CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND
STUDENTS’ CHRISTIAN FORMATION

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
by
Melody Kay Smith

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA
2020
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February 13, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Training young people to love and serve God is an important responsibility shared by both parents and church leaders. This study explored one approach to that mandate: classical Christian education, a modern revival of a centuries-long tradition. The modern renewal began in the 1980’s after a near century-long hiatus during which time classical methodology was replaced by a progressive, secular approach. Currently, research is still minimal, therefore this study seeks to fill a gap regarding this unique Christian pedagogy. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to determine if any perceived relationships exist between the distinguishing characteristics of classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation at three K-12 classical Christian schools. The research questions address four overarching elements of this educational approach: Trivium methodology, a high view of mankind, curricular integration, and an emphasis on Western civilization. Data was collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and parent/student groups, and homework assignments. In this multiple case study, each of the three schools was considered one bounded case. A within-case analysis was conducted on the first case, then replicated on the second and third cases. A cross-case analysis compared the findings, and conclusions were drawn regarding the potential connections between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation.

Key words: classical Christian, Christian schools, Trivium, Christian formation
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Dedication

To Greg, my husband and greatest cheerleader

I will always cherish our new adventures. I could not have completed this one without you.

And to my parents who taught me to read the Bible deeply, to pray, and to work.
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank my dissertation committee. Thank you, Dr. Allan England for giving of your time and for your suggestions. Thank you, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt for being a constant source of uplifting encouragement. This program has been life-changing.

To my fellow CLED classmates, thank you for all your encouragement along the way, and for your invaluable insight and suggestions in our peer review efforts. I rejoice with you all concerning God’s future plans for us.

Finally, I wish to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for consistently helping me through this amazing and unexpected journey of learning and self-discovery.
# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. 3

Copyright .................................................................................................................................................. 4

Dedication .................................................................................................................................................. 5

Acknowledgments ....................................................................................................................................... 6

List of Tables ............................................................................................................................................... 10

List of Figures ............................................................................................................................................ 11

List of Abbreviations ................................................................................................................................ 12

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN ................................................................................................. 13
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 13
  Background to the Problem ...................................................................................................................... 14
  Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................................................... 26
  Purpose Statement ................................................................................................................................... 27
  Research Questions .................................................................................................................................. 28
  Assumptions and Delimitations .............................................................................................................. 28
    Research Assumptions ............................................................................................................................ 28
    Delimitations of the Research Design .................................................................................................. 29
  Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................................... 29
  Significance of the Study .......................................................................................................................... 30
  Summary of the Design ............................................................................................................................ 34

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 35
  Overview .................................................................................................................................................. 35
  Theological Framework for the Study ..................................................................................................... 35
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .........................................................74

Research Design Synopsis ..................................................................................74

The Problem ..........................................................................................................74

Purpose Statement .................................................................................................75

Research Questions ..............................................................................................75

Research Design and Methodology ......................................................................76

Setting ....................................................................................................................77

Participants ............................................................................................................78

Role of the Researcher ............................................................................................79

Ethical Considerations ...........................................................................................80

Data Collection Methods and Instruments ..........................................................81

Collection Methods ...............................................................................................82

Instruments and Protocols ....................................................................................82

Procedures .............................................................................................................85

Data Analysis ........................................................................................................85

Analysis Methods ................................................................................................85

Trustworthiness .....................................................................................................86

Chapter Summary .................................................................................................88

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS .........................................................89
Compilation Protocol and Measures ................................................................. 89
Demographic and Sample Data ........................................................................ 89
Data Analysis and Findings ............................................................................. 94
Evaluation of the Research Design ................................................................. 139

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS ........................................................................ 141
Research Purpose ............................................................................................. 141
Research Questions .......................................................................................... 141
Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications ................................. 141
Research Limitations ....................................................................................... 149
Further Research ............................................................................................. 149

REFERENCES .................................................................................................. 151

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER .......................................................... 158
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM ...................................................................... 159
APPENDIX C: PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM .................................... 161
APPENDIX D: ASSENT OF CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ...... 163
APPENDIX E: INFORMATION CARD FOR INTERVIEWS ................................. 164
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHERS ......................... 165
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS ...... 167
APPENDIX H: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL .............................. 169
APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS ................................. 170
APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS .......... 173
**List of Tables**

Table 1: Trivium-based Stratified Sample..............................................................................................79
Table 2: Emergent Themes and Categories for Case One .................................................................104
Table 3: Perceived Connections between Themes and Christian Formation in Case One ..........107
Table 4: Emergent Themes and Categories for Case Two .................................................................116
Table 5: Perceived Connections between Themes and Christian Formation in Case Two ........119
Table 6: Emergent Themes and Categories for Case Three ............................................................129
Table 7: Perceived Connections between Themes and Christian Formation in Case Three ....132
Table 8: Cross-case Analysis for RQs 1 - 4 ......................................................................................134
Table 9: Cross-case Conclusions ......................................................................................................146
List of Figures

Figure 1: Curriculum Model with Biblical Foundation ................................................................. 42
List of Abbreviations

Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Liberty University (LU)

Research Question (RQ)
CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

An educational model, first devised by the ancient Greeks and later Christianized in the Middle Ages, has been revived in recent years: classical Christian education. Academically rigorous and biblically centered, it could be of interest to parents, yet most people today have never heard of it. Likewise, minimal research exists on it. Gradually declining in the 1800’s, this model was finally supplanted by progressive education in the early twentieth century. The near century-long break of this long-standing tradition explains why this revival of classical education now seems new to many people. Christopher Perrin, a national leader in the movement, explained, “What we call ‘classical education’ was before the late 1800s simply ‘education.’ The word ‘classical’ as an adjective has become dominant now because we’re describing its renewal” (Perrin, 2018, website).

Modern classical Christian schools integrate a Christian worldview into all academic areas: the “ACCS [Association of Classical Christian Schools] schools insist on the centrality of God, who has revealed Himself in the language of the Bible and the facts of creation, and who provides the very grounds of education” (Veith & Kern, 2015, p.25). Calhoun (1989) finds that classical Christian education “is grounded in a highly ordered and purposeful worldview” (p. 149) and its highest aim is for students to know and want to be like God (p. 149). Dietrich (2009) finds that parents are choosing classical Christian schools for its unique combination of strong academics and its commitment to developing the whole child, including Christian education and moral principles (p. 125). Chapter one of this study includes background information, the problem and purpose statements, research questions, assumptions and delimitations, definitions of terms, and finally, the significance of the study.
Background to the Problem

The training of children in the ways of God is a matter of utmost importance. Jesus made clear his desire for children to know him: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt 19:14). For young people of ancient Greco-Roman world, in which the New Testament was set, education was the means to cultivate virtuous citizens through ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty. What they were missing, however, in this worthy endeavor was the foundation: the one true and living God. Truth, goodness, and beauty are more than objective qualities found in the universe; they are praiseworthy attributes of God. Christian formation is centered upon the worship of God and to this end Christian educators strive. In every generation, the question remains as to how to best disciple the young so they can withstand the falsehoods of the day and worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This section will discuss the background to the topic of classical Christian education as it relates to the study’s theological, historical, sociological, and theoretical contexts.

Theological Context

Christian formation. The theological context will begin with discussion of Christian formation, the goal to which Christian education efforts aim. Hielem (2010) describes the simple yet profound experience of Christian formation: “At the very center of our walk with God, we find the wondrous and incomprehensible mystery that the risen Lord Jesus Christ, before whom every knee shall bow, comes to live in our hearts” (p. 12).

Paul describes aspects of Christian formation in his letter to the Colossians. First, it involves the death of the sinful nature and a resurrection to new life in Christ: “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins…” (Col 2:13). This death-to-life process, mirroring the death and
resurrection of Christ, is pictured in baptism: “…having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:12). Formation is a life-long process in which the Holy Spirit renews the human heart according to the image of God in which it was created. Paul explains, “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature… since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Col 3:5, 9b-10).

While formation is a work of the Spirit, it also involves the human element of education. Knowledge about God and his Word provide needed understanding of God and also the means to discern falsehoods. In this way, Paul desired the Colossians to “have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2-3). He continued with a caution about deception, reasoning that understanding God’s truth would guard against such a trap: “I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments” (Col 2:4). He added, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy” (Col 2:8).

Christian formation is marked by a godly love for others and a growing faith. Paul acknowledged these traits in the Colossian Christians: “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people” (Col 1:3-4). Showing grace and love to non-believers is also an important aspect of Christian formation. Paul exhorted the Colossians as such: “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (4:5-6). Lastly, Paul encouraged the Colossian believers to live the Christian life
“rooted and built up in [Christ]” (Col 2:6-7), noting the benefit of Christian teaching toward this end: “strengthened in the faith as you were taught” (2:7).

Based upon Paul’s exhortations to the Colossians regarding the various aspects of the Christian life, Christian formation as defined by this study will include knowledge about God and the Bible, love for God and others, a growing faith, the ability to discern biblical truth from falsehood, sharing and defending one’s faith, and living the Christian in the world today.

**Christian Education.** Christian formation is the aim of Christian education. Bramer (2007) broadly defines Christian formation, noting the role of education:

Christian formation aims at the spirit, attitudes, and purposes of Christ and God’s realm coming to characterize individuals and groups by facilitating the learning of the Gospel and Christian tradition. This is accomplished through instruction and narrative grounded in the Christian Scriptures, learning God’s presence and power through worship and spiritual practices, and learning redemptive living through critical-reflective engagement in constructive actions, Christian community, and life experiences (p. 361).

Christian education holds a dual emphasis between faith formation and faith information. Mere knowledge about God “is not the center of faith formation, but it is indispensable in coming to know how wide and long and high and deep is the love of God” (Hielema, 2010, p. 19).

Christian education equips students to withstand ungodly influences they encounter in the world. Jesus was aware of this need as evidenced by his prayer for his disciples: “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15). Jesus, however, expected his followers to intentionally engage with people of the world as his witnesses (Acts 1:8, Matt 5:13-16). As he sent out his disciples, he warned them of the fierce opposition they would face: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:2-3). Christian education equips students to withstand ungodly influences they encounter while still living as the “light of the world” (Matt 5:14-16).
God’s revelation and Christian education. God reveals himself to mankind through special revelation, referring to his Word and his Son, Jesus, and also through general revelation, referring to his created world. Both are God’s gracious means of making himself known to humanity. Scripture is taught as the inerrant and infallible Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Christian education is Christ-focused: students learn about his life and teaching, with the aim of knowing and emulating him through a loving, life-long relationship. This aim reflects mankind’s ultimate purpose from God: “to become like their Lord, characterized by the love and light and righteousness which are the commands of Christ and characteristics of God” (Bramer, 2007, p. 358).

Christian education is also enhanced through God’s general revelation of himself through his created universe. Speaking of God’s revealed truth to those who sinfully suppress it, Paul wrote, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse” (Rom 1:20). The psalmist David worshipped God for the beauty of God’s creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge” (Ps 19:1-2).

Everything in existence has been ultimately made by God and he is immanently present therein (Erickson, 2015, p. 83). His creation provides clues to his character: it is orderly, logical, not random and arbitrary (p. 83). Jesus, himself a master teacher, often incorporated the world of nature to teach his students about God: “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or
store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matt 6:26). Furthermore, since human beings are part of God’s created order, God’s general revelation also impacts relational interactions with fellow human beings as they are made in his image. Based on Paul’s writing to the Philippian church concerning “whatever things are true,” (Phil 4:8), Gaebelein (1968) asserts that “Christian truth embraces all truth, and that nothing true is outside the scope of Christianity” (p. 21). He maintains that knowledge of the truth can be found in nature and scientific study, but stresses, however, that the primary place of truth is to be found in the Scriptures and the Person of Jesus Christ (1968, p. 22). Both special and general revelation are relevant to classical Christian education as this methodology intentionally integrates the curriculum and biblical truth across disciplines.

