depends. If we educated better we could not sustain the corporate utopia we have made. Schools build national wealth by tearing down personal sovereignty, morality, and family life. It's a trade off.*  
(Gatto, p. 151)

The continuing problem has been the virtual ignorance about the goals

and objectives we have outlined above, those that form the rationale behind progressive schooling as it was established and matured throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The major resistance to the program as it began and first evolved from the east to the west, from the urban centers to the rural hamlets, were parents. For the most part, they were out-resourced by educators, industrialists, and government officials, and they lost nearly every battle. Unwittingly and tragically, many influential religious leaders in the American Protestant denominations enthusiastically endorsed the establishment of the legal foundations for government-sponsored, compulsory education as a counter to the Roman Catholic school system and its influence. There is perhaps no better place where this alliance between secular utopians and Protestant Churchmen finally achieved a complete victory over the civic influences of its Roman Catholic constituency than the city of San Francisco during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is what it is today, in part, by the eradication of longstanding Catholic influence in its culture and politics.

Most generations of regular folk, especially after the Second World War, have been completely ignorant of the history of American education. The common belief held by most parents and teachers is that the innovations that have come on the scene in the name of educational reform have been advanced for the sake of improving the effectiveness of educating our children. This simply is not the case. The old education and its strategies and methods were not replaced by a system of compulsory schooling designed to do the job of educating our children in a superior or more effective manner. It was quite the opposite! The purpose of the compulsory, government-sponsored schooling system was to retard and to dumb-down learning, to restrict the

educated classes to the brightest and best, and to relegate the rest of American children to becoming efficient, effective laborers to produce and consume ever increasing quantities of our own manufactured goods. Now, after years of this system, we produce little ( mostly services, including entertainment) and are not competing effectively in today's global economy.

Today, our schools are the product of startling incompetency due to both the vacuum of a passed bygone industrial age and the paralyzing power of teachers' unions. We no longer have the factories and mills that require a mass labor force. Since the close of the 1970s, the productive energies of American industrialization and the dream utopia have declined rapidly. The baby-boomer generation, which received from American mass production energies possibly the greatest increase of material blessing over against the previous generation, saw the whole utopian enterprise to be completely unfulfilling. They started a protest during the hippy generation in the 1960s and early 1970s, and they pronounced the verdict that a life of great material prosperity and consumption was empty, hollow, and hostile to the human spirit. In order to cope with the intellectual and spiritual vacuum of a materialist culture and a third-rate education, they turned not to better and more traditional education, but to drugs, sex, and entertainment - continuing staples of contemporary escapist culture.

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*and best, and to relegate the rest of American children to becoming efficient, effective laborers to produce and consume ever increasing quantities of our own manufactured goods.*

Our CCLE conference theme this year was meant to challenge us to consider the most fundamental question that must be raised before anyone can evaluate different pedagogies: *Why educate? To what end?* We have seen that the answer to this question underwent a radical change from previous time periods in Western and American history, shaped by the materialistic utopian visions and objectives of 19<sup>th</sup> progressive industrialists and educators.

*If you are not clear on why your children should be educated – to what end – you are not yet in a position to evaluate how and where they should be educated.*

Today, there is a tremendous need for Christian parents, pastors, and educators to think through this question very carefully before establishing priorities and making decisions about where and how their baptized children should be educated. If you are not clear on why your children should be educated – to what end – you are not yet in a position to evaluate how and where they should be educated.

## **How Classical Christian Education Created the Modern World**

By Dr. E. Christian Kopff

In 1960 Irving Kristol wrote in the English review *Encounter*, “Future historians may yet decide that one of the crucial events of our century, perhaps decisive for its cultural and political destiny, was the gradual dissolution and abandonment of the study of the classics as the core of the school curriculum.”<sup>i</sup> Just as the abandonment of studying the classics and the classical curriculum that accompanied and explained them was “crucial and perhaps decisive” for the Twentieth Century, so the spread of the classical curriculum from the education of clergy and clerks at cathedral schools and cloisters in the Middle Ages to aristocratic courts in the Renaissance and then to schools for subjects and citizens in the Reformation and its aftermath was decisive for religious revival, scientific discovery and political freedom in the Modern Era.

Despite curricular differences in various parts of Europe, classical Christian education in early modern Europe shared certain fundamental traits. There was a balance between instruction in the arts of language and the arts of mathematics, the trivium and quadrivium. The arts of language were taught as (Latin) grammar, dialectic (or logic) and rhetoric. The reading lists of the curriculum were taken from what German classicist Manfred Fuhrmann calls the Two Canons, the Bible and the pagan classics.<sup>ii</sup> This curriculum educated the people who created the Modern World.

