The MEDIEVAL REDEMPTION of CHRISTMAS

ALSO...

- Ready for MonCon 2016?  p. 10
- A School for Everyone: Four Different Takes on “Classical Christian”  p. 32
- Schools Without Chests: What Happens When Truth Is Silenced  p. 18
In this information age, it’s sometimes hard to know how to choose from the sea of options and resources that present themselves at every turn. When you are choosing what books your children will read, the stakes are especially high. That is why we have put years of research into The Classical Reader, collecting and analyzing the K–12 reading recommendations of classical educators from around the country, seeking those readings that have been important and pleasurable to generations of students. This pithy book includes recommendations for reading at each grade level, noting each selection’s level of difficulty and genre. The Classical Reader provides a way to keep a record of what your student has read and will also help you to plan future reading. This book is a valuable resource for every school and family for everything from book reports to reading for pleasure. The Classical Reader is a veritable cave of dragon loot, an embarrassment of riches that will provide years of instruction and delight and help to instill a lifelong love of reading.

A sortable online version of The Classical Reader is available at ClassicalReader.com
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Calvin College admits students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin.
That **stitch in time that would save nine**, for education, was missed a century ago. Christian culture is grasping at threads as it tries to remain relevant. But, there is hope that we can reweave a once great tapestry.

A PBS feature “Sacred Journeys with Bruce Feiler” repeats the common but false claim: “Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, made its early gains through military conquest.” Feiler, like so many in the media and academia today, tells the story he wants to believe—lumping Christianity with Islam because “all religions are the same.” But history reveals Feiler’s error. Emperors, kings, and crusaders may have fought wars in the name of Christianity. But this is not how Christianity spread. The leaders of these quests appealed to Christianity because it was already widely accepted and they wanted its support. So how did Christianity, with its ideas, become the world’s largest religion?

The true story about Christian expansion may surprise you. You are part of this legacy every time you sit in the pick-up line at your child’s school.

During times of Christianity’s spread, educators fueled the growth—first as classical educators turned Christian (Justin, Clement, Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and others) and then in monasteries across Europe practicing classical Christian education. Ironically, where Anglo-Saxon and continental kings failed to push back Viking invaders, the Norsemen were undone by Christian educators they captured. Monks, captured and enslaved by the Vikings, were taken back to Scandinavia where, as slaves, they taught the pagans about Christ and His world. Alcuin, a monk from York, England, started schools across the pagan Saxon lands. Within a few hundred years, the Vikings quit pillaging not out of defeat, but because their culture had become Christian.

Christian ideas took hold as Christian parents and educators (often monks, see page 10) cultivated a Christian *paideia* in children. This thing called *paideia* (read more starting on page 18) is the building block of Christian civility and culture. Christianity grew rapidly between AD 40 and AD 310 in the Mediterranean, and from AD 450 to AD 900 in Western Europe. It was the strong, distinct, and set-apart Christian culture that attracted converts and grew the church.

During Christianity’s early expansion, Christians were attacked by the Roman public as cannibalistic (eating the body of Christ during communion) and incestuous (they married their “sisters in Christ”), and because they worshipped the head of an ass (who knows where this came from). Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–180) called Christians “illiterate and bucolic yokels.” We now know that the writings of some of these yokels at the time (Tertullian, Irenaeus, and slightly later, Augustine) have more influence today than Aurelius does.

Since the early part of the twentieth century, true Christians have been increasingly marginalized. Now, we’re being labeled as homophobes, sexist, haters, silly, superstitious, and weak-minded. And, history is being rewritten to slander our heritage, as Feiler has done. As a whole, we need to hold fast to our tradition and regain our grasp on education so that one day the critics on PBS, NBC, ABC, FOX and the rest will look like the second-century Romans—judged as foolish artifacts of history. ✪

— David Goodwin
ACCS President
The Jungle Book Unearths Cultural Treasure

The rarest of cultural alignments occurred this past year

The same story, retold for and by three different generations, is the worldview equivalent of layers in an archeological dig. In three versions of *The Jungle Book*, we can see three distinct views of “the good life” that reflect the changing cultural scene in America.

Taken from the long tradition of fables, *The Jungle Book* shows us “the good life” through personified animals, a primitive human culture, and a petri dish of worldviews. Just as *Aesop’s Fables*, *1001 Arabian Nights*, and *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* shaped virtues in three distinct civilizations, *The Jungle Book* reveals our civilization, and imprints in different ways on our kids.

Classical education makes us aware of an underappreciated power: the vision of “the good life.” Every culture is shaped by the vision of what life we should pursue—our founding fathers called this the pursuit of happiness. What makes us happy is largely a function of vision, cultivated at a young age (go to school and college, get married, have 2.5 children, etc.). This vision carves our children’s track through life. Parents should teach their children two simple questions to ask every time they watch a movie or engage in a story: “What is the vision of ‘the good life’ in this work?” and, “Is this really good?”

Rudyard Kipling released *The Jungle Book* as a series in the 1890s. The second *The Jungle Book* Unearths Cultural Treasure

We can glimpse the shifting vision of “the good life” over the past 100+ years by looking at just a handful of examples from *The Jungle Book* retellings.

“The good life” for both Kipling and JB ‘16 involves jungle law, but the source is quite different. Kipling’s original concept of the law is more like C.S. Lewis’s “deep magic” inscribed on the stone table—it’s coded into creation by the creator and known by everyone (Romans 1). For example, Mowgli’s life is bought by Bagheera for the price of a kill—a bull—based in the law of the jungle. In JB ‘16, we see this law become a social contract. The animals all benefit mutually as they agree to follow the law—no killing at times of low water because then everyone can get a drink. We can see the contrast between God’s law, built into nature, and today’s concept of law as a social contract, flexible and practical. How does this influence your child’s understanding of right and wrong?

In JB ‘67, we see a different view of children. In Kipling’s work, it is considered bad manners to compliment children in front of them. Yet in Disney’s view, we see the parent figure, Baloo, calling Mowgli “little buddy.” Kipling’s Baloo was a parent/disciplinarian (Hebrews 12:7). Disney played a keen role in moving the vision of parenting from one who loves and disciplines children to one who loves, befriends, and indulges children.

Throughout Kipling’s story, the vision of “the good life” is family. This can clearly be seen in Mowgli’s motivation to return to his village. In Kipling’s original, Mowgli is drawn by his mother and relatives there. In JB ‘67, Mowgli returns for an attractive girl. We can see a vision of “the good life” emerge—the pursuit of family versus a romantic/sexual motivation.

The consequences of ideas, and the consequences of stories, are more powerful than we think. Of course, *The Jungle Book* stories reflect these attitude shifts; they are not solely responsible for creating them. It takes hundreds of stories to do that.

Visit ClassicalDifference.com to see some interesting videos by the Family Policy Institute of Washington. Before you shake your head at what college students believe these days, keep reading to take a look at the vision of “the good life” we pass to our children.

Virtues in Motion

We can glimpse the shifting vision of “the good life” over the past 100+ years by looking at just a handful of examples from *The Jungle Book* retellings.

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P.E.—TOLKIEN WEEK EDITION

■ “TROLL TAG” TRAUMA
1ST GRADE BOY 1: Hey, are you going to raise your hand to be a troll tagger?
1ST GRADE BOY 2: No, dude. I do NOT need that kind of stress in my life right now.

■ WOUNDED IN “THE BATTLE OF FIVE ARMIES”
1ST GRADE GIRL, HAVING LOST A TOOTH: I don’t know why all these people want to SEE my tooth. That’s just gross.