**Spiritual training of the young.** Both the Old and New Testaments declare God’s commands for the spiritual training of the young. God chose Abraham to father the future nation of Israel, specifically noting his responsibility to raise his children to fear the LORD:

> Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him (Gen 18:18-19).

Moses explained to the Israelites God’s plan for sustaining a godly family heritage. Training children to love and honor God is the crucial component:

> These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life (Deut 6:1-2).

These admonitions are continued in the New Testament. Referring to the fifth commandment, Paul’s instructions concerning family harmony includes the training of children to live for God:
Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:1-4).

God designed humanity to know him even from an early age. Jesus assumed children would believe in him: “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble…” (Matt 18:6, italics added). A young person’s Christian formation may begin with a direct decision to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior, or begin as a process to that end (May, Posterski, Stonehouse, & Cannell, 2005, p. 50). The commitment then continues as a lifelong process of maturity and becoming more like Christ.

**Historical Context**

Classical education, in what later became formalized into the seven liberal arts, began with the ancient Greeks and continued into the Roman period. In this model, the curriculum was comprised of two main categories, the trivium and the quadrivium. The trivium included grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and the quadrivium included geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 55). The music instruction was broader in scope than the modern version of the discipline; in their music school, students learned reading and mathematics skills, practiced recitations, and also learned to sing and play instrumental music (Perrin, 2004, p. 9). Greek education emphasized virtue and citizenship (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 57). The Socratic method of asking guiding, contemplative questions developed at this time (p. 58). An ancient Greek education aimed to produce responsible, contributing citizens (2003, p. 53).

In the Middle Ages, a renewed interest in classical studies emerged after a time of educational decline following the fall of the Roman Empire (Anthony & Benson, 2003, pp. 147, 131). The liberal arts were formalized, and the terms, trivium and quadrivium were assigned
Theology was added to educational curriculum, along with a new emphasis on integrating reason with faith (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 148). Classical education continued throughout the Renaissance and Reformation, both movements driven by a return to past learning (Perrin, 2004, p. 13). During the Reformation, the authority of the Bible was renewed (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 199).

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment brought about a new emphasis on reason, the scientific method, and acquiring knowledge through the senses. Understanding the world through a lens of faith was no longer considered valid (Anthony, 2001, p. 249). Similarly, new educational philosophies arose during the nineteenth century which prompted a shift away from classical methods. This change was also influenced by new discoveries in science which in turn, steered people away from supernatural beliefs and biblical authority (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 327). In America, pragmatism arose as the dominant educational influence during this time, a philosophy which came to serve as a formalized theory for truth. According to William James (1842-1910), a prominent proponent, pragmatism “was an extension of empiricist thinking in that it departed from abstract theory with absolute principles to concrete theory with relative principles” (Gough, 2001, p. 377). Truth was considered situational, dependent on the context (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 329). Furthermore, he believed that since human experience can change, so also can truth (Gough, 2001, p. 377).

William James’ work influenced John Dewey (1859-1952), considered the “father of the progressive education movement” (Leyda, 2001, pp. 201-202). Dewey’s theory focused on experience as the source of knowledge. He rejected ideas of God, the supernatural, any concept of absolute truth, and regarded the natural world as “the whole of what could be understood; it is ultimate reality” (Leyda, 2001, p. 202). Dewey believed “in humankind’s creative capacities to
bring about a more progressive society” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 330). and that education played a major role in this effort (p. 330). According to Perrin (2004), progressive educators typically considered the classical model to be “harsh, cold and unpleasant for students” (p. 17). In response, the progressives aimed for more entertaining and fun methods while at the same time reducing their expectations for student work and achievement. Other shifts emerged as well: permissiveness increased, misbehavior was less likely to incur discipline, and grading became softer in the aims of protecting students’ self-esteem (Perrin, 2004, p. 17).

In twentieth-century America, Mortimer Adler (1902-2001), along with his colleague, Robert Hutchins, developed the Great Books program, an educational approach focusing on the literature of Western civilization. Adler was influenced by classical teachings of Aristotle and Aquinas and believed in absolute truth (Barcalow, 2001, p. 23). As such, Adler openly disagreed with John Dewey’s theory of pragmatism, and argued “that any view that makes truth relative creates moral and intellectual chaos” (2001, p. 23). Adler and Hutchins were major proponents of the contemporary educational theory perennialism, which emerged in the 1930’s as a rejection of progressivism (Knight, 2006, chap. 6, Perennialism, Kindle). Though it supported the return to absolutes and time-tested ideas, perennialism was a secular educational theory (Knight, 2006, chap. 6, Kindle).

As the American culture has moved to a postmodern, relativistic, and secular mindset, people’s religious beliefs are increasingly marginalized to the private realm of life. By the mid-twentieth century this trend was solidified when progressive, secular education became the norm.

In 1980, a few parents in three different states, without each other’s knowledge, decided to start classical type Christian schools. One of them was Douglas Wilson, a pastor in Moscow, Idaho who wrote Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning in 1991. Wilson’s book mirrored
Dorothy Sayers’ appeal in her 1947 speech to restore the “lost tools of learning” (2001), referring to the classical Trivium. Within ten years, the Association of Classical Christian Schools was founded to provide training, an annual national conference, and help with starting new schools. Other people influenced the movement. C. S. Lewis wrote *The Abolition of Man* in 1947 which criticizes the new progressive education. In 1981, David Hicks wrote *Norms and Nobility* which advocates the teaching of normative ideals of virtue and wisdom as opposed to mere pragmatic and vocational skills (ACCS, n.d.a).

In contrast to teaching for vocational purposes, classical Christian schools reclaimed the liberal arts, considered to be the tools for learning everything else. Theology is taught, not as an extra class, but as the ground for all other academic disciplines. In this approach, the idea of private religious practice is rejected; there is no dualism between the sacred and the secular.

“Classical Christian schools teach all subjects based on the principle that God is the Creator of all that exists, and therefore all knowledge is interrelated and points back to Him” (ACCS, n.d.b). These philosophical and theological bases secured the new classical movement as a solidly Christian educational endeavor.

**Sociological Context**

The Christian life was not meant to be lived in isolation. Jesus taught his disciples that their lives were to have an obvious and transforming effect on society:

> You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matt 5:14-16).

Jesus also made clear that living the Christian life in the world would not be easy. It would come with spiritual opposition as evidenced by his prayer for his disciples before he died:
I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one (John 17:14-15).

To these ends, students must be prepared to live in their world as authentic Christians. Teaching students to discern and critique cultural issues is a crucial part of Christian education. Recently speaking at a Christian college about political ostracization and media bias, law professor and author, Alan Dershowitz commented on the current cultural climate:

We’re living in an Orwellian age today, when the news and the media have become weaponized against political enemies. The criminal justice system (which I have been teaching for fifty years) has become weaponized. If you don’t like somebody’s politics, indict them. That’s not the answer. The answer is, argue with them. Participate in the court of public opinion. Make your points known and then people will decide after hearing all the arguments, what the truth is. I don’t envy your generation. You’re going to have a very difficult time distinguishing truth from fantasy (2019).

Dershowitz’s observation validates the crucial need for Christian educators to train the young to know Truth – through the Scriptures and through a relationship with Christ – and then to equip them to engage the culture in a biblical, loving, knowledgeable, and persuasive manner.

Echoing Jesus’ declaration that his people are to be salt and light in the world (Matt 5:13-14), Pazmiño (2008) advises Christian educators to teach students the necessary skills to identify, analyze, and act upon cultural elements so they can “adequately represent Christ in the various cultures and subcultures in which they have been called to live, work, and minister” (chap. 5, One Model section, Kindle). Pearcey (2004) cautions that people can unknowingly adopt nonbiblical philosophies if they have not learned a biblical worldview (p. 44). She further notes that a biblical perspective exists for everything, not just for spiritual issues (p. 44).

**Theoretical Context**

The theoretical foundations for this study coincide with the research questions which address four overarching characteristics of classical Christian education in its modern form:
Trivium methodology, a high view of mankind, curricular integration, and an emphasis on Western civilization. These four general elements were chosen based on information from the Circe Institute website (Circe Institute website, n.d.b, n.d.c).

**Trivium methodology.** In a 1947 speech, Dorothy Sayers formulated the theory that the Trivium corresponded to childhood development: the early elementary grades or grammar stage, emphasizing memorization of facts, the middle grades or logic stage emphasizing critical thinking and debate, and high school level or rhetoric stage, emphasizing writing and speech (Sayers, 2001). Most modern classical Christian schools utilize this development model of the Trivium as opposed to its reference to the three language arts of the seven liberal arts (along with the quadrivium which includes mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and music) (Circe Institute website, n.d.a).

**High view of mankind.** Because mankind is the image-bearer of the transcendent God, classical Christian proponents believe that students should be educated holistically, with attention given to their emotional, spiritual, and rational growth (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 15). Furthermore, emphasis is focused not only toward information and ideas, but also toward norms that hold the objective of educating young people to become both rational and noble (Hicks, 1999, p. vi). Plato’s educational emphasis on truth, goodness, and beauty are still inherent elements of modern classical Christian education. They are considered “the soul’s nourishment” (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 14) and are deemed as those praiseworthy characteristics of God. A classical Christian education then, “cultivates the creativity and spiritual lives of students so that the much-celebrated ‘whole child’ is truly prepared for life, without losing touch with his deepest and most intimate self” (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 14).
Curricular integration. Integrated study, according to classical Christian educators, helps students understand how God, man, and the created world beautifully fit together under the lordship of Christ. This paradigm is based on Paul’s explanation about the centrality of Christ: “All things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:16-17). Clark and Jain (2013) propose that an integrated curriculum cultivates “fully integrated human beings… whose knowledge of the world, man, and God fit harmoniously within a distinctly Christian philosophy” (Paradigm section, Kindle). According to Hicks (1999), academic disciplines such as art, history, literature, and religion should be integrated toward one inquiry, such as some historical period. As such, they are “pieces to one puzzle” (p. 133). Those puzzle pieces then connect larger historical points of study (p. 133).

Emphasis on Western civilization. Through connection with past, the student realizes he is actually a part of that “puzzle” (Hicks, 1999, p. 133). The study of history becomes “normative inquiry, bridging in exciting and ennobling stories the hiatus between knowledge and responsibility” (p. 133). Classical students read primary historical sources as well as the Great Books, referring to the time-tested literature of Western civilization. Through this connection with the past, students learn to discern what is true, good, and beautiful (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 107). Hicks (1999) believes young people are enriched by this discipline since these sources address the “fundamental yearning for dignity, moral uprightness, order, freedom, purpose, and transcendent value” (p. 138).

Researcher’s Relationship to the Problem

This researcher’s interest in classical Christian education began twenty years ago when a friend and fellow homeschool mother recommended the book, The Well-Trained Mind (2004) by Dr. Susan Wise Bauer and her mother and homeschool teacher, Jesse Wise. The book was
written as a guide to classical Christian education for homeschool families. Through this and other sources, the researcher found many of the classical elements to work well for their family’s homeschooling efforts. For example, through curricular integration, understanding the Bible was enhanced. Until that time, the researcher had studied history, Bible, and art history in college as separate disciplines. Through the classical approach of curriculum integration, the researcher, along with her children, studied these academic disciplines in a unified manner. Simultaneously learning about Egyptian ziggurats, creating maps and timelines of the time period, and reading about the Exodus gave new insight into the realities of this biblical account.