*...the two Canons, the Bible and the pagan classics. This curriculum*

*educated the people who created the Modern World.*

The idea that Martin Luther was hostile to the pagan classics is found in the twentieth century from committed classical Christian educators like Louis Markos to learned specialists like Harvard's Douglas Bush.<sup>iii</sup> The origins of the error may be due to the background radiation from Luther's polemic with Erasmus, who had a tendency to treat his opponents as enemies of "good letters." It would be an unacceptable simplification to treat the Reformation as primarily the result of educational reform, but it is equally unacceptable to ignore the role of classical Christian education in the creative turmoil of the sixteenth century. In his letter to Humanist poet Eobanus Hessus (1523), Luther insisted that his theology was compatible with Humanist ideals. "Without knowledge of literature, pure theology cannot exist, as until now, with letters collapsing in ruins, theology fell most pitifully and lay ruined. I see there has never been a great revelation of God's Word unless He first prepared the way by the rise and flourishing of languages and letters." (WA Br 3: 50; AE 49: 34)

Martin Luther devoted much of his early years at Wittenberg to reforming the university in a humanist mold. Hiring Philip Melancthon was part of that initiative.<sup>iv</sup> Luther discussed the ideas behind university reform in his 1520 letter *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (WA 6; AE 44). When the Reformation led to the closing of the cathedral and cloister schools that had been the locus of medieval schooling since Charlemagne, he and Melancthon turned to grammar schools. Luther's first response was his 1524 letter *To The Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish*

*and Maintain Christian Schools* (WA 15; AE 45), the Magna Charta of classical Christian education. Melancthon's visits to the schools of Saxony led in 1528 to the publication of a model school plan, the *Instructions for Visitors* (WA 26; AE 40), that outlined a curriculum of catechesis in the faith, teaching the trivium beginning with Latin grammar, and reading the Two Canons. Under the leadership of men like Johannes Sturm in Strasburg and Johannes Bugenhagen in Scandinavia, this curriculum spread across Europe, including England. The results were an explosive growth in literacy among ordinary folk and artistic creativity in art, music, literature and science.

*...but the classical Christian roots of the Scientific Revolution are more often denied outright...*

That Shakespeare was the product of a classical Christian education is often ignored, but the classical Christian roots of the Scientific Revolution are more often denied outright, as in such triumphs of American jurisprudence as Judge Jones's decision in *Kitzmiller et al. v. Dover Area School District*: "Expert testimony reveals that since the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, science has been limited to the search for natural causes to explain natural phenomena.... While supernatural explanations may be important and have merit they are not part of science.... This self-imposed convention of science which limits inquiry to testable, natural explanation about the natural world is referred to by philosophers as 'methodological naturalism,' and is sometimes known as the scientific method."<sup>v</sup>

*The results were an explosive growth in literacy among ordinary folk and artistic creativity in art, music, literature and science*

Whenever “this self-imposed convention” arose, it was not during the Scientific Revolution. Historians of science know that both Christian theology and the classics influenced science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>vi</sup> They tend, however, to study them as two separate sources instead of insisting that the decisive factor was the uniting of Christian and ancient thought, and the obvious source of this union of Christianity and the classics was the classical Christian education enjoyed by most educated people in that era.

The Scientific Revolution was self-consciously a return to the ideals and even the texts of ancient science. Copernicus knew that he was reviving the heliocentric hypothesis of Aristarchus of Samos from the third century BC. Andreas Vesalius based the foundational text of modern medicine, *De humani corporis fabrica*, on the second century AD Greek physician, Galen. It appeared in 1543, the same year Copernicus’s *De revolutionibus* was published. “Like Copernicus, Vesalius presented his work as restoration of an ancient practice; also like Copernicus, he pointed out flaws in the work of his great model from antiquity; and like Copernicus the rationale for his project emerged directly from humanist values and ambitions.”<sup>vii</sup> Historians often refer to this age as the Scientific Renaissance. The classical Christian curriculum these men studied continued to educate important scientists like Linnaeus in the Eighteenth century, Charles Darwin in the

Nineteenth and Werner Heisenberg in the Twentieth.

*Thomas Hobbes called geometry “the only science God hath seen fit to bestow upon mankind.”*

Lutherans played a significant role in what they, like Copernicus and Vesalius, viewed as the restoration of ancient science. Georg Joachim Rheticus composed the first accessible description of Copernicus’s ideas. As mathematics professor at Wittenberg in 1539, Rheticus visited Copernicus and in 1540 published *Narratio Prima* (“The First Account”). Lutheran theologian Andreas Osiander saw *De revolutionibus* through the press. His influential anonymous preface praised the work for “saving the phenomena,” that is, providing a mathematical model that predicted the movement of the planets more elegantly than other models, without claiming the heliocentric system was physically real. Scholars in sixteenth century Wittenberg followed Osiander’s lead and ignored the physical truth of Copernicus. They usually began their astronomy courses with a summary of Ptolemy’s arguments for a stationary earth and then used Copernicus’s model to make calculations of the movement of the celestial bodies.<sup>viii</sup>

This was the method of Tycho Brahe, the greatest naked-eye observational astronomer who ever lived. His accurate observations cleared up many problems. His modification of the Ptolemaic model, with the sun circling the earth while the planets circled the sun, contended with Copernicus for generations. Among Lutheran scientists formed by the classical Christian curriculum, Johannes Kepler believed in Pythagoras and Plato as deeply as the