■ A BREAK FROM “CAPTURE THE RING”
2ND GRADE BOY, DECIDING IF HE SHOULD PLAY: What’s a hobbit? TEACHER: It’s a character from Lord of the Rings. They’re half as tall as humans, live in Middle Earth, and eat two breakfasts.
2ND GRADE BOY: OH! Two breakfasts?! I’m in!
—Amy Burgess, Covenant Classical School, Fort Worth, TX, on behalf of P.E. Teacher Karise Gilliland

■ WHAT DOES “MEDIEVAL” MEAN TO YOU?
Medieval is the time way back in history when people built castles and women weren’t allowed to wear shorts.
—Janey Fletcher, 4th grade, Westminster Academy, Memphis, TN

Halfway evil? —2nd Grade, The Ambrose School, Meridian, ID

■ IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT CHRISTMAS …
• I would make it snow on Christmas every year! —Sarah Smith
• I want 1000 pieces of candy, and for Christmas to be my birthday. —Alli Carner
• I think we should give more presents than we get. —Lana Heilig
• I would go to my favorite restaurant for pancakes instead of regular Christmas dinner. —Shepherd Carner
• —Julie Nagem, Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten, Westminster Academy, Memphis, TN

Want to read the moral of the story? Visit ClassicalDifference.com/2016-winter

Submissions
To submit a story or quote, go to ClassicalDifference.com/submissions. Published submissions in the “Set Apart” section are worth $25 in lunch money.
Traditions can be a complicated thing. As a young family starting out, trying to build a few of your own can feel a little shocking. All those fun things you remember about Christmas don't just happen! Someone has to plan it and do the work and clean up the mess afterwards. Someone has to pick out that Christmas dress and find the shoes and buy the tights—all in time for the big event. You probably already have traditions from your own childhood that are as much a part of your idea of Christmas as your name is part of you. As each year rolls around, we find ourselves adding and removing things from our "traditions" list. We learn from friends, troubleshoot things we didn't like as much as we thought we would, and pioneer new ways to express that what we are celebrating is still very Good News. This party, this very best party, began 2000 years ago and hasn't stopped since.

The main concern, and one that many Christians share, is that we never want to fall into the trap of honoring our traditions rather than using our traditions to honor Christ. Traditions are just wonderful tools that we have been given, but they are certainly not an end in themselves.

Here are a few things that have stuck with us through the years.

**CREATURE COMFORTS**

Christmastime means twinkle lights and shiny decor, stacks of wool blankets, eggnog in the fridge, and most importantly, Christmas books on the hearth. I have a crate of books I add to each year, of all levels of difficulty and seriousness (or lack thereof). The kids see the books come out...
Sitting in our living rooms this Christmas, surrounded by tinsel and wrapping paper and listening to “White Christmas” on Pandora, we might not feel any connection to the mystical and forgotten world of 1000 years ago. But the medieval mindset was one of redemption.

From education (see a history of education in the next issue) to holidays, they took the world around them and made it Christ’s. The Dark Ages, shrouded by paganism on one side and humanism on the other, brought us much of the lore and tradition that fills this holiday with light.

I’m dreaming of a white Christmas, just like the ones I used to know, where the tree tops glisten and children listen to hear sleigh bells in the snow... —Irving Berlin
Creating Christmas

THE RECIPE THAT MADE ONE OF OUR GREATEST HOLIDAYS

Who has not seen at least one movie version of Charles Dickens’ beloved yuletide tale, *A Christmas Carol*? Yet few today realize that *A Christmas Carol* played a key role in revitalizing nineteenth-century Christmas and returning it to a holiday infused with social charity and family cheer. Due to the influences of a staid Puritanism and the utilitarian Industrial Revolution, Christmas in the mid-1800s had been stripped of much of its medieval magic.

Dickens helped change all that. But he was not the first defender of Christmas, nor was he the first to realize that the true wonder and joy of Christmas could draw in Christians and non-Christians alike. Emmanuel—“God with us”—is the seemingly impossible paradox, the almost unbelievable news that the all-powerful, all-present, unseen God could, and would, take on human flesh and become a man. Worthy of celebration, of frivolity, of pulling out all the stops? I would think so!

The church fathers of the fourth century thought so as well. When Constantine ended the Roman persecution of the church, he, along with the leaders of the church, knew that bridges would have to be built between Christianity and paganism.

You see, at the time of Constantine, the Roman pagans were already celebrating a religious festival of Mardis Gras-like joy and mirth. The Romans believed, as Virgil records in Book VIII of the *Aeneid*, that Italy had, in the distant past, experienced a Golden Age of pastoral innocence. During that time, Saturn, the father of Jupiter, and his fellow Titans had lived on the earth alongside mortals. Long ago, Italy had fallen from her age of gold; however, each year, around the winter solstice, the Romans celebrated the Saturnalia as a way of hearkening back to that lost time of divine closeness, when the dwelling places of gods and men had come, all too briefly, into direct proximity.

But that was not all. The time of the winter solstice, which the Romans celebrated on December 25 rather than December 21, also included a birthday celebration—that of the invincible Sun, who rose up anew out of the shortest day of the year and marched forward into the promised spring. It seemed to Constantine and to many of the church leaders that the conjunction of the Saturnalia and the birthday of the sun made for an appropriate season to celebrate the birth of Christ, He who had drawn heaven and earth together by His Incarnation and brought Light into a world imprisoned in darkness.

Yes, there are many who would argue that the dating of Christmas marks a negative example of the church watering down Christian theology to accommodate pagan culture. Like the religious Puritans and the secular utilitarians of the Victorian Age, they would strip Christmas of all its “medieval” trappings and transform it into a day of sober reflection, either on our sins or our bank accounts.

The medieval church did not see it that way. Far from destroyers of doctrine, they were cultural evangelists, reaching out to the pagan world with a message of hope and joy: “Let us lead you to the full truth, which up until now you have only seen in part.” Or, in the words of that timeless promise that Paul extended to his pagan Greek audience: “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:23; ESV).

The best classical Christian schools lead their students upward from the wonderful, yet limited general revelation of Homer, Plato, and Virgil to the glorious fullness of Christ and the Bible. After all, Christ’s kingdom is forever, and is over everything—including pagan festivals.

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LOUIS MARKOS (www.Loumarkos.com), professor in English & Scholar in Residence at Houston Baptist University, holds the Robert H. Ray Chair in Humanities. His books include *From Achilles to Christ: Why Christians Should Read the Pagan Classics*, *On the Shoulders of Hobbits: The Road to Virtue with Tolkien and Lewis*, and *The Dreaming Stone* (a children’s novel in which his children become part of Greek mythology).

Christmas is Upon Us!

For a few short weeks, hope and peace seem a little more real, the redemption of our culture a little more possible. We chose to highlight the medieval period because despite the lurid reputation and sometimes equally lurid realities, the medieval mindset was one of reclamation. To many modern Christians, paganism is something to be despised and rejected. But what if we used a recycle model instead? Reclaim, renew, redeem. In the medieval mind, all people are made in the *Imago Dei* and all their varying cultures have good in them that can be reclaimed. But it must be renewed and redeemed to become fully Christian. Methods aside, seeking to enhance the shadow of God’s glory, wherever it may be found, is a mindset worthy of imitation.