Secondly, as an ordained Assemblies of God pastor, the researcher has found discipleship materials for children and youth to be weak. While Christian education should certainly be exciting and joyful, children’s materials tend to overemphasize fun and underemphasize effort to lead young people to know, worship, and commit their lives to God. Biblical illiteracy is a serious problem. This study is of interest to the researcher because it explores the particularities of this unique method of Christian education for youth and children. Perhaps it could offer new avenues for discipleship in the church, for parents, and for other contexts.

Classical Christian education, according to the literature, aims to develop strong Christian formation in its students. Very little research exists, however, on classical Christian education in general, and even less regarding the goal of Christian formation within this methodology. Therefore, a study is needed to explore what specific connections might exist between the distinguishing characteristics of classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation.

**Statement of the Problem**

Since this revival of classical Christian education is fairly recent, research on this method is minimal. The existing studies cover topics of teacher self-efficacy (Anderson, 2016), a
A comparison study of PSAT scores (Vaughan, 2018), leadership of headmasters (Dietrich, 2009), a comparison study of spiritual formation (Dernlan, 2013), and a comparative study of the Christian worldviews of K-12 classical and non-classical teachers (Wood, 2008).

Classical Christian education offers parents one alternative for K-12 Christian education. The classical Christian approach integrates biblical belief throughout academic disciplines as opposed to separating the sacred from the secular (Wilson, 1996, p. 170). The Trivium, specifically the middle dialectical/logic stage, builds students’ critical thinking skills. The Socratic method is used, teaching students to seek truth and think for themselves. How do teachers integrate these thinking skills with spiritual formation? Is there a connection with students being taught to seek truth, goodness, and beauty – classical aims – with a stronger degree of personal spiritual formation? The last stage, that of rhetoric, trains older students the art of self-expression through strong writing and oratory skills. Do teachers connect these skills with spiritual formation, such as being able to clearly express and justify their beliefs? Are there any detrimental factors at play, such as pride, competitiveness, or the misuse of rhetoric as manipulation? This qualitative study adds to the limited research by providing an in-depth exploration of classical Christian methodology and its possible connection to students' spiritual development.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to determine if any perceived relationships exist between the distinguishing characteristics of classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation at three K-12 classical Christian schools. For this study Christian formation is defined as the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, from the early stage of faith – whether at a specific time or a process – and continuing through lifelong
sanctification. This work of the Spirit is holistic, transforming a person toward Christlikeness in all of life: intellectually, morally, and aesthetically (Wilson, 2003). As it pertains to the students of this study, Christian formation includes knowledge about God and the Bible, a growing faith in God, love for God and others, an ability to discern biblical truth from falsehood, sharing and defending one’s faith, and a desire to live as a Christian in the world throughout life.

**Research Questions**

The research questions cover the overarching characteristics of classical Christian education. They were chosen based on the Circe Institute’s descriptions of defining elements and principles of classical Christian education (Circe Institute website, n.d.b, n.d.c). Further information regarding the terminology used is provided in the Definition of Terms.

**RQ1.** How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the Trivium methodology foster Christian formation?

**RQ2.** How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian conviction of a high view of mankind foster Christian formation?

**RQ3.** How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian element of curricular integration foster Christian formation?

**RQ4.** How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian emphasis on Western civilization foster Christian formation?

**RQ5.** What, if any, are the perceived connections, in the cases studied, between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation?

**Assumptions and Delimitations**

**Research Assumptions**

1. It is assumed that participating teachers are Christians themselves and consider Christian formation of students as an inherent part of their educational responsibility.
While Christian formation is not something which can be directly measured, it is assumed that it is possible to detect the Holy Spirit at work in a believer’s life. Evidence of this transforming activity can include the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), humility, a teachable spirit, a heart of worship, respectful relationships, and a growing faith in God.

**Delimitations of the Research Design**

1. The research was delimited to three K-12 schools with membership in the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS). Other criteria included a student body of at least 80 students, the school had to have been in existence for at least four years, and the school’s website clearly defined it as a classical Christian school.

2. The focus of the study was delimited to the perceptions of teachers, students, and parents concerning the pedagogical elements unique to classical Christian education and their possible connection to students’ Christian faith formation. This research is not an evaluation of the participating schools, teachers’ proficiency in any area, including students’ Christian formation, nor does the research evaluate students’ Christian faith development.

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions informed this study:

1. *Christian formation:* The ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, from the early stage of faith – whether at a specific time or a process – and continuing through lifelong sanctification. This work of the Spirit is holistic, transforming a person toward Christlikeness in all of life: intellectually, morally, and aesthetically (Wilson, 2003). As it pertains to K-12 students of this study, it includes knowledge about God and the Bible, a growing faith in God, love for God and others, an ability to discern biblical truth from falsehood, sharing and defending one’s faith, and a desire to live as a Christian in the world throughout life. The researcher chose to use the term “Christian formation” rather than “spiritual formation” since spiritual can refer to any world belief system.

2. *Classical Christian education:* For this study, classical Christian education refers to the modern renewal of this educational approach. It is an educational philosophy and methodology which aims for “the cultivation of wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on truth, goodness, and beauty by means of the seven liberal arts and the four sciences so that, in Christ, the student is enabled to better know, glorify, and enjoy God” (Circe Institute website, n.d.a).

3. *Classical education / Paideia:* The educational philosophy and methodology of the ancient Greeks. Virtue, meaning, and purpose were as equally important as factual knowledge. Students were taught how to think rationally and speak eloquently, aiming to produce young adults who could responsibly contribute to a greater society. In contrast, the *paideia of the Lord* (Eph 6:4) is nurtured in the Christian community (Turley, 2009).
The goal is not an exemplary society, but the worship of God (Wilson, 2003). According to the Association of Classical Christian Schools, *paideia* is “the cultivated affections toward rightly ordered virtue in the soul” (ACCS, n.d.b).

4. **Curricular integration:** The coordination of academic disciplines in order to convey the interconnection of the individual parts of the created world and its history, with the overall whole. History, geography, and literature, for example, are taught according to the same time period. The idea is grounded on the belief that Christ is creator and sustainer for the universe (John 1:3, Col 1:17) and all that can be learned about it. There is no sacred/secular dualism. Integration refers to Logocentrism; it is Christ who “binds every subject in a universal harmony, makes sense of all things, and lifts learning and knowledge to the realm of eternal meaning” (Circe Institute website, n.d.b).

5. **Trivium:** For this study, the Trivium refers to the three-stage theory of child development. In the grammar stage (early elementary), children learn and memorize basic facts. In the logic stage (middle grades), students learn critical thinking, logic, and debate. The rhetoric stage (high school) focuses on the communication skills of writing and oratory.

6. **Western civilization:** The ideas, values, philosophies first developed by the ancient Greeks and Romans and which continued throughout history in Europe and North America. Christianity was birthed into the ancient Greco-Roman culture and both Christian and Greek/Roman influences are found in Western ideas of liberty, justice, government, science, reason, and the belief in a transcendent realm.

**Significance of the Study**

Recent research studies reveal significant problems in the spiritual state of today’s youth. For the *National Study of Youth and Religion*, spanning the years 2003 through 2005, massive data was collected on the spirituality of American youth through interviews conducted with over 3,300 teens along with surveys completed by their parents. Based on this study, Dean (2010) explains that teens are not hostile or rebellious toward the church, but rather, they simply do not care about it to a very high degree (p. 17). They view church life more “like music or sports, as an extra-curricular activity: a good, well-rounded ting to do, but unnecessary for an integrated life” (p. 6). In the research, a high percentage of teens viewed church as “a very nice thing” (p. 6), but actual faith was found to be lacking (p. 6). Dean’s (2010) book title, *Almost Christian*, refers to the high percentage of American congregants who adhere to a “do-good, feel-good
spirituality that has little to do with the Triune God of Christian tradition and even less to do with loving Jesus Christ enough to follow him into the world” (p. 4).

Also based on the *National Study of Youth and Religion*, Smith and Denton (2005) reported that though many of the youth were competent speakers in general (p. 133), they typically had difficulty in discussing matters of faith: “We found very few teens from any religious background who are able to articulate well their religious beliefs and explain how those beliefs connect to the rest of their lives” (p. 131). The researchers concluded that the participating youth had received insufficient preparation in the skills of explaining their beliefs (p. 133).

Based on a four-year study between 2008 and 2011, Barna Group president and researcher David Kinnaman (2011) asserts that the young are ill-prepared to follow Christ in the current culture: “Like a Geiger counter under a mushroom cloud, the next generation is reacting to the radioactive intensity of social, technological, and religious changes. And for the most part, we are sending them into the world unprepared to withstand the fallout” (p. 28). The internet provides young people with instant access to information but they need the Christian influence and community to provide truth and wisdom (p. 127).

In Kinnaman’s (2011) study, 36% of the participating teens and young adults admitted that they did not feel free to bring up pressing life questions and 10% expressed that they were not allowed to discuss doubts in church (p. 192). This reluctance to discuss doubts and pose questions leads to a further problem: isolation (p. 192). When people view church as a place where they cannot be honest, they feel the need “to pretend, to put on a show, which all too often results in a faith that is no more than skin deep” (Kinnaman, 2011, p. 192-193). Irene Cho from the Fuller Youth Institute, agrees based on their research findings. Many young people expressed
that church would never be the place they could discuss difficult personal issues of identity and their future (Barna, 2018, p. 33). Cho believes that “providing young people with safe places to ask difficult questions, express doubts, learn how to integrate with their world and engage with internal struggle is absolutely crucial to cultivating faith. Doubt is not what kills faith; silence is” (p. 33).

Of great concern to Christian parents and educators is the significant drop-off rate of young adults leaving the church. While teens are generally very active in religious areas, twenty-somethings are the least active, resulting in a 43% drop-off rate in church adherence between the two groups (Kinnaman, 2011, p. 22). According to Kinnaman (2011), “These numbers represent about eight million twenty-somethings who were active churchgoers as teenagers but who will no longer be particularly engaged in a church by their thirtieth birthday” (p. 22). Even among those who stay in church including all ages, faith is shallow; biblical literacy and knowledge of doctrine and church history is poor (p. 27). Ideas of right and wrong, truth and falsehood are blurred (pp. 11-12). Kinnaman (2011) cautions, “The next generation is caught between two possible destinies – one moored by the power and depth of the Jesus-centered gospel and one anchored to a cheap, Americanized version of the historic faith that will snap at the slightest puff of wind” (p. 28).

During 2016 and 2017, the Barna Group conducted a comprehensive research study on teens aged thirteen to eighteen, an age group known as Generation Z. The study explored teens’ views on issues including identity, worldview, motivations, and the church and faith (Barna Group, 2018, p. 10). The resultant report passionately stated the need for improvement in discipleship of the young within Christian contexts:

With best of intentions, we bubble wrap our kids and create Disney World-like environments for them in our churches, and then wonder why they have no resilience in
faith or life. Students are entertained but not prepared. They’ve had a lot of fun but are not ready to lead (Barna, 2018, p. 5).

Among the findings was an increase in atheism among teens (Barna, 2018, p. 25). According to this study of Generation Z, the percentage of those who identify as atheist is twice that of American adults (13% compared to 6%). The study also shows a decline, from older to younger, in the percentage of people who identify as Protestant or Catholic Christian (75% of the Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, compared to only 59% of Generation Z teens (Barna, 2018, p. 25).

The Generation Z study found that over a quarter of participants stated that church was “not a safe place to express doubt” (Barna, 2018, p. 71). This issue is a concern of parents. According to the annual *Barna Trends* report for 2018, Christian parents’ highest desires for their children’s education encompassed the following elements in Christian schools: safety, academic excellence, values and spirituality, and warm and communicative teachers (Barna, 2017, pp. 68-69). Safety issues covered a broad spectrum, including students feeling free to question and express doubt, being able to handle differences, and having a sense of belonging (p. 68).