Bible. He followed the arts of mathematics, even when they led him to postulate that the heavenly bodies moved in ellipses, instead of circles, an hypothesis denounced by the equally classical Galileo for breaking with a tradition of positing circular motion for the heavenly bodies that went back to Plato. Kepler used geometry to describe the universe not only to “save the phenomena,” but to give a true picture of the heavens, as Plato argued in Republic VI and the curriculum of Republic VII. Geometry haunted the seventeenth century. Thomas Hobbes called geometry “the only science God hath seen fit to bestow upon mankind.” Newton composed *Principia* in Latin with geometrical proofs. The liberal arts were fundamental for the Scientific Revolution.

Classical Christian education was as central for the American Revolution as for the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution. When Henry Lee doubted the Declaration’s originality, Jefferson denied he was attempting to be original. “It was intended to be an expression of the American mind.... All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, &c.”<sup>x</sup>

Jefferson’s recollections are confirmed by other colonial activists. Jonathan Mayhew said in his 1766 sermon on the repeal of the Stamp Act, “Having been initiated in youth, in the doctrines of civil liberty, as they were taught by such men as Plato, Demosthenes, and Cicero, and other renowned persons among the ancients, and such as Sydney and Milton, Locke and Hoadley among the moderns; I liked them; they seemed rational.”<sup>x</sup> In 1775 John Adams wrote to a Tory opponent, “These are what are called revolution principles. They are the principles of

Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Cicero, of Sidney, Harrington and Locke: the principles of nature and eternal reason.”<sup>xi</sup> Jefferson, Mayhew and Adams traced “the doctrines of civil liberty,” “the principles of nature and eternal reason,” the “authority” of the Declaration of Independence back to classical antiquity.

*The Founders knew that the classical Christian curriculum preserved a legacy of wisdom, justice and beauty that was essential for faith and freedom.*

David Bederman points out the danger of ignoring the Founders’ classical piety.<sup>xii</sup>

It would be easy to dismiss the influence of the classical tradition on the Framing generation as some peculiar and pretentious residuum of the elite culture of the times. Indeed, in the modern historiography of the intellectual life of the early republic, that is precisely the prevalent view: that classicism was a mere window dressing to the pragmatic, hard-knuckled politics of the period. In the same fashion, these same historians have tended to discount the religious fervor of the times.... In accordance with this view, when the script of the Framing morality play veers off into unexpected pieces of dialogue—as when the Framers speak of God’s providence and the role of churches in the new society, or of classical models of government and republican virtues—our modern, internal dramaturge excises these

scenes, or, worse yet, annotates them as irrelevant.

Historian Clinton Rossiter gave the best praise of America's old classical education.<sup>xiii</sup>

It is easy to smile at the dull, rigid, crabbed methods that prevailed in colonial colleges, but if we judge the vineyards by the fruit they brought forth, we must acknowledge them a fertile ground of learning, science, reason, and liberty. They may not have taught young men enough useful knowledge, but they did teach them—in their own tradition-ridden way—to think, communicate, and lead.... The roll call of Harvard and William and Mary men in the Revolution should be evidence enough that Latin, logic, and metaphysics were a rich fertilizer in the cultivation of reason, virtue, honor, and love of liberty.

It was not just the colonial period. In 2002 Caroline Winterer showed that classical education was the educational gold standard throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>xiv</sup> In 2009 Carl Richard's *Golden Age of Classics in America* demonstrated the classics' role in the rambunctious creativity and politics of antebellum America.<sup>xv</sup> After the Civil War, Richard argues, "the classics began a gradual decline due to social, economic and intellectual forces." I believe that the decline was very gradual until the cultural catastrophe of the 1960's. Episcopalian prep schools and Lutheran and Catholic parochial schools continued to teach Latin. According to the United States Office of Education, in school year 1889-1890, 34.7% of public high school students took Latin. In 1900 and 1910 one half of public high school students studied Latin.<sup>xvi</sup> More studied it in private and parochial schools. In 1962 there were

still 728,637 students of high school Latin.<sup>xvii</sup>

The Founders knew that the classical Christian curriculum preserved a legacy of wisdom, justice and beauty that was essential for faith and freedom. John Adams wrote to his friend, Dr. Benjamin Rush, "I should as soon think of closing all my window shutters to enable me to see as of banishing the Classics to improve Republican ideas."<sup>xviii</sup> They valued the Christian heritage as well. When Lutheran pastor Frederick Christian Schaeffer sent James Madison his sermon for the founding of St. Matthew's Church in New York City, Madison responded from retirement in Montpelier, Virginia (December 3, 1821), "Your address...illustrates the excellence of a system to which, by a due distinction, the genius and courage of Luther led the way, between what is due to Caesar and what is due God, best promotes the discharge of both obligations."<sup>xix</sup> We still need to keep our window shutters open to the classical Christian education that preserves and unites our religious and cultural traditions.