As you head into this season of light and a new year, make this your resolution: **RECLAIM, RENEW, REDEEM!**
The medieval mindset, largely lost and almost entirely dismissed by our worldview today, forms much of the foundation of classical education.

Each year, students at The Ambrose School experience medieval monasticism in a real way at the Monastic Conventiculum (MonCon). After studying monasticism, they spend from Friday afternoon to Saturday morning at school. But not ordinary school.

Arriving on a Friday evening, they don their robes (pre-prepared by volunteers out of bedsheets) take a vow, and enter the transformed monastery. They are not allowed to speak (much). A cell phone is punishable by excommunication, if only from the event. They eat simple food and follow a monastic schedule of services (liturgies), sleep, scribing, and personal devotions.

This is just one example of the ways classical education teaches the heart, trains the affections, and educates the soul. Classical schools around the country do this in various ways every day, not all as solemn or lengthy as an entire night and day. But effective, nonetheless. These goals are contained in those little habits ingrained throughout the days and months—those extra projects, the house systems, the overnight retreats.

In the words of the teacher who created MonCon, here is why it matters.

But the Promise showed their wildest dreams had simply not been wild enough.
—Michael Card

I have seen things like this hundreds of times—it's the joy of teaching really—but it never ceases to astonish me and bring me to my knees with gratitude and awe that when we "do school" or "do academics" in this way—through an experience that is embodied, beautiful and real, and not merely a "reenactment" (let alone a lecture, reading, or other type of traditional lesson)—13- and 14-year-old boys and girls (who initially whined that we were not allowing them to bring technology to this event) not only actually learn the "facts" and "ideas" of history, literature, and philosophy better, their loves are truly shaped: these students came away from the week not only understanding monasticism.
better, but loving prayer, poetry, meditation, liturgy, silence, loving Jesus more. This is one tangible instance of how academics and discipleship must be inextricably intertwined—the beauty of academic truth not only filling minds but pulling hearts toward goodness.

Here is what I saw. An unusually active student spending every free moment of MonCon in the chapel with his Bible, or on his knees, or head bowed in prayer. Other students volitionally choosing to do the same—and I had the opportunity to pray for them as golden sunset-light filled the “chapel.” Their silence, tears, soft hearts, open Bibles. The light of 300+ (see cover photo) candles making our school a place of hallowed beauty—and the students’ visceral responses to this beauty.

Beauty, peace, stillness, silence, prayer, liturgy, community, discipline, the presence of the Holy Spirit—over and over again—these are the words the students are using to describe their academic experience of learning about medieval monasticism.

And this is why you might want to think even more deeply about how you can help and support your school and teachers as they seek to educate deeply.

JENNY RALLENS, teacher of Medieval Humanities and Rhetoric at The Ambrose School, developed MonCon, believing discipleship to be the umbrella over academic teaching. She is currently pursuing her M.A. at Oxford, England. She is also living in C.S. Lewis’ home, The Kilns, and has seen “the lamp-post” which makes her the envy of most of us here at The Classical Difference.

MEDIEVAL ROOTS

Advent (see page 37) — Setting aside time for reflection before Christmas might have begun as early as the fourth century, but Advent as the four preceding Sundays was made official somewhere around 1100, depending on the source.

The 12 Days of Christmas — Formalized in the Middle Ages, this period of celebration starts on Christmas Day and lasts until the evening of January 5, also called Twelfth Night.

Epiphany — During medieval times, January 6 marked the end of Christmas and, according to some sources, made Epiphany as big a celebration as Christmas. Epiphany commemorates the arrival of the Magi.

CAROLS — For better or worse, carol singers going from house to house now is the result of a medieval ban. The word “carol” means to sing and dance in a circle. Legend has it that so many services were disrupted by this practice, the Church told them to desist or take it outside. Which they did. Hot chocolate was invented later.

Christmas — Literally. The first recorded use of the word “Christmas” (“Cristes Maesse”) was in a book dated 1038 from Saxon England.
Students on MonCon ...

- the liturgies changed me …
- shifted the focus off myself …
- surprised at the peace I felt in times of silence …
- praying, I got this feeling that at the time I couldn't put a name to, but looking back it was peace … it's still here in a way …
- time we spent with God made me want to live that way every day …
- writing and meditating on the word of God—it was beautiful—in the dark with only candlelight …
- feeling the presence of God in silent prayer and contemplation …

Christmas Kitsch on Display

A SERMON IN A SWEATER

Earlier this week, our secondary students gathered in a congregation of Christmas sweater ugliness. The kind of ugliness displayed is what philosophers call “kitsch,” which the dictionary defines as “art, objects, or design considered to be in poor taste because of excessive garishness or sentimentality, but sometimes appreciated in an ironic or knowing way.”

We found humor in our sweaters because we knew how hideous they were. This is good, because at Petra, we are concerned about students' tastes. We want them to know the difference between kitsch and truth, beauty, and goodness.

It is now, during this holiday time of the year—a time of strong emotion and feeling—that we need to be careful not to succumb to a kind of kitsch that blinds us from the incomprehensible truth, beauty, and goodness of Christmas. For there are versions of Christmas and of Jesus that are as dire in their kitsch as the sweaters we wore that Tuesday morning.

The British philosopher, Roger Scruton, in an essay on kitsch, defines it as “the attempt to have your emotions on the cheap. … The world of kitsch is a world of make-believe, of permanent childhood, in which every day is Christmas. In such a world, death does not really happen.”

Like it or not, the actual birth of Jesus is enshrouded and wrapped up in death. This infant is our Savior—a Savior born to die, that death might be defeated. Now do not get me wrong. I am not saying that Christmas is a time of doom and gloom. It is indeed a time of great celebration. But our celebrations will—yea, they must be—tinged with a portion of sadness and longing, because the work of the infant is not fully accomplished.

"Come, Lord Jesus," is the cry of Advent. We celebrate what happened 2,000 years ago. But we look toward the full realization of that birth in a future we long to be in now.

Excerpted from the Petra Academy Blog, by Gregg Valeriano, humanities and logic teacher.
and run like they are meeting old friends at the airport—A Peanuts Christmas, Tumtum and Nutmeg: A Christmas Adventure, Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree, The Conscience Pudding, Christmas in Noisy Village, The Stable Rat and Other Christmas Poems, The Story of the Other Wise Man, and the list goes on. Some of these titles I remember from my own childhood and it is sweet to see my kids poring over them the way I did.

CRAFTING COMFORT

My children love to make all manner of decorative crafting items. To manage but still embrace their desire to celebrate, I make one garland area in the dining room that they can embellish at their leisure. Having a designated place to hang the 10K snowflakes and the inevitable loop chain and all the other ornamentation of the season makes it fun for them and low-key for me. It’s a wonderful thing to not find random things duct taped to the walls.

TREATS!

We are a family that loves food, so we also love food traditions. But there are too many things we like, and we just can’t make and eat treats all day every day for a month. I had a real breakthrough when I realized that just because it is a tradition for us does not mean we have to do it every year. Gingerbread houses are fun, but in my opinion, once a year is too often for them. Now, at the beginning of December, I make a list of all the things we sometimes make and the kids vote on what they really want. Then I make one treat a week (I know the runner-ups if I feel like splurging). This more mellow approach spares me from spending all day every day in December thinking I ought to be decorating sugar cookies.