Relativism among teens emerged as a strong finding, aligning with the same outlook of the general population (Barna, 2018, p. 64). Tensions between science and faith were found; half of the teens believed that church rejected much of what science reveals about the world (Barna, 2018, p. 70). In the data analysis, 46% of teens required “factual evidence to support my beliefs” (p. 65), further illustrating their uneasiness with the science-faith tension (p. 65).

Christian parents, along with church leaders, are responsible for the discipleship of the young. This responsibility is sobering in light of these recent research findings. This study adds to the limited research on classical Christian schools. The research also affects Christian
leadership in the broader scope of Christian education. Since the study indicates that the distinguishing characteristics of modern classical Christian education prove to foster Christian formation, it informs parents, churches, non-classical Christian schools, and youth-oriented parachurch organizations of alternatives in Christian education. Likewise, those findings provide empirical data for Christian education publishers and Christian education degree programs in colleges and universities.

**Summary of the Design**

For this qualitative multiple case study, data was collected through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and parent/student groups, and documents. Classroom observations included relational interactions, curricular content, and the contents of the rooms. Interview questions were open-ended, giving participants the opportunity to describe their experiences. Protocol forms (Appendices H, I, and J) were used to record data and reflections for observations and interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, pp. 260-261). The population samples were stratified according to the childhood developmental stages of the Trivium (typically following the elementary, junior high, and high school classifications). According to qualitative protocol, the researcher coded and analyzed the data according to emerging themes and drew conclusions within the first case (school). The study was then replicated on the second and third cases (schools), and a cross-case analysis compared findings from the three schools.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In the Bible, Paul exhorted parents to “bring [your children] up in the *paideia* and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). Paul’s audience of the ancient Greco-Roman world would have understood this admonition. It was the *paideia* which taught students to see divine, purposeful beauty in the created world. Realizing the existence of the divine cultivated a sense of awe and wonder (Turley, 2012). While ancient Greeks based paideia on their society, Paul based it on the church. For the Christian student then, the *paideia of the Lord* leads to an understanding of the Christian community as the culture for discipleship (Turley, 2009), and for the worship of God, the ultimate aim of classical Christian education (Wilson, 2003).

This chapter presents an overview of relevant literature and research organized according to theological, theoretical, and related literature frameworks. The theological section explores the theology of both Christian formation and Christian education, with special emphasis on children and youth. Theoretical issues include relevant educational philosophies, and theories concerning Christian education. Related literature pertains to classical Christian education specifically, including its history and the four distinguishing characteristics informing the research questions.

Theological Framework for the Study

A study of K-12 classical Christian education and Christian formation begins with a theological foundation. This section will include discussion of the theology of Christian formation, the spiritual formation of children and youth, the theology of Christian education, Biblical foundations of Christian education, and Christian education of children and youth specifically. Through this review, the terms Christian formation, spiritual formation, and faith formation will be used interchangeably.
Theology of Christian Formation

Christian formation refers to “the intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Wilhoit, 2008, p. 23). The goal is spiritual maturity as described by Jesus: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48). Formation, derived from morphe (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18), implies not only outward change, but also a transformation of the inner soul and spirit (Taylor, 2001, chap. 9, Kindle),

God’s plan for Christian formation began at creation. Through the created universe, God made himself known to mankind: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse” (Rom 1:20). David the Psalmist wrote of the witness of creation:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world (Ps 19:1-4).

This general revelation serves as the “divine disclosure to all persons at all times and in all places by which humans come to know that God is and what he is like” (Elwell, 2001, p. 1019). General revelation informs Christian formation through the following factors. It provides the basis for truth wherever it is found (Elwell, 2001; Morrow, 2008, p. 35; Pearcey, 2004, p. 34;). It gives evidence of a universal moral law implanted in the universe from which human beings find a sense of right and wrong (Estep, Anthony, & Allison, 2008, p. 8). Finally, general revelation provides the rational basis for special revelation of Scripture and Jesus Christ. In this way, “natural theology (however modest) serves as the vestibule of revealed theology” (Elwell,
2001, p. 1021). According to evangelical theology, “God has not left himself without witness since all of creation is stamped with the divine fingerprint” (Morrow, 2008, p. 32).

Though Protestants agree that natural theology reveals general knowledge about God, they have historically considered it insufficient because of how sin marred the creation. Because of this factor, they view special revelation – Christ and the Scriptures – as a far better source of revelation about God and vital matters leading to Christian formation (Estep et al., 2008, p. 9).

God’s plan for mankind’s salvation is revealed in the creation account. A bond between God and humans was formed through God’s personal creation of Adam and then placing him in a garden, personally crafted and by “the Artist/Creator” (Wilhoit, 2008, p. 34). After the entrance of sin in the creation, God’s love and grace, as a means of redemption, continued to create order out of chaos as described in Genesis chapters one and two. This intention continues through Christ. In Christ “all things hold together” (Col 1:17); he “sustains all things by his powerful word” (Heb 1:3). Christian formation stems from God’s love for mankind (Wilhoit, 2008, p. 34).

Human beings are unable to procure their own spiritual formation, nor can the sinful human nature be cured through social science or education (Erickson, 2015, p. 358). Spiritual renewal is the divine enablement of God (Erickson, 2015, p. 358; Morrow, 2008, p. 45). He uses three resources for this spiritual formation: his written Word, the Holy Spirit, and his community, the church (Morrow, 2008, p. 45). God’s Word provides the primary source of truth about Jesus Christ and how to follow him, the pathway to Christian formation. God’s Word gives guidance and insight (Ps 119:9-10), stability (Eph 4:12-15), and the means of spiritual maturity (1 Pet 2:2-3) (Morrow, 2008, p. 45).

The Holy Spirit’s work of transformation is crucial to spiritual growth. The experience begins with regeneration, or the new birth (John 3:3-8). This involves “something new, a whole
reversal of a person’s natural tendencies” (Erickson, 2015, p. 356). The new birth begins with repentance from sin. Two New Testament (Greek) words are used for the act of repentance. *Metamelomai* refers to the emotional remorse over sin; *metanoeō* refers to changing one’s mind or to think differently (Erickson, 2015, p. 353). This initial process is then followed by the Spirit’s ongoing, lifelong work of sanctification (Erickson, 2015, p. 357; Morrow, 2008, p. 44). The apostle Paul wrote, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18).

Spiritual formation was designed to occur within a loving community of believers and guided by spiritually mature leaders (Bramer, 2007, p. 358). In this fellowship, members form relationships and grow together spiritually through mutually shared worship, encouragement, teaching, ministry, and shared everyday life (Col 3:13-17) (Bramer, p. 360; Wilhoit, 2008, p. 23). Community is not optional; it is a necessity for spiritual formation (Morrow, 2008, p. 46). This bond of Christian love is further “deepened and enriched when a wide variety of God’s children walk together” (Hielema, 2010, p. 16). In addition to the bond formed with other Christians in their present context, believers have a connection with the past; they belong to the “people who live inside the story of God’s faithfulness” (Hielema, 2010, p. 14).

**Biblical foundations concerning children and youth.** Throughout both Testaments are accounts of children and young people who experience a relationship with God. While still a boy, God called Samuel to ministry leadership (1 Sam 3:1). Their close relationship continued throughout Samuel’s life: “The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground” (1 Sam 3:19). As a young shepherd, David experienced
God’s presence and power while caring for his animals. He was still young when his strong faith led him to defend God’s honor against a giant:

David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam 17:34-37).

Jeremiah was called of God while still in the womb (Jer 1:1-4), specifically, countering Jeremiah’s fear that he was too young: “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you” (1:7). John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit while still in the womb (Luke 1:15). Timothy was commended for knowing the Scriptures from infancy (2 Tim 3:15).

**Jesus and children.** Jesus welcomed children and insisted that his disciples do the same, a surprising demand given the cultural setting was one in which children were deemed unimportant (May, Posterski, Stonehouse, & Cannell, 2005, p. 71): “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt 19:14). The Synoptic Gospels include Jesus’ teaching about children. Jesus used a child to teach his disciples about humility (Matt 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48); he gave a stern warning about those who would cause a child to sin (Matt 18:6-16; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 17:1-2); and he blessed children (Matt 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17) (May et al., 2005, p. 39).

**Christian formation of children and youth.** In an interview with the Barna Group (2018) concerning difficulties youth face in developing a Christian faith, apologist Dr. Jonathan Morrow notes two causes: their fear of being accused of judgmentalism, and a “crisis of knowledge,” (Barna, 2018, p. 100) referring to the postmodern idea that truth is merely opinion.
He suggests three solutions, centered on worldview transformation. First, they need to learn an apologetical rationale for their beliefs. Toward this end, they need a “safe space for them to ask questions and explore doubts” (Barna, 2018, pp. 100-101). Secondly, teens need relationships with wise people as a remedy for loneliness and isolation. This point was cited by Morrow as the most important influence (p. 101). Lastly, students need habitual practices for their faith; more than simply doing what is right, the focus should concern them becoming a person who loves that which is good (Barna, 2018, p. 101).

**Theology of Christian Education**

Learning about any aspect of life begins with God, the creator, and the instructions concerning all of life found in his Word (Issler, 2001, chap. 3, Kindle). The Bible is a trustworthy source of answers for all time periods because it is “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). Studying the Bible is “at the heart of Christian education” (Issler, 2001, chap. 3). The aim for Christian educators is “to take the living Word of God and write it on the hearts of believers” (2001, chap. 3).

Being made in God’s image has various implications for education. First, educational ministry is holistically-oriented; it guides all areas of humanity – body, soul, and spirit – toward submission to the Word of God. In the earthly life, the physical aspect of humanity is inseparable from the immaterial elements, such as emotions, soul, and spirit. All aspects of humanity, including the body, are included in God’s plan of redemption (1 Cor 15:50-54) (Estep et al., 2008, pp. 177-178). A classical Christian education pioneer, Wilson (2003) argues against Adler’s notion that human emotions are to be regulated by reason (Adler, 1988, p. 42 as quoted in Wilson, 2003, p. 46), noting that Bible neither speaks of subordinating emotions to reason nor the reverse, but that “the whole man – body, soul, spirit – should be subordinated to the Word of
God” (Wilson, 2003, p. 47). Similarly, Wilson points to Deuteronomy 6:5 as the greatest commandment for the context of education: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (p. 47).

A second educational implication of being made in God’s image regards mankind’s innate dignity: human beings are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:13-16) (Estep et al., 2008, p. 178). The fitting response when contemplating this truth is worship of mankind’s creator, being filled with wonder (p. 178). Human beings have amazing potential for intellectual and creative pursuits. Educators should never minimize these abilities or accomplishments in some misguided notion about bringing honor to God. Any good that is done, whether individually or collectively, is the result of being created in God’s image (p. 178).

**Biblical foundations of Christian education.** Christian formation is pursued through “instruction and narrative grounded in the Christian Scriptures, learning God’s presence and power through worship and spiritual practices, and learning redemptive living through critical-reflective engagement in constructive actions, Christian community, and life experiences” (Bramer, 2007, p. 361). The Word of God is the foundation for Christian education, and teaching must stay true to it (Richards & Bredfeldt, 1998, p. 271). Furthermore, Christian education is centered on God (Estep et al., 2008, p. 47). Faith for God’s people involves believing in something, namely God. There exists in Christian education curriculum, particularly in children’s curriculum, a tendency to teach morals in place of the true hermeneutical intent of the passage. In such instances, “Where is God? A merit-centered works righteousness replaces the biblical core of grace and the biblical concept that human response is an expression of love to a God whose grace enables it is clouded and lost” (Richards & Bredfeldt, 1998, p. 271).
Education is modeled by God; he himself is a teacher. From the beginning of man’s existence, God instructed him (Gen 1:28-30). As God’s student, the Psalmist David asked to be taught God’s truth: “Teach me your ways and I will walk in your truth” (Ps 86:11). In the New Testament, Jesus’ ministry was largely comprised of teaching. He is central in educational matters (Col 1:15-29; 1 John 2:27) (Estep et al., 2008, p. 47).