(E. Christian Kopff is Associate Director of the Honors Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder, author of *The Devil Knows Latin: Why America Needs the Classical Tradition* [1999] and translator of Josef Pieper, *Tradition: Concept and Claim* [2008].)

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<sup>i</sup> *The Neo-Conservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009* (New York: Basic Books, 2011) 111

<sup>ii</sup> Manfred Fuhrmann, *Bildung: Europas Kulturelle Identität* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002) 9-13

<sup>iii</sup> Louis Markos, *From Achilles to Christ: Why Christians Should Read the Pagan Classics* (Downers Grove IL: IVI Academic, 2007) 11-12; Douglas Bush, *The*



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*Renaissance and English Humanism* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1939) 66-67

<sup>iv</sup>Volker Leppin, *Martin Luther* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010) 104-106

<sup>v</sup>[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kitzmiller\\_v.\\_Dover\\_Area\\_School\\_District](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kitzmiller_v._Dover_Area_School_District), pp. 64-65

<sup>vi</sup>Ronald L. Numbers, *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2009)

<sup>vii</sup>Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and its Ambitions, 1500-1700*. Second Edition (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009) 39

<sup>viii</sup>Robert S. Westman, “The Melanchthon Circle, Reticus, and the Wittenberg Interpretation of the Copernican Theory,” *Isis* 66 (1975) 165-193

<sup>ix</sup>Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, Merrill Peterson, ed. (New York: Library of America, 1984) 1501 (8 May 1825)

<sup>x</sup>Jonathan Mayhew, *The Snare Broken* (Boston: R & S Draper, 1766) 43

<sup>xi</sup>*Letters of Novanglus* (January 23, 1775) in *Works*, 4 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1851) 15

<sup>xii</sup>David J. Bederman, *Classical Foundations of the American Constitution* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) 222-3

<sup>xiii</sup>Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953) 122

<sup>xiv</sup>Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life 1780-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002)

<sup>xv</sup>Carl J. Richard, *Golden Age of the Classics in America: Greece, Rome and the*

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*Antebellum United States* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 2009), quote on p. xii

<sup>xvi</sup>John Francis Latimer, *What's Happened to Our High Schools* (Washington DC: Public Affairs Press, 1958) 26

<sup>xvii</sup>Samuel A. Goldberg, “High School Enrollments in Latin 1964-65,” *Classical Bulletin* 59 (1966) 299

<sup>xviii</sup>*Old Family Letters* (Series A), Alexander Biddle, ed., (Philadelphia: J B Lippincott, 1892) 39-40 (19 June 1789)

<sup>xix</sup>James Madison, *Letters and Other Writings* (Philadelphia: J B Lippincott, 1865) 3:242-243

**A Research Study: Effects of  
Classical Education on Achievement  
in Lutheran Schools**  
By Anthony B. Splittgerber

Classical education is (and remains!) a growing movement in education, but as a pedagogical model classical education has not often been researched quantitatively. Indeed, many of classical education's most compelling elements cannot be quantified. Its core philosophies are highly compatible with Christian teachings; consequently, many Christian schools have embraced classical education, even though classical education is not just for Christian schools. Classical education can be implemented by any school, and its proponents often tout both its academic rigor and academic superiority. Prior to this writing, there had been no published research to validate these assertions. There had, however, been several studies on the teaching of Latin (which all classical schools taught), with empirical evidence to suggest that students who study Latin fare far better on academic tests, especially the

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language arts, than their counterparts who do not receive Latin instruction. Latin was but one component of the classical curriculum which this research project studied.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in academic achievement between comparable Lutheran schools which utilized a classical education model and those that did not. This project analyzed standardized academic test scores to gauge the academic prowess of the classical education model within Lutheran schools.

*Indeed, many of classical education's most compelling elements cannot be quantified.*

A quasi-experimental design was selected for this project because assignment of groups would not be random, as would be the case in a true experiment. This project utilized a relatively small set of self-identified classical Lutheran schools. The researcher then sought to match each classical Lutheran school with a non-Lutheran counterpart. Random assignment was not an option if a sufficient amount of data was to be acquired.

This study utilized two subject test groups: a “classical Lutheran schools” group and a “non-classical Lutheran schools” counterpart group. Initially, the first group would consist of 11 schools from the Consortium for Classical and Lutheran Education (CCLE). The schools were selected because of their curricular similarity and solidarity of beliefs and teaching, as evidenced by their membership in this consortium.

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The selection of the second group, non-classical Lutheran schools, was made upon receipt of demographic data from the participating classical Lutheran schools. A concerted effort was made to find Lutheran schools that had similar total K-8 populations. Race, ethnicity, and gender were not factors of consideration in the selection of appropriate matches. Instead, school population was the primary factor in determining matches, with geographic characteristics considered as well. For example, a classical Lutheran school with a student population of 60 students located in the Midwest would be matched with a non-classical counterpart with 60 students also located in the Midwest within a similar population setting, such as rural or urban.