ADVENT

We celebrate Advent in anticipation of Christmas (though not as a penitential season). Practically speaking, I have a set of little mittens with the numbers of the days on them. The kids take turns opening the mittens to discover the Advent surprise. Sometimes it might actually be a gift—a message that says “Go look under your pillows!” where they will find a new pair of silly socks, or a card game, or other simple item. Typically though, our Advent surprises simply add a level of joy to something already planned. I write a clue that leads them to a hidden tray of cookies and milk with straws. Or they find out we are getting the Christmas tree today. Or maybe we are going to decorate those sugar cookies, or watch a movie, or eat popcorn. I only put the surprise in the mitten right before they open it, so I am in very little danger of over promising and under delivering.

So we head into this Christmas season armed with all of the feeble efforts we can muster to celebrate the Incarnation. And by God’s grace we trust to see our children blessed in that. We hope to forever anchor in them the correlation between loving God and loving each other. We want this knowledge—that Jesus came—to be tied up in their hearts with all of their sweetest memories.

Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

RACHEL JANKOVIC is a wife, homemaker, and mother of seven. She graduated from New Saint Andrews College, but mostly reads cookbooks now to avoid story grip (being highly susceptible). Rachel’s books Loving the Little Years and Fit to Burst continue to be parenting favorites. She is also a contributor to the Desiring God blog and is featured in their book Mom Enough.
Eric Metaxas is a #1 New York Times bestselling author known for mobilizing people to ask bigger questions and live more meaningful lives. His smash best-seller *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet Spy* is ranked #21 by Amazon in "most highlighted books of all time," and his books have been translated into more than twenty languages.

The Eric Metaxas Show is on over 300 stations across the country. The two-hour program airs live weekdays 2 to 4pm ET from the Empire State Building in New York City. Billed as ‘The Show About Everything’ past guests showcase a wide range of personalities to include: Actor Morgan Freeman, Journalist Katie Couric, Mary Karr author of The Liars’ Club, Dick Cavett, USA Today columnist Kirsten Powers, Nia Vardalos, New York Times columnist David Brooks, Peter Hitchens, comedians such as Jimmy ‘JJ’ Walker and more.

**LIVE weekday afternoons 2 - 4 PM ET**

Listen on-air or online.
To find Eric on a radio station near you: metaxastalk.com/find-a-station

Call or Text the Show
800.973.1684

“**The Show About Everything**”
Letters & Notes

ACCS President Joins the Eric Metaxas Show

Listen to David Goodwin, ACCS president, talk with Eric Metaxas about Common Core and classical Christian education:

Mock Trial Continued

Last issue’s “Mock Trial” story highlighted the mock trial teams in many of our schools, and we don’t want to leave anyone out.

■ BAYSHORE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

In the annual Alabama Youth in Government Judicial Competition, Bayshore’s mock trial team came out on top, placing first in all four categories. This is the first time Bayshore has fielded a mock trial team in any competition. There were 23 teams in the competition.

■ AUGUSTINE CLASSICAL ACADEMY

Augustine’s mock trial team came in 5th in the state of New York. Traditionally one of the biggest competitions, the state finals in Albany draw from a field of 350 teams. The Augustine team is in its fourth year.

We are proud of our mock trial teams. Congratulations!

MHA Worldview Summit 2017

A MARS HILL ACADEMY CAPSTONE EVENT IN WASHINGTON, DC

“In which students and outstanding speakers from Congress, public policy institutes, academia and advocacy organizations address pressing topics, such as religious freedom, marriage and the sanctity of life …”
major retelling was in the 1967 Disney animation release. With Disney’s live-action release of the 2016 Jungle Book, we see the third major retelling of this story. (We’ll call them “Kipling’s,” “JB ’67,” and “JB ’16.”)

All three versions are well done and excellent in their own right. Kipling’s rich storytelling will leave your child with a sense of awe from deep in the Asian jungles that will be burned into their imagination for life, especially if read to them at bedtime! JB ’67’s soundtrack has some of the best jazz music written for children. And the stunning visual imagery and compelling depiction of Mowgli by Neel Sethi in JB ’16 is well worth a rental, if you didn’t see it in the theater.

None of these depictions are avant-garde. They reflect the culture that “is” more than they try to influence it. They are just playful stories. This is what makes them such good artifacts to help understand “us.” Kipling’s work is very different from the 1967 or 2016 retellings. The original Mowgli is a boy of two natures. His prideful, playful, and sometimes rebellious nature requires his animal custodians to discipline him. But, he’s also regal. The animals cannot look him in the eye. His authority over them is based simply in the fact that he’s a man-cub. Clearly, we see Kipling’s Christian understanding of Mowgli—a divine image bearer, yet fallen. And, we see an understanding of hierarchy, rather than equality. We see this most clearly in the banderlog—a lawless civilization of monkeys. Mowgli is attracted to the banderlog, not by fire as with Disney’s renditions, but because they want him to be their king. Of course, they’re lousy subjects, so this doesn’t work out.

When Walt Disney himself commissioned a team to put Kipling’s tale on the silver screen, he wanted something happier and more playful than Kipling’s original. We see a Mowgli who is fun loving, curious, and likable. JB ’67 was Walt Disney’s last anachronistic work to depict his view of “the good life” as redefined for Americans by Disney himself from 1945–1970—fun music, indulgent friends, a Mowgli-gets-the-girl scene, and a villain who gets burned (but not killed) in the end. Walt’s formula, from Snow White to The Jungle Book, did more to imprint values of “if it

Parents should teach their children two simple questions: “What is the vision of ‘the good life’ in this work?” and “Is this really good?”
feels good, do it” and “free love” on the idealistic hippies than any college professor could.

In the 2016 version, the boy is not regal, he’s more “authentic.” In JB ’16, Mowgli is a reflection of our dependence on technology—he builds simple machines to win races, get honey, and thwart Sheer Khan. This gains the friendship of the animals. And, in the end, technology (tools) wins the day. Mowgli’s ultimate victory comes through cooperating with nature’s king—the elephant. A reverence, almost worship, of nature and the belief that overcoming adversity just requires a bit of technology has been borrowed from a generation attached to i-devices while they victoriously climb El Capitan.

By “excavating” three generations, we can see what cannot be seen year-to-year. Kipling’s Christian, yet romanticized, view of “the good life” leaves children with a sense of wonder and a healthy fear of the evil in our world, and a virtuous response to that evil. Walt’s innocent and indulgent view helped to create a generation that needed every problem to be fixed, the outcome to be just, and above all, the pursuit to be fun. Where prior generations saw family, children, and the resources to support them as “the good life,” Disney reflected and helped reshape “the good life” as no obligations, no rules, just right. And, in the most recent telling, we see a good life marked by harmony and dependence on nature, and the boundless potential of the individual.

We can see the Christian worldview is not something that is spelled out in sermons or even read directly by citing verses of Scripture. Rather, it’s a subtle view of what constitutes a life well lived, informed by the whole of Scripture. What do your children believe about “the good life?”

Clarity in Contrast

TWO VIEWS OF “THE GOOD LIFE”

In 1964, Walt Disney was disappointed with Bill Peet after he created an initial, faithful interpretation of Rudyard Kipling’s classic The Jungle Book. Disney wanted something less lush and moody, and less serious. He hired a new director, Larry Clemmons, to direct The Jungle Book with one condition: “The first thing I want you to do,” instructed Disney, “is not to read it. I want you to have fun with it.”

The product, released in 1967, bears the result of Disney’s request. In Disney’s released version, the monkeys steal an innocent Mowgli, prompting his “friends” Bagheera and Baloo to save him. At the end of the battle with the monkeys, Bagheera and Baloo discuss what happened.