The community of believers hold an important place in Christian education. Faith – its content, practices, and experiences – are learned through the church. Education is intended as a community-oriented endeavor, with every element designed to foster Christian formation in its members “including the content, disciplines, and ministries of the Christian faith” (Estep et al., 2008, p. 50).

**Christian education of children and youth.** Jesus assumed children would believe in him: “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me [emphasis added]—to stumble…” (Matt 18:6). In the biblical accounts of Jesus and children, details concerning the children’s salvation or spiritual growth are not found. The focus is on the need to encourage young people to come to him, and celebrate their love for him (May, Posterski, Stonehouse, & Cannell, 2005, p. 68). Christian educators play a crucial role in this endeavor. While the Holy Spirit works to draw and conform young followers to Christ, the teachers can make space and opportunity for this to occur, enabling the children to grow comfortable with the quietness of prayer. They can thereby experience God, not merely learn about him (May et al., p. 71).

Jesus’ own experience of growth and development is lauded in the New Testament: “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). This verse depicts the importance of the balanced life. To follow Jesus’ model, Christian educators would aim “to create disciples who were strong in wisdom (cognitive) and stature (physical), and in
favor with God (spiritual) and men (social)” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 399). Salvation is only the beginning; the goal is discipleship (p. 399).

God’s chosen method of communication with mankind is his Word, therefore, the Bible is to be used for young people, not just adults (Richards & Bredfeldt, 1998, p. 270). Through God’s Word they learn to know and understand a personal God, his love and faithfulness, his character, and his will, so they can obey him (1998, p. 270).

Following God’s design of childhood development, Christian education efforts need to appropriately align with the level of children and/or youth (Richards & Bredfeldt, 1998, p. 273). In this way, the young students can discover that God can relate to their own unique needs, and they discover how to respond to him (1998, p. 273).

Though age-segregated children’s church has merit, children learn a great deal from participating in the worship service of adults (Kennemur, 2008, p. 311; May, Posterski, Stonehouse, & Cannell, 2005, p. 256). They learn by watching, and feel a part of the group. They hear needs expressed in prayer, and will grow in their understanding of worship. Their active participation might include reading Scripture, praying, or leading music (May et al., p. 256). For the adults, the presence of children provides educational benefits as they are reminded of Jesus’ teaching on the simple faith of children (Matt 18:3) (Kennemur, 2008, p. 311).

Teens also benefit from the empowerment gained through active participation within the faith community (Taylor, 2001, chap. 9, Kindle; Rahn, 2001, chap. 23, Kindle). Christian young people belong to the church – to God’s people – in the same way as adults belong. Age variations “merely add to the multigenerational beauty of the church” (Rahn, 2001, chap. 23). One theological aspect of youth ministry then, is “ecclesiastical inclusiveness” (Rahn, 2001, chap. 23). A second aspect involves cultural engagement. Jesus’ high priestly prayer (John 17)
for his followers informs Christian education of youth, who typically experience excessive cultural influence. Rather than hide from the culture, they can be equipped to transform it, seeking to reconcile the fallen culture to Christ, and making disciples of their friends (Rahn, 2001, chap. 23).

In summary, the pursuit of Christian formation, specifically that of children and youth, is an important mandate for educators in the church and Christian school. Christian education is God-centered and geared toward leading students into a right relationship with him. The Bible stands as the basis of truth for all subjects. Since human beings are made in God’s image, a holistic educational approach which addresses body, mind, and spirit is appropriate. The faith community plays a vital role in the training of its youngest members.

**Theoretical Framework for the Study**

Theories of education are built upon social science. At a deeper level, theories are built on worldviews. Social sciences refer to those human-focused disciplines of study such as psychology, sociology, education, cognitive development, and human development including morality and faith (Estep et al., 2008, pp. 19-20). Worldview refers to a “philosophical or theological system of understanding reality, truth, and values” (Estep et al., pp. 18-19). For this theoretical framework, attention will be given to relevant educational philosophies and the theoretical background informing Christian education. The research topic of classical Christian education – an educational and theological theory itself – will be discussed in detail in the Related Literature section.

**Relevant Educational Philosophies**

Until the eighteenth century, the dominant idea of education was that of training. Education, according to the traditional sense, “is inherently an induction into the adult tribe – and
so it has been from the dawn of human social groups” (Hirsch, 2016, p. 196). People growing up in the nineteenth century were influenced by romanticism. While classical educators had always aimed to correct human nature, the later romantics focused on child growth and development (Hirsch, 2016, p. 194).

These romantic ideas were influenced by Horace Mann in the 1840’s and his writings about child development and “hands-on learning” (Hirsch, 2016, p. 195). Mann noted that human senses came from God so using them would foster a natural means of learning, as opposed to “purely bookish, rote-learned activities” (p. 195). The romantics then influenced the rise of progressive education in the early twentieth century; the Progressive Education Association was formed in the 1920’s (p. 195).

Hirsch (2016) disagrees with progressive educational aims: “‘Development’ demands from the child what the child does not have” (p. 196). Education built on natural human growth and development “intensifies inequalities” (p. 196). He asserts that progressive education, influenced by John Dewey (1859-1952), marked a subtle transition from “the instructive, molding conception of early education – the classical concept of Noah Webster – to the romantic, pantheistic idea of natural development, in which encouraging the imagination of the child is in effect encouraging the divine spark, the inner light” (2016, p. 205).

Essentialism and perennialism are two of the five traditional educational philosophies (Benson, 2001, p 257). Both pertain to this study because they are utilized in classical Christian education. The more recent educational philosophies of progressivism and postmodernism are discussed because these theories are those that modern classical Christian education has rejected, with the aim of returning to traditional methods.
Essentialism. With roots going back to Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas, essentialism focuses on educational fundamentals, the basic body of knowledge which stands the test of time (Benson, 2001, p. 258). In the 1930’s essentialism arose in opposition to the child-centered progressive theory (Knight, 2006, Chap. 6, Kindle). According to this philosophy, learning requires student discipline and diligence. The teacher initiates the learning process, using exemplary methods which bring out the students’ disciplined engagement. The goal is the educational endeavor is for the student to acquire the curricular material (Benson, 2001, p. 258).

The curriculum emphasizes the essentials, the “tried-and-true heritage of skills, facts, and laws of knowledge acquisitions” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, pp. 394-395), namely, the “classical curriculum” (p. 395). The teacher plays an authoritative role. He would be characterized by the following behaviors:

- A coworker with God in perfecting man
- The personification of reality for students to embrace
- A specialist in knowledge about students
- An exemplar of propriety
- A personal good friend to each student
- One who awakens the desire to learn in students

As it applies to education, essentialism is a combination of idealism and realism (Anthony & Benson, 2003; Knight, 2006, Chap. 6, Kindle). With the philosophy of idealism, reality is believed to exist solely in the mental realm of ideas, thoughts, and images. Matter is a reflection of reality. God is “basically mind, or self” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 392). With realism, reality transcends human reasoning (p. 394). Educational realists focus on discovering knowledge through the senses and the scientific method (p. 394). Among notable adherents, Socrates (469-399 B.C.) and Plato (427-347 B.C.) were idealists (p. 393). Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) were realists (p. 394).
Perennialism. Like essentialism, perennialism also emerged in the 1930’s in opposition to child-centered progressive education. Its modern form is a near-total rejection of progressivism (Knight, 2006, Chap. 6, Kindle). Perennialists “advocate a return to the absolutes and focus of time-honored ideas of human culture – those ideas that have proven their validity and usefulness by having withstood the test of time” (Knight, Chap. 6, Perennialism section, Kindle). It is also known as “neoscholasticism, traditionalism, and neo-Thomism” (p. 396). Perennialism’s origins date back to Aristotle, as a realist. Years later, Thomas Aquinas adopted the philosophy and added a spiritual element to it (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 396-397).

Educationally, high value is placed on the exercise and discipline of the mind. God reveals himself through human intellect. Reality is discovered through “three primary means: the scientific method, intuition, and revelation” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 397). Intuition, is particularly valued since “it leads to ultimate Truth” (p. 397) and therefore, education should include focus on its development (p. 397). Liberal arts are valued more than vocational skills. These intellectual emphases point to perennialism’s ultimate aim of education: “to liberate man by helping become an essential self, a rational individual with superior reasoning capabilities” (p. 398). To facilitate reasoning abilities, emphasis is given to language arts and rhetoric. Literature classics are preferred over more modern works, and foreign language, including Greek or Latin, are taught, even to young students (p. 398).

Spiritual matters are important to perennialist educators. Students pursue a quest for knowledge and truth as spiritual beings; they can also know God and have a relationship with him. A prime objective is to bring together “these two desires together through an integrated blend of curricular and cocurricular activities” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 398). The teacher
aims to train students’ rational abilities since it is only through intellectual discipline that ultimate truth can be understood (p. 398).

**Progressivism.** With American progressivism, attention is focused on the child as an individual, including his interests, abilities and culture (Hirsch, 2016, p. 3; Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 333). Progressive classrooms are democratic in regards to establishing rules, curriculum, and general management. Teachers are authority figures, but are also the children’s fellow life-long learners. Rather than master teachers, they are “learning facilitators” (2003, p. 401).

Rousseau’s (1712-1778) idealist notions of the nature of children heavily influenced progressivism (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 332). John Dewey (1859-1952) also played a key role in progressivism. He rejected traditional, teacher-centered instructed, favoring instead “student-centered knowledge through inquiry” (2003, p. 329). Dewey is considered to have a founding role, but later social science provided further acceptance. For example, Jean Piaget (1896-1980) promoted constructivism, in which children are encouraged to construct their own path of learning, and also stage theory (Hirsch, 2016, p. 207). Knowledge in the constructivist sense is not comprised of a set of facts and concepts independent of the student who has yet to discover them. Because knowledge is constructed by human individuals, it is fallible and unstable (Knight, 2006, chap. 5, Kindle).

Progressivism was a reaction against the teaching of absolute truth, the idea that facts are “absolute and eternal, never changing regardless of context or culture” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 399). In contrast, progressive educators hold a relativistic view; the degree of truth is dependent on the context (p. 399).

**Postmodernism.** Postmodernism evolved as a reaction to the Enlightenment (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 404), an era of the later 1600’s and most of the 1700’s, marked by “reason,
science, progress, personal happiness, scientific inquiry, and the endowed rights of all mankind” (2003, p. 231). Specifically rejected are the ideas of individual autonomy, tradition, and the belief in objective reasoning. In contrast, there are many valid perspectives of the world and no single worldview should be considered final. There are also no moral absolutes; ethics are relative “since no value system can be applied across the board to all other cultures, genders, or socioeconomic groups” (2003, p. 405). Multiculturalism is espoused (p. 405).

Education is viewed, not as the exchange of knowledge from teacher to student, but as the means to meet students’ social needs and broaden their worldview. The Enlightenment’s use of “the seven liberal arts would never be taught to all students. Such a notion implies authoritative value judgment regarding the nature of curriculum and the needs of students” (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 405). Social issues are emphasized, especially how strong cultures have used power to dominate weak cultures (Knight, 2006, chap. 5, Kindle).

**Theoretical Background of Christian Education**

As noted, educational theories stem from a philosophical or theological worldview and the social sciences. Christian education is built from a biblical and theological worldview as well as social science (Estep et al., 2008 pp. 28-29). For this study, theology is confined to evangelical theology. Pazmiño defines Christian education as follows:

Christian education is the deliberate, systematic, and sustained divine and human effort to share or appropriate the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, sensitivities, and behaviors that comprise or are consistent with the Christian faith. It fosters change, renewal, and reformation of persons, groups, and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit to conform to the revealed will of God as expressed in the Scriptures and preeminently in the person of Jesus Christ, as well as any outcomes of that effort (Williams, 2001, p. 133).