Lutheran schools had been specifically chosen because of convenience – namely the accessibility, availability, and willingness of participants. With such a convenience sample it would become more difficult to assure that the sample was representative of the population; however, by using only Lutheran schools that were relatively geographically diverse (that is, schools not confined to a predetermined district or state), the degree of representation should have remained quite high because of the relative homogeneity of Lutheran schools.

This research project analyzed the results of standardized tests every school conducts annually. The data collection instrument for this project was the nationally-normed, standardized test administered for the 2008-2009 school year, such as either the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) or some similar measure, such as the California Achievement Test (CAT). As long as the test used by each school was a

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nationally normed test, then the national percentile rankings (NPR's) of each test would remain comparable.

In order to compare the achievement of each school, this project focused on the national percentile rankings of each class per school in each subject. Paired classical and non-classical NPR's were compared. The NPR's of reading, language, math, and core tests in classical Lutheran schools were averaged, as were the NPR's of all non-classical schools. A t-test assessed the significance of the differences in NPR scores. Significance was determined at a .01 level due to the small sample size.

The comparison of means and the use of the t-test to evaluate significance answered the research question: *How do the standardized test scores of Lutheran classical schools compare to those of Lutheran schools not using the classical education model?* National percentile rankings were used because they were comparable to the percentile rankings in other similar tests. While stanines and grade equivalencies could also be compared, these scores were not as easily understood by the average reader as were national percentile rankings. In addition to the comparison of means, statistical analysis also included the mode, median, and range in an effort to elicit additional data for evaluation. These tools were examined for unexpected trends and to support the comparison of means and the use of the t-test.

The quasi-experimental design allowed for smaller sample populations, because various conditions limited the pool of available test subjects. In the end, six of the eleven classical schools participated with submission of their test scores. As it became clear that lower than expected numbers of classical Lutheran education schools would be participating, the research design was

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adjusted slightly to bolster the total number of participants in order to prevent invalidation of the research. To this end, each classical participant was matched with three to four potential matches in the hopes of strengthening the data with more participants. An emphasis would now be placed on the number of overall students in the pooled population of classical Lutheran schools and that of the non-classical Lutheran schools. Ultimately nine non-classical Lutheran schools agreed to participate in the study to be compared with six classical Lutheran schools.

An analysis of the data showed the following results:

First, of the 36 subsets of data, only five of those subsets were statistically insignificant. Second, when one graphed the data by test type one could see that at an early level, non-classical Lutheran schools outperformed classical Lutheran schools; however, the reverse happened for grades four through eight. From the fourth grade through the eighth grade, classical Lutheran schools outperformed non-classical schools in academic achievement as assessed through standardized testing.

*In general, non-classical Lutheran schools' NPR's declined steadily from kindergarten through eighth grade while classical Lutheran schools' NPR's increased steadily from kindergarten through eighth grade.*

This researcher had hypothesized that the mean test scores of classical model schools would be significantly higher than non-classical schools. The research indicates that the

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hypothesis was an incorrect one – at least in part. The classical model schools did score higher than their non-classical counterparts in grades four through eight (with data statistically significant in all but the sixth grade). However, the hypothesis was incorrect in respect to the data for the lower grades, where the non-classical Lutheran schools performed significantly better than the classical schools.

*There was most definitely a significant difference in achievement between the comparable Lutheran schools that utilized a classical education model and those that did not.*

Despite the partially incorrect hypothesis, the research was successful in answering the research question and in achieving the purpose of the research. There was most definitely a significant difference in achievement between the comparable Lutheran schools that utilized a classical education model and those that did not. The questions then became: Why did the scores of the classical models begin so poorly in comparison to their later scores? Why did non-classical scores have such a decline from their kindergarten scores to their eighth grade scores? These questions warrant further investigation.

It should be noted further that most classical schools did not begin the teaching of Latin until the third grade, which possibly explained why their scores continued a steady increase and overtook the non-classical schools in the fourth grade. In addition, most non-classical schools did not begin

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standardized testing until the third grade. From the third grade on, similar populations were being compared, but at the kindergarten level there were 94 classical students compared to only nine non-classical students. The non-classical score was extremely high (98<sup>th</sup> percentile) and was probably not representative of the entire non-classical population.

Classical Lutheran schools showed achievement gains in each of the four areas reported, even mathematics. This researcher had hypothesized that at the very least, classical Lutheran schools would show gains in reading and language, because previous research indicated that the teaching of Latin would have this effect. So it is some surprise that the classical school would still outperform the non-classical Lutheran school in the upper grades in mathematics. This data would give credence to the thought that it is the whole classical curriculum and pedagogy, not just the teaching of Latin, which helped to account for the difference in scores and the upward trend of the classical scores.

This research offers some preliminary quantitative data to demonstrate the effectiveness of classical education in areas of academic achievement. This research no doubt is not without error, and some may take issue with some assumptions this researcher has made. This researcher considers this research a starting point; perhaps others will expand on the research and further validate its results or refute them.