1967 DISNEY RELEASE

BAGHEERA: “Mowgli seems to have man’s ability to get into trouble.”

BALOO: “Keep it down, you’re going to wake up ‘little buddy.’ He’s had a big day. It was a real sockeroo. It ain’t easy to learn to be like me ... you know.”

BAGHEERA: “Associating with those undesirable, skatter-brained apes? I hope Mowgli learns something from that experience.”

The scene ends as Baloo tucks him in. Throughout the rest of the show, Mowgli’s crisis is in finding a friend he can trust. It turns out to be a girl.

In Rudyard Kipling’s 1894 original, the story is a bit more sordid, with a deep moral. After Mowgli has been found befriending the monkeys, he’s scolded by his guardians, Baloo and Bagheera. Mowgli’s pride and rebellion bring him to temporarily disrespect his teacher, Baloo.

THE ORIGINAL

MOWGLI: “They were kind ... They stand on their feet as I do. They do not hit me with their hard paws. They play all day ... I will play with them again!”

BALOO: “Listen, Man-cub,” his voice rumbled like thunder on a hot night, “I have taught thee all the Law of the Jungle for all the people of the jungle, except the Monkey-folk who live in the trees. They have no law. They are outcast ... They have no remembrance. They boast and chatter and pretend that they are a great people about to do great affairs in the jungle, but the falling of a nut turns their minds to laughter and all is forgotten ...”

BAGHEERA: “His nose is sore on thy account. As are my ears and sides and paws, and Baloo’s neck and shoulders ... all this from your playing with the [monkey people].”

MOWGLI: “True, it is true. I am an evil man-cub and my stomach is sad in me.”

BALOO: “Sorrow never stays punishment.”

These examples are but the tip of the iceberg in the recurring moral simplification and dumbing down of great stories, which yield shallow, simplified morals in our kids. We encourage you to read the original Jungle Book to your children this holiday season.
Welcome to Veritas Charter School

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

“What will justify your life?” is engraved over the entrance of Ridgeview Classical School, one of the most successful charter schools in Colorado. The mission of Great Hearts Classical Charter School in Arizona is to graduate “young men and women who possess a sense of destiny and purpose that is directed to the service of the greater good.” These, and countless other secular and public schools across the country, have discovered the strength of classical education to cultivate virtue. But how far can classical education be removed from God before it becomes something else?
In his new book *Making Sense of God*, Timothy Keller, *New York Times* best-selling author and pastor, recounts the story of a public school teacher who was frustrated with the various “character education” curricula that strictly forbade her to bring religious justifications for any of the values being taught.

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

**TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS**

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

Earlier that week, in a class at a classical Christian school, juniors were discussing a passage midway through Dostoyevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*. The Christian discussion was rich with the teacher guiding students through some deep stuff: the burden free will creates, the purpose of suffering in God's creation, and a beautiful depiction of love as the ultimate conqueror. She framed the work in the theological system of the author, a deep and reflective Christianity.

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

Back at the secular classical school, students gathered around a table to discuss, by some turn of fate, the same book, near the same passage! What followed said volumes. The teacher began the discussion and then stepped back. Mormon and Roman Catholic views, along with a variety of indiscernible positions, were suggested by students.

There the discussion remained—an exploration rather than a destination. The teacher could not step in and guide spiritually because he was forbidden to advocate for “religious” ideas. The discussion could only change topics, not delve deeper. Christian theology was out. And, without theology, philosophy is neutered. All that was left for the students in the class was to pool their youthful “wisdom” and wander through questions about ultimate meaning with their 17- and 18-year-old peers.

**THE DESTINATION & THE PATH**

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

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Perspective

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

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

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

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

The Classical World

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

Charter Schools in the News

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ ¹ ¹ ¹ ¹
truth came through Jesus Christ.” John is speaking into a classical world that had a strong idea of the importance of the Logos, but was lost in the futility of truth without Christ.

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

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

**BREACHING THE CORE**

Without Christ, classical education’s core questions—“what is truth?” and “why am I here?” and “how shall I live?”—cannot be answered truthfully. Jesus Christ is not a part that can be safely extracted from classical education and taught at home. He’s integral to the nature of the thing. If He is removed, we run the risk of creating the ugliness of a person without a face, a soul without love, a truth without the author of truth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Perspective

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

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

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

In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise.
One key evidence that our educational system may indeed be broken is the meteoric rise of innovation-based charter schools.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But if your goal is to open a Pâtisserie on Main St., then wisdom says you must go back, with painstaking patience, to discover how the best pastries in Europe have always been made.
Both paths depend on discovery and innovation—but they move in very different directions.

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

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

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

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

A croissant, however, is not so unpredictable. The same flaky goodness that helped Charles Martel defeat the Moors at the Battle of Tours is still available down the street at our local French bistro. As long as butter, flour, and eggs remain the same, we have, at our fingertips, the blueprint for deliciousness.

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

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

Soli Deo Gloria.

CHRISTOPHER JOHN MAIOCCA teaches secondary English, history, and Bible at Horizon Prep, Rancho Santa Fe, CA.

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2 Of course I realize that charter schools are publicly funded. I am referring rather to the entrepreneurial spirit that compelled those public funds to be disbursed to charters in the first place.
Winter
Alyssa Gilmore
St. Stephen’s Academy
Beaverton, OR

8th grade contribution to the school’s annual Christmas card sale fundraiser. Materials used were acrylic paint on bristol board. This painting was awarded the Scholastic Art Awards Honorable Mention.

Bird in Snow
Benjamin Barry
Jonathan Edwards Classical Academy
Whites Creek, TN

5th grade mixed media assignment. The student used a combination of colored pencil, chalk pastels, and acrylic paint.
Deck our Halls 🎅

We like to fill our hallway with student art, poetry, essays, short stories and other good works.

Send your submissions to ClassicalDifference.com/submissions. Published student works earn a $10 Amazon gift card for purchasing classic books. Or crayons.

Sunset in Winter
Manami Fukuda
Mars Hill Academy
Mason, OH

6th grade watercolor assignment. According to Manami, it is a "reproduction of a watercolor painting by an American artist."

Barn
Micah Dowdy
Mars Hill Academy
Mason, OH

6th grade watercolor assignment. The student created a barn scene using only two watercolors, orange and blue.

The annual Blakey Prize in Fine Art offers cash prizes to young artists in ACCS-accredited schools. First prize is $500. Second prize is $250. The deadline is April 14, 2017.

Talk to your headmaster for more details, or get the Contest Guidelines at www.accsedu.org/school-resources Blakey-art-prize. Please note that this contest is open only to students in ACCS-accredited schools.

SEE THE 2016 WINNERS:
www.accsedu.org/school-resources Blakey-art-prize
THE WORLD IS
our classroom

Fathom invites you to connect to it.

Learning is a lifelong pursuit. At Fathom, we believe that the best trips are the ones where you come home with stories to tell and knowledge to share. Make yourself a part of the place you visit by connecting with people and their communities. Connect, discover, inspire.

“As a person of faith, I was encouraged sharing the experience alongside others with different perspectives. We were all able to share the same end goal and build a sense of community.”

— TONY LANGFORD, PASTOR
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To truly understand, you cannot just study. You must experience it.

Fathom trips go deep. Aboard a small ship, you’ll have the chance to discover the impossibly scenic northern edge of the Dominican Republic—home to friendly locals and a vibrant culture set against a gorgeous 60-mile backdrop of golden coastline, turquoise waters and stunning mountains. Throughout the journey, you’ll have up to three days to spend on the ground in Puerto Plata building fellowship with travelers and your Dominican hosts via engaging real-world community development activities.