Rather than simply Christianize various secular methods, Wilhoit (1991) proposes the transformational approach to Christian education. This approach “seeks to foster a radical change in learner-disciples by remaking them from the inside out through the working of God’s grace”
He contrasts this method to that of other secular-based perspectives often used in Christian curriculum. Romanticists, for example, find nothing wrong with the inside of mankind (p. 105), transmissionists are mainly concerned with knowledge transference (p. 106), and developmentalists desire change from within, but the change, however, is viewed as a matter of adjusting one’s perspective (p. 107). The transformational teacher leads students to find purpose and meaning in God (p. 108).

Balanced, comprehensive Christian education will involve the cognitive, affective, and behavioral parameters. Teaching focused on mental processes will focus on knowledge of Scripture, doctrines, and theology. Students will study Scriptures and think theologically. Affective learning develops character and virtue. Students will have loving relationships with God and others and employ theologically-based moral reasoning. Behavior-based learning provides training and opportunities for Christian service. The best means of Christian education employs a holistic approach, with no one area being emphasized disproportionately. Students work towards all areas in a humble manner, bringing Glory to God, not self (Estep et al., 2008, pp. 266-269).

A foundational underpinning to Christian education is the “unity of truth” (Knight, 2006, chap. 10, Kindle). God created everything in the universe, therefore all truth comes from him. There is no sacred/secular divide (Wilson, 1996, p. 170). To think as a Christian, one understands that Christianity provides truth about all of reality (Pearcy, 2004, p. 34). For education according to a biblical worldview, God is the “Creator of the objects and patterns of science and math and the Director of historical events. In essence, there is no such thing as ‘secular’ aspects of the curriculum” (Knight, 2006, chap. 10). Gaebelein (1968), also rejects a sacred/secular division. For Christian education, he compares adding a Bible course to other
courses to adding a garage to a house: “What the building of knowledge needs is not a new garage but a new foundation” (p. 18). He calls for Christian educators to approach their subjects, “whether scientific, historical, mathematical, literary, or artistic, as included with the pattern of God’s truth” (p. 23). Jesus declared Himself “the truth” (John 14:6) and declared God’s Word to be truth (John 17:17). Based on these premises, Gaebelein (1968) concludes that “truth is holy; inherent in the nature of God Himself, it is ever sacred” (p. 25).

The Bible is central to the curriculum of the Christian school and the means of integration of all subjects. In some curricular models, religion is one subject along with all others. At the far extreme, the Bible and religion are taught to the exclusion of other subjects. Both are insufficient means of teaching the truths of all of life (Knight, 2006, chap. 10). Knight’s (2006) preferred model, pictured below, depicts how the Bible and the biblical worldview provide a framework for the curriculum in its entirety. Furthermore, the broken lines “signify that there are no hard and fast divisions between the various subjects, let alone a false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular” (chap. 10, Fig. 8, Kindle).

Figure 1: Curriculum Model with Biblical Foundation
**Spiritual development of children and youth.** Theories regarding human development are valuable to Christian education efforts. Teaching God’s Word in a way which matches the developmental abilities of the student provides the best chance that the effort will result in changed hearts, attitudes, and behavior (Gorman, 1995, chap. 8, Significance section, Kindle).

In his theory of faith development, James Fowler (1940-2015) asserts that faith is universal to humankind because everyone believes in something. The object of that belief however, may not be of a religious nature (Downs, 1995, chap. 4, Kindle). His research focuses on “how people believe rather than what people believe” (1995, chap. 4). His theory presents six stages of development though not every person proceeds through all six (1995). Children and adolescents are unable to progress to stages four through six (Dirks, 2001, chap. 8, Kindle).

Stage Zero: Infancy/Undifferentiated Faith – In this pre-stage, the infant’s growing sense of trust, hope, love, and autonomy prepares the foundation for all future faith formation (Fowler, 1981, p. 121).

Stage One: Intuitive/Projective Faith – In early childhood, children are drawn to stories and images. They are not yet capable of logical thinking, but learn images and feelings about faith from parents (Downs, 1995).

Stage Two: Mythic-Literal Faith (Childhood and beyond) – Those in this stage can understand meaning (mythic) in stories, though thinking is still in concrete (literal) terms (Downs, 1995).

Stage Three: Synthetic/Conventional Faith (Adolescence and beyond) – This stage is marked by relationships and fitting in with a group. The opinions of others have the potential to positively or negatively influence a teen’s sense of self (Fowler, 1981, p. 154). In stage three, people easily view God as their friend (Downs, 1995).
Stage Four: Individuative/Reflective Faith (Young adulthood) – A shift from the previous stage, this is a period of selfhood, and of spiritual thinking and questioning (Downs, 1995).

Stage Five: Conjunctive Faith (Midlife and beyond) – This stage of faith brings both a greater humility toward self and a greater awareness of the majesty of God (Downs, 1995).

Stage Six: Universalizing Faith (Midlife and beyond) – People are more concerned with love and justice, and a new zeal for the work of God (Downs, 1995).

Developmental theories hold value for Christian education, but limitations exist. Kohlberg’s developmental theory of morality provides insight in how children understand right and wrong (Stonehouse, 1995, chap. 3, Kindle). Though valuable for teaching, Christian education is more than teaching morals. Christian teachers desire that their students will respond to God through a relationship in which they want to please him. “Morality is more than rules – it is a relationship” (Gorman, 1995, chap. 8, Kindle). Downs (1995) notes Fowler’s generic concept of faith: “The distinction between the Christian and the secularist is the content of faith, not the fact of faith” (chap. 4, Kindle). Fowler assumes a predictable process of development, generally the same for atheists, or those of any world religion (Dirks, 2001, chap. 8, Kindle).

One major omission in development theory is the work of sanctification. While stage theory focuses on human experience, it ignores God’s work. Stage theory brings about appreciation for differences among people; in contrast, the “purpose of sanctification is to bring about Christlikeness in every aspect of one’s being, leading to an appropriate realization of the exclusive claims of Christ” (Dirks, 2001, chap. 8, Kindle).

At some points in their development, young people have questions, even doubts about God. The Bible itself depicts some aspects of God as mysterious. This aspect of mystery can foster healthy awe and wonder towards God’s majesty (Keeley, 2008, p. 56-57). Education
geared solely toward pragmatic life skills and economic usefulness might very well sever “educational pursuits from the transcendent, from that which is true, good, and beautiful regardless of time and culture” (Turley, 2012, p. 239). Imagination is part of the human make-up, designed by God. It was given to human beings by God “to perceive the divinely infused meaning of the cosmos, which provides a moral map of the world by which we might live” (Turley, 2014, chap. 6, Kindle).

**Principles of Christian Teaching.** Teaching is God-focused. God’s people hold the highest priority, above content, methods, technology, or environment. The objectives center on leading people to a life-long, transformed, mature life of following Christ (Estep et al., 2008, p. 265). Teaching is also a Spirit-appointed gift of ministry (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28; Rom. 12:6-8). The Christian teacher’s primary role “is to relate to the Master Teacher in such a way that he or she becomes God’s agent in the plan of redemption” (Knight, 2006, chap. 10, Kindle). As such, the Christian teacher leads students to develop the means of seeing reality and organizing knowledge according to a Christian worldview (Knight, 2006).

Yount’s (2010) educational model affirms the need to address the cognitive, affective, and behavior aspects of student learning. In his *Discipler’s Model*, Yount (2010) utilizes a building metaphor with seven strategically placed elements. Two side-by-side stones, representing the Bible and human needs, serve as the foundation. Scripture is regarded as powerful, purposeful, divinely inspired, and the revelation of eternal truth (pp. 7-8). Human need guides the various emphases of the lessons since needs, both general and specific, vary among student groups (p. 9). These two stones – God’s Word and human need – are placed side by side, not because they are equal but because “for spiritual growth to occur, we need to connect God’s
Truth with the relevant needs of the learners” (p. 12). With an overemphasis on either one, the learning process crumbles (p. 10).

Resting on the two-stone base are three pillars signifying the learning stages of thinking, relating, and valuing (Yount, 2010, p. 20). Referring to the left thinking pillar, Yount (2010) explains the three different Greek translations of knowledge in Scripture: *oida*, which refers to academic knowledge, *gnosis*, the knowledge gained from study or experience, and *epignosis*, referring to full understanding or knowledge which “goes beyond” (p. 13). The right pillar, valuing, speaks to helping learners mature in issues of the heart such as love, humility, respect for authority, and family tenderness (p. 16). Emotional maturation occurs in classrooms which foster a caring and mutually open atmosphere. Students know they will not face humiliation (p. 16).

Yount (2010) sets these two pillars on opposite sides to portray the balance needed between rational and affective elements in learning: “Both are necessary because we were created in the image of God as thinking-feeling beings” (p. 18). Overemphasizing factual knowledge ignores Jesus’ assertion that the world would recognize his disciples by their love for each other (John 13:35) (p. 18). Likewise, with an overemphasis on emotional factors, learners are vulnerable to false teaching or at least “unstable emotional ‘fluff’” (p. 19). The relating pillar is placed centrally as fitting for the two greatest commandments of love (Matt 22:37-39) (p. 20).

Resting on these five elements is the capstone of spiritual growth in which students mature and become more like Christ (Yount, 2010, p. 21). Lastly, the model depicts the building within a circle representing the Holy Spirit’s role in the learning process (p. 23). This circle represents the “surrounding and indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit of God” (p. 23). His
leading helps the prayerful and servant-hearted educator hold all the other elements in the correct tension (pp. 23, 25).

Estep, Anthony, and Allison (2008) provide five roles of Christian teachers. The teacher is first God’s instrument and thereby serves with humility. They are students of God’s Word themselves. Ezra, as an example, not only taught the Scriptures, he studied and lived by them (Ezra 7:10). The teacher is a mentor, setting a living example before their students. As teachers, they are servant leaders. Lastly, teachers are learning specialists, seeking to know their students and the curriculum. To this end, they share ideas and learn from other teachers, and explore materials and methodologies (pp. 271-272).

Secondary goals of Christian education include the healing of relationships. These include relational connections between students and God, with others, and with the student’s self. Healing of relationships lead to other educational aims: character development, and practical matters such as job preparation and the means of social, emotional, and physical well-being (Knight, 2006, chap. 10).

More than imparting knowledge, Christian education is the means whereby the student, through the Holy Spirit and the educator, is transformed into the image of Christ. Educational theories based on biblically-aligned social science and worldviews are necessary components toward this end. The following section will discuss the specific theological and theoretical elements of classical Christian education.

**Related Literature**

Christian education consists of more than mere instruction. The classical idea of *paideia* can be described as an educational pursuit founded on a biblical worldview and using ancient methods of child development. It includes the cultivation of virtue, skills in reasoning, and an
interactive study of the Great books of Western civilization (ACCS, n.d.b.). Littlejohn and Evans (2006) assert that the overarching purpose of classically educating students is to lead students to live “Christianly” (p. 20) in the world: “Teaching them to think, to discern, and to behave wisely should be coupled with instilling in them a sense of obligation to contend for those same values throughout society” (p. 20). According to Wilson’s (2003) conviction, an understanding of the Trivium must begin with the fear of God: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov 1:7) (p. 133). He warns, “If we begin with ourselves or with ancient teachers, we will always stumble and fall” (p. 133). This section of the literature review will explore the historical roots and the distinguishing characteristics of modern classical Christian education.