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Principal  
Zion Lutheran School of Kearney,  
Nebraska

\*Author's note: This article summarizes a much more thorough work. Research

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citations and references have been removed, as have all graphs, tables, and appendices. For those who wish to read the full, original research, a free download is available from this web address:

<http://www.zionkearney.org/curriculum/academics/further-reading/>

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## **The Book Classical Lutheran Educators Have Been Waiting For**

**A Review of Thomas Korcok's *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011)**

**By Gene Edward Veith**

Thomas Korcok's history of Lutheran education shows that the classical liberal arts approach is not just another educational alternative with which some Lutherans, as well as other conservative Christians, are experimenting. With scholarship that will come as an eye-opening surprise even to advocates of classical education, Dr. Korcok shows that classical education combined with catechesis is *the* Lutheran educational tradition.

Moreover, he shows how this distinctively Lutheran approach to education is grounded in confessional Lutheran theology, to the point that throughout the history of Lutheranism—especially the strain that would become the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod—theological controversies were often played out not just in churches but in schools, curriculum, and pedagogy. Church leaders from Luther to Walther believed that the classical liberal arts integrated with catechesis was the educational model that could best equip church members to understand Lutheran theology and to serve their neighbors in their vocations.

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Dr. Korcok, a pastor in the Lutheran Church of Canada, conducted this research for his doctoral dissertation at the Free University of Amsterdam. He begins with an illuminating account of how the fathers of the early church—especially St. Augustine—Christianized the Greco-Roman educational program designed for the free citizen (the *artes liberalis*), as opposed to the manual training given to tradesmen and slaves. This included the insight that the best of secular culture could be used by Christians in service to Christ. This tradition of Christian classicism was systematized further in the Middle Ages, with the invention of the university, whose curriculum was organized around the Seven Liberal Arts (the *trivium*, with its three language-related arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric; and the *quadrivium*, with its four mathematics-related arts of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) and the three classifications of knowledge (*scientia*): Natural Science, Moral Science, and Theological Science.

Medieval scholasticism emphasized logic above the other liberal arts, but the Renaissance educational reforms emphasized the importance of rhetoric, which included the study of literature and the use of original sources—such as the Bible. It was in the context of Renaissance liberal arts education that the University of Wittenberg was founded and that the Reformation took place. A major priority for Luther and Melancthon was the establishment of schools. These went beyond simply teaching Christians how to read the Bible. They also implemented a liberal arts curriculum, thus opening up an education designed to cultivate intellectual growth, creativity, and freedom to all Christians, including women, peasants, and others marginalized under feudal society.

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*This included the insight that the best of secular culture could be used by Christians in service to Christ.*

The new Reformation schools were built upon two theological foundations. The first is Baptism. All Christians, by virtue of their Baptism, are priests in Christ's church. As Luther says in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in the church there is no "difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status." This leveling effect meant, in the words of Dr. Korcok, that "if education in the liberal arts was suitable for the child of a prince, then it was suitable for the child of a laborer as well." The connection between Baptism and a liberal arts education was further developed by Johannes Bugenhagen, whose contribution to Lutheran education, Korcok shows, rivaled that of Melancthon. The other key theological foundation to Lutheran education and the distinct shape that it assumed is the doctrine of vocation. Christians must be equipped to serve in both of God's Kingdoms. A liberal arts education, Luther and his fellow Reformers believed, best equips Christians for service to their neighbor in each of the estates to which God assigns us: not only the workplace (as in the current meaning of "vocational education"), but also in the family, the church, and the state.

Dr. Korcok shows that the theological conflicts faced by the Lutherans often manifested themselves in educational controversies. The Enthusiasts considered the liberal arts

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to be too worldly and wanted education that was restricted to learning how to read the Bible. On the other extreme, the Renaissance humanists believed that a liberal arts education is sufficient in itself to teach religion and good morals. No, said the Lutherans, the liberal arts by themselves, while valuable gifts of God, are not enough. Christians also need thorough catechesis in the revelations of Scripture and the truths of theology. The Pietists would also have an educational agenda. They, like the Enthusiasts, also disapproved of the "pagan" and "worldly" scope of the classical liberal arts. They also had a more narrow understanding of vocation than the orthodox Lutherans, taking it only to mean "job" or "occupation." The Pietists wanted pragmatic schools that emphasized job training. Then came the Rationalists who wanted to throw out the liberal arts as relics of the past in favor of a new "scientific" education, which, ominously, would be combined with an emphasis on German nationalism. In each case, orthodox Lutherans defended and put into practice an education that combined the liberal arts with Lutheran catechesis.