The Spirit of Togetherness
Togetherness is a hallmark of every Fathom trip, and the MV Adonia, our intimate 704-passenger ship creates the ideal space to serve as your home base throughout this journey. Here, you’ll have the chance to take part in specially designed workshops that will introduce you to your destination and ignite your senses of curiosity and self-discovery. When you’re not ashore, the Adonia is the perfect place to connect, relax, and reflect on the day that was.

Impact Activities
On each Dominican Republic trip, travelers can choose from seven unique activities designed to improve economic development, education and the environment. Alongside local partners, you’ll build upon the efforts of previous Fathom travelers and leave a lasting impact for those to come.

AVAILABLE ACTIVITIES

- Water filter production
- Reforestation & nursery
- Student English conversation & learning
- Community English conversation & learning
- Cacao & women’s chocolate cooperative
- Recycled paper & crafts entrepreneurship
- Concrete floors in community homes

UP TO 3 IMPACT ACTIVITIES ARE INCLUDED IN THE COST OF YOUR TRIP
We Would Like to Share Your Ideas!

Because we can all use a little help in the morning.

On our way to school, we listen to K-LOVE, eat breakfast, recite memory verses, and pray before entering the carpool lane!

—Tamara Downey, Parent

Poll Results

From parents, for teachers

- **LITOGRAPHICS.COM**: for amazing and unique gifts! Choose t-shirts, posters, tote bags, or infinity scarves. Then select the text from a specific book and the entire text is printed on that item—arranged to look like a picture. I’ve purchased a shirt with *King Lear*, a poster with Dante’s *Inferno*, and a tote with *The Secret Garden*. Most of the featured works are taught by our teachers. **Request a discount code if you are purchasing something for educational purposes.**

- **CLASSIC CLASSICS**: can be found at garage sales, used bookstores, and even Amazon. Look for fancy, unique, or vintage copies. Don’t leave out the science and math teachers. There are interesting books on astronomy, botany, physics, and even time travel. And, theology books work for everyone.

- **GIFT CARDS**: because they can decide if they want to get something for the classroom or something personal for themselves. They love them!!!

- **MAPS**: old.

- **WIZARD SUPPLIES**: For guys (and maybe gals too—just not my wife) get a pipe like Gandalf’s. Look on Amazon.

- **OUR GIFT IDEA**: Magazine (*Biblical Archaeology Review, First Things, World*) or Audible subscription, and a coffee gift card to stay awake and use it.

AND FOR THE CLASSICAL STUDENT WHO HAS EVERYTHING:

- Ancient Egyptian Cuckoo Clock: “Queen Nefertiti’s bust emerges on the hour as regal procession rotates. Limited to 4,999.”
  - [http://www.brADFoordexchange.com/products](http://www.brADFoordexchange.com/products)

- Chainmail Haubergeon: “When it comes to protecting yourself in the years of the medieval era, nothing compares to a good suit of mail armor.” Haubergeons available in stainless steel, aluminum, brass, copper, and blackened steel.
  - [http://www.medievalcollectibles.com](http://www.medievalcollectibles.com)

What are your favorite “on-the-go” breakfast ideas?

Do you have a recipe your kids love? A tip to make breakfast easier?
Share your idea or recipe at ClassicalDifference.com/share.

RESULTS PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.
I Wish I Had More Time to Read …

... CHARLES DICKENS
“For it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child Himself.”
— *A Christmas Carol*

... LAURA INGALLS WILDER
Our hearts grow tender with childhood memories and love of kindred, and we are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmas-time.

... SALLY LLOYD-JONES
They caught their breath. Then quietly, they tiptoed inside. They knelt on the dirt floor. They had heard about this Promised Child and now he was here. Heaven’s son. The Maker of the Stars. A baby sleeping in his mother’s arms.
This baby would be like that bright star shining in the sky that night. A Light to light up the whole world. Chasing away darkness. Helping people to see.
And the darker the night got, the brighter the star would shine.
— *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*

... T.S. ELIOT
The child wonders at the Christmas Tree:
Let him continue in the spirit of wonder
At the Feast as an event not accepted as a pretext;
So that the glittering rapture, the amazement
Of the first-remembered Christmas Tree
So that the surprises, delight in new possessions
(Each one with its peculiar and exciting smell),
The expectation of the goose or turkey
And the expected awe on its appearance …

So that before the end, the eightieth Christmas
(By “eightieth” meaning whichever is last)
The accumulated memories of annual emotion
May be concentrated into a great joy
Which shall be also a great fear, as on the occasion
When fear came upon every soul:
Because the beginning shall remind us of the end
And the first coming of the second coming.
— *The Cultivation of Christmas Trees*

OTHER GREAT GIFT IDEAS
- The Jesus Storybook Bible: The greatest story ever told—for kids and their adults. It just might make everyone in your family, from the oldest to the youngest, see the Truth in a whole new way.

- Getty Kids Hymnal: *In Christ Alone*:
  Arranged with children’s voices and easy-to-digest harmonies.
  A great listen in the car or classroom! Get one for your teacher, your kids, or yourself.

gettymusic.com/gettykids hymnal/

I Heard It in the Pickup Line
What teachers might say to you at the end of a long day

- So the mother asked, “What can he do to bring up his grade?” And I said, “Well, contact Michael J. Fox and ask to borrow that Delorean. Set it for September.”

- If you promise not to believe everything your child says happens at school, I promise not to believe everything he says happens at home.

- “I was absent from your class yesterday. Did I miss anything important?”
  “No, we just sat around and waited for you to come back.”
  — pinterify.net, someecards.com
The Classical Difference

Around the Country

Last year, the ACCS president saw log-cabin schools in Virginia, schools with hog traps in Texas, and schools that look more like college campuses. (In fact, one of them had taken over an ex-college campus.) He's seen schools surrounded by high-rises and schools in church basements. He even saw one school with no building at all—operating in a church lobby until another facility became available. But, they all share their distinctly classical Christian form while they serve families as diverse as America.

Recently, he visited four schools, all within a two-hour drive of Philadelphia, that represent four very different stories with four very different school bodies. Is classical Christian education a fit for anyone? It seems there's a pretty good chance the answer is yes. If not, start one! The ACCS is here to help.

Urban Renewal Meets Classical Renewal

Philadelphia Classical School

Just a decade or two ago, “inner city school” meant serving underprivileged kids in a tough setting. That still can be true, and some classical Christian schools serve this mission. But Philadelphia Classical School is one of several ACCS schools thriving on urban renewal. They have a roughly even mix of under-served students from the inner city, and working families who live in the city. This mix of students and families provides an environment where parents are united around the philosophy of education and a love of Christ. While their facility may result in a few compromises (they have no playground or outdoor space), the beautiful historic cathedral in the downtown area combined with amazing historic field trips just a few steps out their front door, provides an experience you'll find at few other classical Christian schools.

During one recent field trip, a man dressed as George Washington walked into a historic Quaker meetinghouse where PCS students were waiting. He launched into his act which included running the children through military drills. At the climax of his performance, General Washington began to recite the Declaration of Independence. The students barely missed a beat and joined him in the recitation. Their voices echoed throughout the building. Other tour guides and people stopped to listen. The best part was when George Washington came to the end of his recitation but the students knew more and kept going. The docents are always happy to see PCS students return.