**Historical Background of Classical Christian Education**

Classical education has been in existence for over 2,500 years. It began with the Greeks. Known as *paideia*, this form of education addressed children holistically. The heart and mind were not considered divided entities. Virtue was a key goal of the Greeks and Romans. To the ancients, it referred to civic responsibility, including aims such as respect for elders and the laws of the land (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 53). Virtue, meaning, and purpose were as equally important as factual knowledge. Though knowledge was taught, the educational goals were much deeper. Students were taught how to think rationally and to speak eloquently. The aim was to produce young adults who could responsibly contribute to a greater society (2003, p. 53).

**The Greeks.** The Greeks initially devised what came to be known later as the seven liberal arts. This curriculum was comprised of grammar, dialectic/logic, and rhetoric stages – the Trivium – and mathematics, music, geometry, and astronomy – the Quadrivium. The term “liberal” here means broad-based. The curriculum encompassed a broad range of learning as
opposed to specific, vocation-based courses (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 68). An art, as used in reference to the liberal arts, refers to a learned skill, as opposed to content. The liberal arts focus on “the foundational skills of thinking that are needed to learn any subject” (Circe Institute, n.d.). These arts provide access to a collection of unified knowledge which includes “the natural and moral sciences, philosophy, and theology’ (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 17).

The dialectic and rhetoric stages of the Trivium were enhanced by Greek culture. Dialectic education focused on logic, reasoning, and debate. The Greeks were quite hospitable to cultural notions of outlying geographical regions and highly valued dialogue with those of opposing viewpoints (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 44). This is evident in Luke’s account of Paul speaking to the Athenians at the Areopagus:

…they said to [Paul], “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas) (Acts 17:19-21).

The Greeks had an immense love of beauty and artistic expression as evident through their contributions in art, sculpture, drama, poetry, and music. The self-expression of the rhetoric emphasis was thereby bolstered by these artistic pursuits (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 44).

Greek ideals, propagated by many of her philosophers, influenced the education of the young. Socrates (469-399 B.C.) was influential in classical Greek education. He devised the method of dialectics, in which knowledge was learned through logical dialogue. In this way, students played an active role in their own learning; they “became thinking participants in a quest for knowledge” (Perry, Chase, Jacob, Jacob, & Von Laue, 2013, p. 79). Plato (c. 347-427 B.C.) envisioned a society where people could fulfill their best moral potential. For him, a just society conformed to universally held principles, and civic leaders exemplified wisdom and virtue (Perry et al., 2013, p. 83).
The worldview of the classical Greeks was highly humanistic. Greek art, for example, portrayed the human body in a realistic yet flawless, idealistic form. It exalted human beauty and dignity (Perry et al., 2013, p. 88). The Greeks were the first civilization to formulate education as the means to the ideal man – body, mind, and spirit. They believed “that the greatest work of art they had to create was a Man” (Castle, 1961, p. 102). These classical humanists did not sanction unrestrained behavior however; they sought to create a higher model of man, one cultivated to reach his highest potential in talent, personality, morality, and overall excellence. To reach this height required self-discipline, hard work, and intelligence (Perry et al., 2013, p. 98).

In the classical world, the cosmos was considered “a temporal reflection of the eternal beauty of the divine” (Turley, 2012, p. 241). The Greeks did agree in the existence of distinct realms of the divine and the human. They believed that human beings held control over their own lives, but they also understood mankind’s capacity for evil. The safeguard against this evil inclination was believed to be established through laws, moral norms, and proper character training (Perry et al., 2013, p. 98). The Greeks also acknowledged their human condition of impoverishment, a fact evident in Socrates’ teaching method of dialogue: he could only impart wisdom when his student admits his perplexity (Turley, 2012, p. 241).

The Romans. The Romans also provided valuable contributions to classical education. In contrast to the Greek ideals of Spartan military might or Athenian intellectualism, the Romans emphasized character development through honesty, courage, and respect for family (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 75). Similar to the Greeks’ holistic view of students, the Romans aimed to integrate education with real life. Their aim was to educate well-rounded students who could integrate the best of several disciplines, including virtue, and “weave them together to form a cohesive and fully integrated mind” (p. 92).
Belief in the supernatural was very strong in the Greco-Roman era. People believed that gods controlled everything (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 47). Gradually, Greek philosophers replaced mythical explanations with scientific, cause-and-effect answers for natural phenomena. These philosophers understood that nature was governed by principles and order, not by the whims of gods or random chance. This new paradigm marked the onset of scientific thought (Perry et al, 2013, pp. 73-74).

The Church, birthed in the classical era, produced a distinctively Christian paideia. While classical education techniques included the use of sacred texts, imitation (of exemplary people or heroes), and culture, Paul set these techniques within the church. For example, Paul urged the Galatian “children” (4:19) to imitate him (4:12) as he imitated Christ (1 Cor 4:15-16) (Turley, 2009, Kindle, Emergence of Christian Paideia section). Paul’s idea that Jesus was Lord of everything countered the pseudo-religion of emperor worship (Turley, 2009, Christ and Caesar section).

**The Middle Ages.** A major educational shift occurred in the Middle Ages: theology was added to the curriculum, along with Greek and Latin studies (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 147). Theology was now the foundation upon which all other education would build (p. 147). A renewal of academic thought, called Scholasticism, emerged which blended theology and philosophy with the liberal arts to foster critical thinking. As a result, believers understood a reasonable faith (Anthony & Benson, 2003, p. 148).

Though the theory of classical education was initially created by the Greeks and Romans, it was during the Middle Ages that it was formalized into a systematic curricular structure. The terms *trivium*, *quadrivium*, and *liberal arts* were created and theology was added. It was referred to as the “the crowning discipline or ‘queen of the sciences’” (Perrin, 2004, p. 12). The Trivium
was taught in cathedral schools and monastic schools, and the quadrivium flourished as part of
the European university (pp. 12-13).

**Modern classical Christian education.** Classical education waned during the 1800’s
and was fully replaced by a progressive model by the mid-twentieth century. The modern re-
emergence of classical education is traced back to a speech by Dorothy Sayers given at Oxford
University in 1947. It was later published as *The Lost Tools of Learning* (2011). Sayers implored
educators to return to the education of the late Middle Ages and recover the “lost tools of
learning” (2011). These lost tools refer to the seven liberal arts (Wilson, 2003, p. 122).

There are two viewpoints concerning the nature of the Trivium in modern classical
education. In its original form, the Trivium is comprised of the language arts (Veith & Kern,
2015, p. 17). Sayers, however, viewed the Trivium as a developmental framework,
corresponding to childhood stages of learning abilities (Sayers, 2011; Hart, 2006). In this
approach, every subject follows a grammar, logic, and rhetoric stage (Hart, 2006, p. 77).
Disagreeing with Sayer’s view, Littlejohn and Evans (2006) maintain that grammar, logic, and
rhetoric are subjects themselves, not developmental stages (p. 38). Wilson, a prominent pioneer
of the modern classical schools and founder of the Association of Classical Christian Schools
(ACCS), holds to Sayers’ method (Wilson, 1991). He believes that teachers who follow this
method are “teaching ‘with the grain’” (Wilson, 1991, chap. 7, Kindle). It produces two worthy
outcomes: children enjoy learning and they become equipped with the “tools of learning” (1999,
chap. 7). Most classical Christian schools today adhere to the Sayers/Wilson developmental
model (Circe Institute, n.d.a).

In the grammar stage, according to the developmental paradigm, young children
memorize facts, such as spelling and grammar rules, as well as addition and multiplication
tables, history dates, and animal classifications (Hart, 2006, p. 77). By memorizing history dates, events, and stories, for example, children have a “peg” (p. 78) on which later information can be hung (p. 78). During the middle school years, students enter the dialectic or logic stage as they are now mature enough to analyze material. No longer learning general facts, they are able to apply reason to the studies (p. 79). In the rhetoric stage, students learn to express their ideas persuasively and eloquently (p. 79).

It was Sayers’ desire that children be taught how to think for themselves, which she considered to be the sole purpose for education. If students were taught according to the Trivium (instead of disconnected subjects), they would acquire the necessary tools of learning which they could then apply to all their learning (Sayers, 2011). Additionally, they would be able to speak eloquently and persuasively. Coinciding with her Christian faith, the study of Bible and theology was all-important and was to be synthesized within the total curriculum (Sayers, 2011).

Philosopher and educator, Mortimer Adler (1902-2001), was an influential figure in the modern classical education movement. He designed the *Paideia Program*, a theory formulated around three ideas: that the qualities of human nature are universal, that the human capacity can be developed, and that education is the means to develop human beings’ “moral and intellectual virtues, and happiness…to which these virtues lead” (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 34). The Socratic method, referring to the use of guided questions, was advocated. He was well-known for his editorial work on the 54-volume set, *Great Books of the Western World* (p. 34).

Unlike the ancient classicists who sought humanistic virtue, classical Christian educators adopt the holistic aim toward wisdom, and purity of heart, mind, and body under the lordship of Christ (Clark & Jain, 2013). Oxford-educated schoolmaster David Hicks criticizes modern schools for focusing on pragmatic and technological pursuits instead of normative ideals of
virtue and wisdom; modern education asks, “What can be done?” instead of “What should be done?” (Hicks, 1981, p. 11). These vain pursuits undermine “the supreme task of education – the cultivation of the human spirit: to teach the young to know what is good, to serve it above self, to reproduce it, and to recognize that in knowledge lies this responsibility” (p. 13).

**Distinguishing Characteristics of Classical Christian Education**

Classical Christian schools integrate a Christian worldview into all academic areas (Calhoun, 1989; Dernlan, 2013; Dietrich, 2009; Wilson, 2003). According to Dietrich (2009), “Classical Christian Schools are distinct because all content is based upon a biblical worldview, characterized by a Christ-centered education with three main goals. The first is to teach all subjects as parts of an integrated whole with Scripture at the center, allowing no relativism or neutrality” (p. 15). From his research comparing modern Christian schools and classical Christian schools, Dernlan (2013) found that modern Christian schools are seeing a significant decline in spiritual formation. He concludes that this is due to the fact that they have followed the idea of religious neutrality, teaching academics as well as morals and ethics outside of religious or biblical foundations. This approach “teaches students to place God in a box called ‘religion class’ or ‘weekly chapel.’ This attitude removes God from daily thought and actions… He is removed from all of life and becomes irrelevant in the life of a student” (p. 74).

It could be assumed that heavy religious emphasis in the classical schools could lead to indoctrination rather than genuine Christian formation. Dernlan (2013) notes that it would be inappropriate to assume indoctrination has replaced education because the students’ middle school years have a strong focus on logic; they are taught to question all teachings (p. 79). Veith and Kern (2015) agree; the dialectic methodology encourages questioning and an openness to discovering truth even “in all its complexity and mystery” (p. 116). Veith and Kern (2015) reject
the idea of “closed dogmatism” (p. 116). Instead of indoctrination, classical education “nourishes wonder; it provokes the curiosity and inquisitiveness that leads to scientific discovery, and it inclines the mind to ultimate questions of religious faith” (p. 116).

Classical education has merit for teaching virtue to young children. Music was viewed by the ancients as a key educational tool for fostering virtue in young children. Both Plato and Aristotle agreed that music taught the young to understand pleasure and pain in the correct applications (Woerther, 2008, p. 99). To Aristotle, music’s rhythms and melodies correlated to human emotions such as anger, gentleness, and courage (2008, p. 100). His view of music education consisted of “habituating young persons to experience pleasure for the things that they are not yet capable of judging rationally and whose value, for good or ill, they cannot yet understand on their own” (2008, p. 100).

Classical education is rigorous, but it intentionally aims to foster in students a love of learning (Clark & Jain, 2013; Hicks, 1999; Wilson, 1991). Teachers have a key role; for students to love what they are taught as well as the process, the teachers must love it first (Wilson, 1991). This love of learning begins with the very young, as they are naturally inspired by awe and wonder. It is the Kindergarten teacher “who helps establish young souls in piety, gymnastic, and music – priming and cultivating the affections, loves, wills, and bodies of children at a time when they are docile, receptive, and eager” (Clark & Jain, 2013, Publishers Note section). It is noteworthy that classical school students statistically score significantly higher than average on national standardized achievements tests (Perrin, 2004; Vaughan, 2018).