*The desire to give their children a truly Lutheran education—consisting of the liberal arts plus catechesis—was enough to make them leave their homeland in search of both religious and educational freedom.*

Dr. Korcok makes an important contribution to the history of

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Lutheranism in America by showing that a major catalyst for the Saxon migration, in which confessional Lutherans fled the Prussian Union of the state church for America and other countries, was the condition of the schools. Confessional congregations generally managed to practice their Lutheran faith, despite the forced union with Reformed congregations, but they could not control the schools, which were dominated by Enlightenment rationalism, and they were appalled by the secularist education their children were receiving. The desire to give their children a truly Lutheran education—consisting of the liberal arts plus catechesis—was enough to make them leave their homeland in search of both religious and educational freedom.

Dr. Korcok documents how this distinctly Lutheran brand of education was a major priority for C. F. W. Walther and the other fathers of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. The book explores Walther's extensive writings on education and describes the early schools and educational projects of the newly-formed synod. These included the founding of *gymnasia*, the full-blown six-year classical high schools as devised by Melancthon and that still to this day educate Germany's elite. These schools were primarily for church workers, young men who wished to prepare for the pastoral ministry with further seminary training and those who desired to become teachers. The ordinary parochial schools in virtually every parish were not on this level, doing far less with Latin and Greek and for a smaller period of time, but they were nevertheless academically impressive. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fabled one-room schoolhouse was presided over by a teacher who herself barely had an elementary education. But the German immigrants who were going to Lutheran schools were taught

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by a thoroughly-trained, superbly-educated professional teacher, who worked from an academically rigorous curriculum. Dr. Korcok argues that the material success of the German immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in contrast to those of other countries, owed a great deal to the quality of the education they were receiving in Lutheran schools.

Eventually, the distinctively classical quality of Lutheran schools started to fade. The pioneering Missouri Synod educators J. C. W. Lindemann and C. A. T. Selle, who founded in 1865 the teachers' seminary in Addison, Illinois (now Concordia University Chicago), did not themselves have a classical education. Though the *gymnasia*, such as the boarding schools in Milwaukee (now Concordia University Wisconsin) and St. Paul, Minnesota (now Concordia University St. Paul), continued to prepare future pastors with the classical languages, the typical parish school dropped Latin in favor of English. Dr. Korcok argues that just as Latin prepared students for participation in intellectual and cultural life of Medieval and Renaissance Europe, English played that same function for German immigrants. Dr. Korcok challenges the conventional view that Missouri Synod schools simply wanted to retain the German language as a way to preserve their German culture. Instead, these schools, while keeping the immigrants' native language alive—which was also the language of Lutheran theology—did a great deal to promote assimilation to American culture. German nationalism, again, was an unwelcome fixture of the rationalist education they were trying to escape. Instead, these German schools made a point of teaching English, which, again, contributed to the unusual

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success of this particular immigrant group. Still, the decline of Latin marked a decline in the classical quality of these schools, though in other ways the heritage of the liberal arts remained. Dr. Korcok does not deal with the more recent history of Lutheran education, with the eventual acceptance of John Dewey's "progressive" education program in the synod's teacher colleges and the impulse to follow the lead of American public schools in their approach to education, with catechesis remaining as the sole remaining Lutheran distinctive.

Today, as public education seems to have lost its way—to the point of exhibiting the anti-intellectualism of the Enthusiasts, the social engineering of the Humanists, the economic preoccupations of the Pietists, and the crass materialism of the Rationalists, all at the same time—many educators are rediscovering again the virtues of classical liberal arts education. Dr. Korcok's book is an important scholarly contribution to that effort. For Lutheran classical educators, it is the book they have been waiting for.

### **The Lutheran Homeschool**

#### **What has Imagination to do with Classical Education?**

A book review from Kathrine Bischof on  
*Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child*  
by Anthony Esolen

Anthony Esolen is the author of *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Western Civilization* and *Ironies of Faith*. He is also Professor of English at Providence College and senior editor of *Touchstone* magazine.

In *Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child*, Esolen relies wonderfully upon classic literature and

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Western Civilization to illustrate his points. For example, from C.S. Lewis' *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Esolen presents the memorably annoying character Eustace Scrubb as a student who has been taught facts, but who lacks moral training and imagination. In the chapter on the essentials of memory work as foundational for imagination, Esolen sites Homer, whom tradition holds to be blind, and Milton, also blind, as examples of creative individuals who used memorization to feed their own imaginations and create poetic masterpieces.

*For all their talk about imagination, he helps the reader understand, progressives do everything to destroy it...*

Anthony Esolen entertains with sarcastic humor throughout his book to illustrate the absurdity of progressive education and its clear attempts to kill the imagination of children. The title itself is sarcastic. Placing himself in the shoes of progressive educators, he seeks to destroy imagination. For all their talk about imagination, he helps the reader understand, progressives do everything to destroy it—sometimes unknowingly, sometimes not. Progressive education does, indeed must, destroy the imagination of the child. Why is this a necessity? Progressivism answers, "If we can but deaden the imagination, then we can settle the child down, and make of him that solid, dependable, and inert space-filler in school and, later, a block of the great state pyramid." [i] Esolen writes that the main goal of public education is, and has been for a long time, to teach just enough information to children so



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that they may get a job. In order to fulfill that goal, educators must make nice little conformists who fit into society like cogs in a machine.

