



Classical
EDUCATION
and
the HOMESCHOOL

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Published by Canon Press 
P.O. Box 8729, Moscow, ID 83843
800.488.2034 | www.canonpress.com

Wesley Callihan, Douglas Jones, and Douglas Wilson,
Classical Education and the Homeschool (revised edition).
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Cover design by David Dalbey.
Printed in the United States of America.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wilson, Douglas, 1953-
Classical education & the homeschool / Douglas Wilson, Wesley Callihan, Douglas Jones. -- Rev. ed.
p. cm.

Originally published: Moscow, ID : Canon Press, 2001.

ISBN-13: 978-1-885767-85-1 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 1-885767-85-4 (pbk.)

1. Home schooling--Curricula. 2. Christian education--Home training. 3. Classical education. I. Callihan, Wes. II. Jones, Douglas. III. Title. IV. Title: Classical education and the homeschool.

LC40.W565 2007

371.04'2--dc22

2007002762



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Introduction

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

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

acknowledge they really do not fully understand what it is they desire.

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

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

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

So what is presented here is nothing more than amiable company for the first few steps on these “older paths” and a rough, sketched-out map for the remainder of the journey. *Deus vobiscum.*



The Necessity for Hard Work

To give to someone else what one never received one's self is, of course, difficult. Many parents are initially attracted to the idea of a classical education because they know that they were shortchanged in their own education; they want their children to be taught in a way that they were not. The problem with this is a problem common in all forms of conversion, including academic conversions—one is turning away from the familiar to embrace the unfamiliar. The word conversion comes from the Latin *converto*, which means “I turn around.” Turning around, turning away from the familiar to the unfamiliar can be rather unnerving at times.

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

The only way to answer such questions successfully is through a commitment to hard work over a long period

of time. We are tempted to think it would be nice if education could occur on the Big Rock Candy Mountain. But it cannot, and as diligent parents, we are confronted with two areas which stand out with respect to the necessity of hard work.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The last important note is certainly not last in order of importance. The Bible teaches that doctrine—teaching—must be *adorned*. If it is not adorned with a gracious manner and clean-hearted living, the child will likely either come to imitate the hypocrisy of the parents or turn away with disgust from everything given to him, including what was truly valuable. Neither direction is

one we should want our children to take. Consequently, the rigor of classical study must not be confused with the rigors of living in an unpleasant home. Consider exhortation from a father in a former century:

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

¹ Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1994, 1861), 36, 119.



Beginning Reading Lists

Ancient Texts

The Aeneid by Virgil

The Antiquities of the Jews and *Wars of the Jews*
by Josephus

The Annals and Histories of Tacitus

The Apocrypha

The Bible should of course be read constantly.

Epic of Gilgamesh

History by Herodotus

The History of the Peloponnesian War
by Thucydides

The Iliad and *Odyssey* by Homer

The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans
by Plutarch

Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

Metamorphoses by Ovid

Nicomachean Ethics, Rhetoric, and On Poetics
by Aristotle

On the Nature of Things by Lucretius

The plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides,
and Aristophanes

The Republic, Gorgias, and Phaedrus by Plato

Early Christian and Medieval Texts

Aquinas: Selected Writings edited by Robert Goodwin

Confessions by Augustine

Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius

Cur Deus Homo by Anselm

The Didache

The Divine Comedy by Dante

Ecclesiastical History by Eusebius

The Koran

Letter to the Corinthians by Clement

On the Incarnation by Athanasius

Modern Texts

The Bondage of the Will by Martin Luther

Christianity and Liberalism by J. Gresham Machen

Commentary on Galatians by Martin Luther

A Defense of Virginia and the South by R.L. Dabney

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion

by David Hume

The Foundations of Social Order by R.J. Rushdoony

Hamlet, Macbeth, and Much Ado About Nothing

by Williams Shakespeare

Historical Theology by William Cunningham

The History of Christian Doctrines by Louis Berkhof

Idols for Destruction by Herbert Schlossberg

In Praise of Folly by Erasmus

Lectures in Sacred Rhetoric by R.L. Dabney

Magnalia Christi Americana by Cotton Mather

Meditations on First Philosophy by Descartes

Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan

Pilgrim's Regress by C.S. Lewis

Postmodern Times by Edward Veith

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

The Prince by Machiavelli

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

On Education

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

On Literature and Reading

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

On Logic

The Art of Reasoning with Symbolic Logic by David Kelley

A Concise Logic by William Halverson

Introduction to Logic by Leonard Copi

Introductory Logic by James Nance and Douglas Wilson

Intermediate Logic by James Nance

Logic by Gordon Clark

A Rulebook for Arguments by Anthony Weston

On Rhetoric

Ad Herennium traditionally attributed to Cicero

Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student by Edward Corbett

Defense of Classical Rhetoric by Brian Vickers

Institutio Oratoria by Quintilian

Lectures in Sacred Rhetoric by R.L. Dabney

Rhetoric by Aristotle

Rhetoric in the Classical Tradition by Winifred Horner

On Worldview Thinking

Angels in the Architecture by Douglas Jones and Douglas Wilson

Back to the Basics by Hagopian, Wilson, Jones, and Wagner

Building a Christian Worldview by W. Andrew Hoffecker

The City of God by Augustine

The Defense of the Faith by Cornelius Van Til

Doctrine of the Knowledge of God by John Frame

A House for My Name by Peter Leithart

Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

Plowing in Hope by David Bruce Hegeman

Through New Eyes by James Jordan

War of the Worldviews by Gary DeMar



Other Resources

The following resources may be useful in learning more about classical and Christian education. Some have different emphases and perspectives than others, but all can be helpful.

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

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

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

Classical Christian Schooling Digest
www.ccsnet.org

Classical Christian Homeschooling (Fritz Hinrichs)
www.classicalhomeschooling.org

Classical Christian Homeschooling (Christine Miller)

www.classical-homeschooling.org

Classical Conversations

910-687-0288

www.classicalconversations.com

Escondido Tutorial Service

www.gbt.org

Greenleaf Press

615-449-1617

www.greenleafpress.com

Logos School Materials

866-562-2174

www.logoschool.com/materials

New Saint Andrews College

208-882-1566

www.nsa.edu

Schola Classical Tutorials

208-301-2637

www.scholatutorials.com

Veritas Press

800-922-5082

www.veritaspress.com

The Well-Trained Mind

www.welltrainedmind.com