College-Town Christians

The Wilberforce School

When you think about it, academic excellence makes sense in a college town. Classical Christian education returns to the idea that the author of all truth (Jesus Christ) might have something to say about finding truth (the ostensible purpose of higher education). College towns tend to be full of "academics." And, regardless of the area of expertise, many college professors appreciate the strength of classical Christian education. "We chose Wilberforce because we were attracted to the school's commitment to both academic excellence and an intellectually robust Christian worldview which is lacking in most schools. We also liked the focus on seeing the world as a result of a Creator who has given our children the facility to learn about it through nature studies, art, history, and literature … and to ultimately be a committed follower of Jesus Christ."

Jonathan Chun, Ph.D. (Princeton, Physics)
■ HOMETOWN: TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF “SCHOOL”
Coventry Christian School

Buses come and go from the 50’s era public school building repurposed as a classical Christian school, centrally located in the suburban-belt town of Pottsville, PA, outside of Philadelphia. Coventry Christian School serves over 300 students in a building that also tells the evolving story of education for the past half century. After its days as a public school building, the facility was sold to Coventry Christian, founded over 30 years ago as a standard Christian school. The school’s hometown feel is reinforced when you meet John Mark Niehls, the school’s headmaster. Niehls’ father started the school, and John Mark attended from an early age. He even met a girl in the third grade there who is now his wife! But, in 2009, the school’s leadership decided it wanted better integration of its history and literature programs. This pursuit opened up the world of classical Christian education for John Mark. After a trip to the annual “Repairing the Ruins” conference on classical Christian education, Niehls decided it was time to overhaul the school into a classical Christian school. No small task.

The vast chasm between conventional education and classical education is hard to bridge. More than simply retraining teachers and buying new textbooks, a classical conversion requires the overhaul of just about everything. Teachers need to be immersed in a whole new philosophy of education. The methods, classrooms, and practices are very different, which requires vigilance. Many schools that convert mistakenly believe that adding Latin, great books, and Socratic discussion to the curriculum will move a school to the “classical Christian” column. Mr. Niehls realized that Coventry had its work cut out for it. Any change this radical would require a lot of effort.

Now, in about the sixth year of the classical transformation, Coventry is looking very much like, well, other classical schools in the ACCS. It serves a suburban family mix. Many of the parents first came to Coventry for Christian education. But what they’ve found is a new form of ancient education that makes sense, wherever you plant it.

■ OLD SCHOOL IN AMISH COUNTRY
Veritas Academy

In the early morning darkness, the path to school for Ty Fischer’s family leads through covered bridges and around horse-drawn carriages in the rolling hills of Pennsylvania’s Amish country. It’s understandable in this small-town setting that classical Christian education would thrive. But few classical Christian schools in America are as established as Veritas Academy in Lancaster, PA.

Veritas’ founding family was one of three original board members of the association that publishes this magazine. Also from that seed has grown the largest curriculum provider dedicated to classical Christian education. The 280 students at Veritas come from wide-ranging backgrounds. The surrounding area supports farmers and bankers, academics and entrepreneurial start-ups. They serve just about every type of student in the famed Lancaster county.

Veritas celebrated its 20th anniversary as a classical Christian school on September 9th. They’ve always been a classical school, so the celebration expressed the depth and diverse lives of their alumni. We’d like to say that’s a big group, but classical Christian education always been a grassroots movement. So, the alumni are an intimate group. But it was abundantly clear, at least to us, that they are making a big impact on our world in just about every type of role. Sure, if you visit their campus, you may note that it shares a building with the police department and several other municipal departments. But, God’s work, and his schools, grow where they’re planted.

Our growth means the stories keep coming—these four Pennsylvania schools are examples of what’s happening around the nation. While we see the trivium, Latin, great books, and enthused teachers throughout, the most surprising thing is the constant level of excellence. These places are noticeably distinct and very different from other types of schools. Serving many different parent and student needs, they all have similar approaches where it counts—in the classroom. ■
ACCS Member Schools

Acacia Academy
Kokomo, IN

Ad Fontes Academy
Centreville, VA

Agape Christi Academy
Eden Prairie, MN

Agathos Classical School
Columbia, TN

Aletheia Christian School of Peoria
Peoria, IL

Alpha Omega Academy
Huntsville, TX

American Christian School
Succasunna, NJ

Annapolis Christian Academy
Corpus Christi, TX

Appomattox Christian Academy
Appomattox, VA

Aquidneck Island Christian Academy
Middletown, RI

Arma Dei Academy
Highlands Ranch, CO

Augustine Classical Academy
Tulsa, OK

Augustine Classical Academy
Mechaniville, NY

Augustine Classical Academy
Lakewood, CO

Augustine School
Jackson, TN

Baldwin Christian School
Baldwin, WI

Bayshore Christian School
Fairhope, AL

Beacon Hill Classical Academy
Camarillo, CA

Bethel American International School
St. Paul, MN

Bloomfield Christian School
Bloomfield Hills, MI

Bradford Academy
Mebane, NC

Brown County Christian Academy
Sardina, OH

Calvary Banga Classical School
Bandung, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