*...when the imagination is destroyed, so is the ability to know Truth.*

Esolen makes the claim that when the imagination is destroyed, so is the ability to know Truth. Two of the ways progressive education eliminates the concept of Truth is first by defining a thing as nothing more than the sum of all its parts and, second, by deleting memory work. By defining a thing as the sum of parts—an apple is a fruit made up of a core, seeds, the flesh, and the skin—then it has neither an origin (a creator) nor a purpose (to be eaten for pleasure and nourishment). When educators seek to eliminate Truth, they also weaken minds through the deletion of memory work from the curriculum. Again putting himself in the progressives' shoes, Esolen says, "How then to do away with the facts? The first thing is to keep the memory weak and empty. That may sound counterintuitive. 'We don't teach by rote memorization,' say our educators today, raising their chins in pride, 'we prefer to teach critical thinking. We prefer to tap into the imagination.'"<sup>ii</sup> Esolen reveals this ironic hypocrisy when he recounts a story of a farmer friend who could recite *Paradise Lost* by memory as he plowed his fields. Progressive educators would ask, "What is the good in that?" Esolen answers that the local politician could not pull the wool over this farmer's eyes to cheat him out of his land and possessions. "To have a wealth of such poetry in your mind...is to be armed against the salesmen and the social

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controllers."<sup>iii</sup> Those men who have a database of not just knowledge, but also wisdom, from which to draw can be independent and can think freely. They have an imagination. The discipline of memory work gives children a kingdom in which they may play; their imagination separates them from the dull, gullible masses.

What is another way we stifle imagination? Esolen's answer: Keep children indoors as much as possible. "Contemporary life happens behind walls."<sup>iv</sup> Today's children spend most of their lives indoors. And yet humans yearn for that place which is without walls, so they create escapes; they create artificial worlds. "Virtual" worlds are one example; parks and zoos are another. Children become convinced that giraffes are impressive, but wrens are drab and boring. Esolen asserts that quiet time alone with the outdoors provides children the very things they need to develop their imaginations and to learn the Truths of creation. They see the beauty of the sunset, feel the rain on their skin, hear the sounds of birds whose names they might not even know yet. They feel the roughness of dirt on their palms, notice the life cycle of plants around them, and gaze up at the starry night sky. Indeed, the heavens declare the glory of God.

*...it eliminates venues where you would most likely find heroes, such as a battlefield. They teach passivism. They belittle and shame the soldier.*

Esolen reveals yet another method to kill the imagination: cut all heroes down to size. How does progressive education

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get rid of heroes? First, it eliminates venues where you would most likely find heroes, such as a battlefield. They teach passivism. They belittle and shame the soldier. Progressives also teach children to “hate and suspect excellence” in extraordinary individuals. One subtle way to accomplish this is by making everyone a hero, even if they are just ordinary. “If everyone is a hero, then no one is a hero; and genuine heroes will go unnoticed in the mindless self-congratulation.”<sup>vi</sup> But “the hero stretches our imagination. He introduces us, for better or for worse, to possibilities we had never considered. He extends the limits of what is human.”<sup>v</sup>

What can classical educators extrapolate from this book? How does Classical Education encourage the imagination, and why should it do so? Classical educators are, for the most part, not bound by and dedicated to state standards. They know that there is a danger in mind-numbing entertainment sources, those that influence a child’s every move and decision. They know there is much to learn which does not (and cannot) appear on standardized tests. Classical educators teach about heroes by teaching rich history, not random social studies. They encourage memory work in great poetry and in all that the mind needs to develop and think: multiplication tables, history timelines, geography, great speeches from great leaders, and more. Classical education has as its goal the knowledge of Truth, goodness, and beauty. Without a good imagination, the student is destined to live with a pack mentality, to be trapped in the world of mass entertainment, to live within the literal walls which contribute to mental ones.

Esolen calls Method 10 “Deny the Transcendent” or “Fix Above the Heads of Men the Lowest Ceiling of All.” With

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the knowledge of truth, beauty and goodness comes the knowledge of our God. Jesus is the Truth who sets men free. His beauty is hidden on the cross for the work of our salvation. His Goodness rescues those who are not good from destruction. Without eyes to see, we are blind to all this. While only the Holy Spirit can grant saving faith in our Redeemer, when we kill the imagination we strengthen the walls that block receptivity to seeing our Creator, to learning language, and to learning anything that is worth knowing.

I recommend this book to all Lutheran homeschoolers and classroom teachers. Esolen writes in an entertaining, yet poignant manner. He is careful to include not only the philosophy behind the ideas, but also many practical examples of how we can teach our kids and nurture their imaginations, all to the glory of God.

<sup>[i]</sup> p. xi

<sup>[ii]</sup> p.8

<sup>[iii]</sup> p. 14

<sup>[iv]</sup> p. 30

<sup>[v]</sup> p. 143

<sup>[vi]</sup> p.148

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