Cair Paravel Latin School, Inc.
Topeka, KS

Calvary Christian Academy
Silver City, NM

Calvary Christian Academy
San Jose, CA

Calvary Classical Academy
St. Cloud, MN

Calvary Classical School
Hampston, VA

Candies Creek Academy
Charleston, TN

Cary Christian School
Cary, NC

Cedar Tree Classical Christian School
Ridgefield, WA

Charis Classical Academy
Madison, WI

Christ Church Academy
Lafayette, LA

Christ Classical School
San Luis Obispo, CA

Christ Presbyterian School
Baron Rouge, LA

Christian Heritage School
Longview, TX

Christ's Legacy Academy
Athena, TN

Clapham School
Wheaton, IL

Classical Christian Academy
Post Falls, ID

Classical School of Wichita
Wichita, KS

Clear Lake Classical
Clear Lake, IA

Colquitt Christian Academy
Moultrie, GA

Coram Deo Academy
Flower Mound, TX

Coram Deo Academy
Carmel, IN

Coram Deo Academy
Richland, WA

Coram Deo Preparatory Academy
Houston, TX

Cornerstone Academy
Merristown, TN

Cornerstone Academy
Snohomish, WA

Cornerstone Christian Academy
Appomattox, VA

Cornerstone Christian Academy
Abingdon, VA

Cornerstone Classical Christian Academy
Montgomery, AL

Cornerstone Classical Christian Academy
Hebron, KY

Cornerstone Classical School
Bault, CO

Cornerstone Classical School
Salina, KS

Covenant Academy
Macon, GA

Covenant Academy
Cypress, TX

Covenant Christian Academy
Harrisburg, PA

Covenant Christian Academy
West Peabody, MA

Covenant Christian Academy
Colleville, TX

Covenant Christian School
Smyrna, GA

Covenant Christian School
Panama City, FL

Covenant Classical Academy
Louisville, KY

Covenant Classical Christian School
Columbia, SC

Covenant Classical School
Concord, NC

Covenant Classical School
Fort Worth, TX

Covenant Classical School
Naperville, IL

Covenant School
Huntington, WV

Coventry Christian School
Portsmouth, PA

Dominion Christian School
Oakton, VA

Dominion Classical Christian School
Dacula, GA

Eastwood Christian School
Montgomery, AL

Eukarya Christian Academy
Stephens City, VA

Evangel Classical Christian School
Alabaster, AL

Evangel Classical School
Marysville, WA

Evangelical Christian Academy
Colorado Springs, CO

Faith Christian Academy
Kansas City, MO

Faith Christian School
Roanoke, VA

First Classical Academy
Katy, TX

First Presbyterian Church School
Tacoma, WA

Franklin Classical School
Franklin, TN

Genesis Classical Academy
Winnebago, MN

Geneva Academy
Monroe, LA

Geneva Academy
Rosenburg, OR

Geneva Academy
Lincoln, NE

Geneva Classical Academy
Lake Elsinore, FL

Geneva School of Boerne
Boerne, TX

Gloria Deo Academy
Spring Branch, TX

Good Shepherd School
Tyler, TX

Grace Academy
Springfield, MA

Grande Academy of Georgetown
Georgetown, TX

Grace Academy of North Texas
Prosper, TX

Grace Christian Academy
Merrick, NY

Grace Classical Academy
Laguna Niguel, CA

Grace Classical Academy
Springfield, MO

Grace Classical Christian Academy
Granbury, TX

Grace Classical School
Jacksonville, NC

Great Books Honors College
Montgomery, AL

Greenville Classical Academy
Simpsonville, SC

Grove City Christian Academy
Grove City, PA

Harvest Christian School
Petaluma, CA

Haw River Christian Academy
Pittsboro, NC

Heritage Oak School
Telchepachi, CA

Heritage Preparatory School
Atlanta, GA

Heritage School
Fredericksburg, TX

Hickory Christian Academy
Hickory, NC

Highland Rim Academy
Cookville, TN

Horizon Prep School
San Antonio, TX

Hunter Preparatory School
Manakin-Sabot, VA

Imago Dei Academy
Alamogordo, NM

Immanuel Lutheran School
Alexandria, VA

Kings Academy
Brownsville, TX

Island Christian Academy
Anderson, SC

Johan Edwards Classical Academy
Mount Horeb, WI

Kings Way Classical Academy
Clackamas, OR

Legacy Academy
De Queen, AR

Legacy Classical Christian Academy
Chesterfield, VA

Liberitas Academy
Tampa, FL

Liberty Classical Academy
White Bear Lake, MN

Lighthouse Christian Academy
Stevensville, MD

Logos Christian Academy
Fallon, NV

Logos Christian Academy
Casa Grande, AZ

Logos Online School
Moscow, ID
Amongst old stacks of paper discovered in our rafters was a thin orange folder dubbed “geography”—the kind with the little prongs that push apart to secure the worksheets all together. I uncovered colored pictures of owls from a fifth grade lesson on birds. The source of my childhood anxiety, aka math speed drills, were there too, scribbled fractions frantically colliding all over the page. I even found those old fables, written in every way possible: condensed, expanded, told from end to beginning. And when I looked over these scraps of paper representing my ten years at Providence Classical Christian, I realized how much a classical education had shaped who I became and who I am still becoming.

Growing up in those tiny hallways, I sometimes doubted whether the effort I put into school was worth it. A question would pop in and out of my consciousness—why am I memorizing definitions, reading Paradise Lost, and dissecting Shurley Grammar and cow eyes side by side? I felt like Calvin and Hobbes’ dad was just yelling, “It builds character!” at me from the front door. But building character was so … vague. And vague wasn’t good enough for me. So what it came down to was: what’s the point?

Now that I’ve had time to reflect, I realize those everyday small-picture tasks became vital for understanding the big picture. While I may no longer remember specific mathematical equations or Latin stems, my classical education gave me some of the building blocks I needed for the next stage of life. It gave me the tools to write and to speak and to do both with grace and intelligence. It instilled within me a distinct work ethic that has helped me accomplish what I want in life without the fear that I am unqualified or undeserving.

This encouragement to pursue my goals came from the teachers at Providence. Their inspiration and tendency to demand excellence prepared me to enter the next stage of my life at Azusa Pacific University. At the beginning, I was surprised by how many of my peers were baffled that they could actually be friends with their professors. I had grown up taking for granted that my teachers were the people I saw every day, and who I am still becoming.

How beautiful the feet that carry this Gospel of peace to the field of injustice and the valleys of need.
To be a voice of hope and healing, to answer the cries of the hungry and helpless with the mercy of Christ.
—Keith & Kristyn Getty, “Compassion Hymn”

Treasure in the Attic
Telling stories of the good life

Providence didn’t give me a fixed lens for seeing the world through my “God glasses.” Rather, it gently took off the dirty, smudged pair I already had on.

It gave me the basic grounding that God is entwined in every story. Providence didn’t give me a fixed lens for seeing the world through my “God glasses.” Rather, it gently took off the dirty, smudged pair I already had on, and let me see the world as it truly is—God’s beautiful story.

MARISSA BLACK is currently pursuing a degree in journalism at Azusa Pacific University. She says that her ideal career would be “combining my love for writing with the desire to help those around me.”

Class of 2013, Providence Classical Christian School, Kirkland, WA
Advent historically begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve. Honoring the season with an Advent wreath is one of the most meaningful traditions in our family. It's also one of the simplest.

Place a small wreath on the table with four colored candles evenly spaced within it. We use all green, red, or blue, but more traditional wreaths have specified, symbolic colors. Just insert small candle holders into the wreath, but make sure you're not creating a fire hazard.

1. Place a small wreath on the table with four colored candles evenly spaced within it. We use all green, red, or blue, but more traditional wreaths have specified, symbolic colors. Just insert small candle holders into the wreath, but make sure you're not creating a fire hazard.

2. Place a white candle in the center, turn off the lights, and you’re ready to go. If it’s completely dark, you might consider supplementing with a non-advent candle or two to provide extra light without ruining the atmosphere.

3. Simply read the script. It will tell you exactly what to do.

We celebrate each Sunday in Advent, plus Christmas Eve. Right before dinner is a good time for our family, so we can enjoy the candlelight while we eat afterward. It only takes about 10 minutes, but the solemn, beautiful words will remain with our children throughout their lives.

NOTE:
Don’t light any wreath candles before you start. This is done during the Advent readings. Use a long lighter if you have younger children.

CHRISTMAS is an indictment before it becomes a delight. It will not have its intended effect until we feel desperately the need for a Savior.

—John Piper

Want to Know More?

Each Sunday in Advent has a Latin name derived from the response (antiphon) to the entrance (introit) psalm for each Sunday in the historic lectionary (book of readings).

**AD TE LEVAVI - 1**
To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
(Psalm 25:1, 24:1 in the Vulgate)

**POPULUS ZION - 2**
For a people shall dwell in Zion …
(Isaiah 30:19)

**GAUDETE - 3**
Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice.
(Philippians 4:4)

**RORATE COELI - 4**
Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness.
(Isaiah 45:8)

For further reading

View and download our Advent script at ClassicalDifference.com/FamilyAdvent.pdf.

**Advent Sundays 2016:** November 27, December 4, December 11, December 18

**For further reading**
View and download our Advent script at ClassicalDifference.com/FamilyAdvent.pdf.
“A little learning is a dangerous thing; / drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
there shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, / and drinking largely sobers us again.”

—Alexander Pope

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I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And mild and sweet the songs repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
“There is no peace on earth,” I said;
For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Then rang the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Because life’s most important lesson is learning why you’re here.

Visit phc.edu/ACCS to learn about an exclusive scholarship available to ACCS-member school students up to $5,000/yr.