The Trivium. The Trivium, as typically used in modern Christian schools, is the classical three-way model utilizing the grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric stages (Wilson, 2003). The grammar stage is the time of fact-gathering and memorization, a method which fits well with
children in the early elementary grades. Bauer and Wise (2004) refer to young children as *sponges*, eager to soak up knowledge. Equally valid is the reverse: children cannot express themselves sufficiently or creatively in the later years if there is insufficient knowledge attained first. Appealing to young children are the many means used to teach these facts including songs and chants to learn math facts, Latin, or lists of kings (pp. 21-22).

The dialectic stage begins in the later elementary grades when children are naturally starting to see relationships between all the facts they have learned. This is the time to learn critical thinking. The middle school students continue to learn facts but “instead of passively accepting this information, she’ll be interacting with it – deciding on its value, its purpose, and its place in the scheme of knowledge” (Bauer & Wise, 2004, p. 233).

In the classical world, rhetoric – the ability to communicate with eloquence and persuasion – was the prize of education. Joined to practical wisdom, eloquence and wisdom were the final outcomes of the whole of education which “cultivated the mind, trained the intellect, and formed the character” (Miller, 2007, p. 187). Jones (2018) provides a biblical perspective to the subject of rhetoric: the rhetoric of love, the work’s title. He argues that rhetoric’s purpose is to change minds, but through the way of love, not domination (p. 18). Used in debate, rhetoric can illicit surprise, gratitude, freedom, respect, understanding, or security (pp. 18-20). These responses stem from a rhetoric of love, specifically, from “the power of goodness” (p. 18).

The rhetoric stage is of particular importance for high-school students growing up in the current postmodern culture (Bauer & Wise, 2004; Littlejohn & Evans, 2006). Rhetoric is the study of persuasive communication, including writing and oratory. In the high school years, teens naturally lean toward self-expression. To meet this natural inclination, training in rhetoric enables students to clearly and persuasively speak their minds (Bauer & Wise, 2004). In classical
schools, high school students will speak before their peers often, whether arguing a political or debate issue or presenting a science class report (Perrin, 2004).

**High view of mankind.** The classical tradition holds mankind in the highest esteem. Socrates (c. 469-399) was most concerned with perfecting human character and the pursuit of moral virtue (Perry et al., 2013, p. 78). Believing that the good and moral life was reached through the development of reason and intelligence, he “made the individual the center of the universe, reason central to the individual, and moral worth the central aim of human life. In Socrates, Greek humanism found its highest expression” (Perry et al., 2013, p. 79).

The Christian doctrine takes the classical view of mankind even further: mankind is created in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27). Mankind is “the lord-steward of the creation on whose virtue the well-being of the earth and its inhabitants depends” (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 13). Classical Christian education then, aims to cultivate virtue and the “nobility that the classical educator perceives in every person” (p. 14).

Plato (c. 429-347 B.C.), a student of Socrates, believed in a transcendent world, independent of the physical realm. This realm of Ideas or Forms refers to the “unchanging, eternal, absolute, and universal standards of beauty, goodness, justice, and truth” (Perry et al., 2013, p. 82). For the classical Christian educator, the ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty are seen as attributes of God (Fellows, 2008; Kreeft, 2005). These ideals point to God’s existence and eternal qualities therefore, mankind should love these traits (Fellows, 2008). Since humans are made in God’s image, they are able to know the true, the good, and the beautiful (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 14). To fulfill this role of Image-bearer, “a person’s human faculties to perceive truth, to love and reproduce the beautiful, and to revere and act on the good must be cultivated” (2015, p. 14).
Andrew Fellows (2008) of L’Abri Fellowship asserts that human beings have inherent receptors enabling them to connect with goodness, beauty, and truth, these elements of God’s nature. The receptors are supernatural, not found in the physical realm. This ability “distinguishes us from that which is purely biological, which has its being only on the plane of the material. Our ability to connect with Goodness, Beauty and Truth is our glory” (Fellows, 2008). More specifically, he explains that the receptor for goodness is the conscience, the receptor for beauty is imagination, and the receptor for truth is the mind or intellectual capacity (Fellows, 2008). These “three receptors are the crowning glory of our humanity. They distinguish us from the animals. They enable us to touch the world of the supernatural” (Fellows, 2008).

Of particular note, Fellows (2008) points out that these functions are inherent in every person, regardless if one is a Christian. They may be distorted by sin, but because God endowed humans with conscience, imagination, and intelligence, all humans can discern “a remarkable correspondence to the way God has made things” (Fellows, 2008). This idea explains the fact that “non-Christian civilizations have something to say to the issues of truth, morality, and beauty. They will always be distorted because of sin, but there is something to learn” (Fellows, 2008).

As a non-Christian classical educator, Adler believed in social equality for everyone, and that every student should, and could, be given the same curricular track and the opportunities it offers (Veith & Kern, 2015, pp. 34-35). In responding to criticism for his classical program’s stance on one set of educational objectives for every child, Adler argues, “Their sameness as human beings – as members of the same species – means that every child has all the
distinguishing properties common to all members of the species. They have all the same inherent tendencies, the same inherent powers, the same inherent capacities” (Adler, 1982, p. 42).

**Curricular integration.** Classical educators view knowledge as an interrelated whole; one subject is not taught in isolation (Bauer & Wise, 2004, p. 15). Likewise, classical Christian education addresses all of life in an integrated Christocentric manner, not through unrelated subjects with a Bible class included separately. History, literature, and art history are taught in a parallel manner, from ancient times to modern, often in a four-year repetition (Bauer, & Wise, 2004). Bauer and Wise (2004) note that studying history through great literature emboldens young people to approach crucial matters of their own times and “can prevent the student from swallowing the rhetoric of modern-day orators undigested” (p. 463). Rhetoric is initially taught as its own discipline and then applied to students’ other subjects, such as history, literature, and science (Bauer & Wise, 2004, p. 462).

Turley (2009) asserts that Paul’s writings provide a biblical case for the integration of Christian education and other subjects. He explains that Paul’s presentation of Jesus as King subverted the Roman notions of imperial rule, and in fact, the Bible reveals that the rulership of Jesus extends to the whole cosmos (Col 1:15-20). In this way, Christian education removes the separation between the Bible and the study of literature, history, science, and government, and centers all of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ (2009, Observations section, Kindle). According to Turley (2009), Paul’s assertion of Jesus’ “messianic kingship deliberately subverting the imperial propaganda of his day demolishes the Enlightenment separation of politics from religion, the civil from the ceremonial. Pauline thought is just as relevant in Government and Social Studies classes as in Bible classes” (Observations section).
Toward these ends, classical schools intentionally integrate biblical truth with everything else for the purpose of Christian education. Wilson (2003), founder of the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS), believes Christian worldview needs to be central to all facets of the classical Christian school. Addressing sports as an example, he admonishes, “If the athletic program is not helping the kids understand God, man, sin, and salvation, then the program is failing, regardless of the win/loss record” (p. 165). Discipleship, according to Littlejohn and Evans, (2006), occurs in communities of faith, when “teaching and learning is integrated with faith” (p. 52). Wilson (2003) asserts that a “consistent Christian pedagogy sees education as inherently religious, as something that involves the whole person in the context of the whole universe, a universe created by the triune God” (p. 67).

**Emphasis on Western civilization.** Classical Christian educators recognize the contributions of Western civilization throughout time (Bauer & Wise, 2004; Hicks, 1999; Veith & Kern, 2015; Wilson, 1991). Of interest to Christian educators, the Western world is unique “in its view of mankind as the image of a transcendent God and in its acceptance of the view that both truth and the world can be known. These commitments are the hinges for much that defines Western civilization” (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 15). It is in the Western culture that Christianity has made the most significant impact historically (Wilson, 2003, p. 84). Wilson (1991) believes that “conversation with the past is the heart and soul of a classical education” (chap. 6).

Adler’s Great Books program reflected his conviction that the study of these books was key to students’ intellectual enlightenment. Skills gained included “critical reading, attentive listening, precise speech, and above all, reflective thought” (Adler, 1988, p. 7). Of note is his stance that a great books program was not to be equated with a course on history or Western civilization but was to be “concerned primarily with the discussion of the great ideas and issues
to be found in those books” (1988, p. 8). Adler answers the question concerning the choice to study Western civilization to the exclusion of Eastern traditions. He states that until there is a worldwide global culture, one should seek to understand the ideas and concerns of his own intellectual tradition (p. 9).

According to Veith and Kern (2015), classical educators recognize the contributions of Western civilization, such as liberty, not to idealize it but to take responsibility for it. To do so, the educator “demands a conversation that challenges his culture and himself with the standards of the true, the good, and the beautiful” (pp. 15-16). The aim is to teach students to rightly discern truth and goodness found through the Western civilization history, to understand worldview positions different than their own, and to take responsibility for their own culture through the ability to debate and influence current issues (Hicks, 1999; Wilson, 1991).

According to Hicks (1999):

Students will know the meaning of excellence by having been schooled in the excellencies of the past, and they will join the great debates of their (and all) times on the strength of a mind educated to grasp the connectedness of things and to understand the fragments of modern life that take their meaning and value from one’s dialectical comprehension of the whole (p. 134).

**Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature**

This literature review focused on three major frameworks concerning the topic of classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation. The first main section explored the theological foundations of Christian formation and Christian education. The second section reviewed relevant philosophies of education and theoretical elements of Christian education. In the last section, the history, philosophy, and methodology of classical Christian education was discussed in depth.
The rationale for this study is twofold. First, the modern re-emergence of classical Christian education is still fairly recent and minimal research exists on it. Existing related studies are summarized as follows. Anderson (2016) conducted a comparison study of teacher self-efficacy in classical and non-classical Christian schools. No statistically significant differences were found.

In Vaughan’s (2018) study, the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) scores of classical and non-classical Christian school students were compared. The findings indicated significantly higher scores for the classical Christian school students.


Dernlan’s (2013) comparative study of students’ spiritual formation in classical and traditional Christian schools indicated a significant statistic in favor of the classical school. This study however, was quite limited in scope; it only compared one school in each category.

Peterson (2012) compared faith and learning integration between classical and non-classical Christian schools. His findings indicated that classical “ACCS teachers self-reported a higher level of integrating faith and learning than the ACSI teachers self-reported” (p. 134).

Wood (2008) studied teachers’ Christian worldviews in Christian K-12 schools, including both classical (ACCS) and traditional (ASCI) Christian schools. Of no significance were factors of teachers being raised in Christian homes, their attendance at Christian schools or universities, or time spent with Christian colleagues. One significant finding was an increased Christian worldview of classical Christian teachers (p. 126).
Squires (2019) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study of classical Christian school graduates to explore their lived experiences of *paideia* in their schools. The graduates reported the following perspectives of their schools: love and wisdom of their teachers, a love of learning and a cultivation of lifelong learning, the establishment of strong friendships, gratitude for their educational experience, and an environment of love and kindness (pp. 171-174).

A second reason for this study’s importance concerns children’s faith development. Christian education is a vital part of the Christian family. Parents are exhorted to “bring [their children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). On a broader scale, Christian education is part of Christ’s Great Commission given to the Church:

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt 28:19-20).

Both mandates must be heeded especially in light of the increasing number of young people embracing atheism (Barna, 2018, p. 25) and because of the strong cultural influence of postmodernism.

The classical Christian approach shows signs of success according to the limited research. The literature implies that this unique pedagogy could have significance for parents, churches, and other contexts involved in Christian education. A gap exists regarding what, if any, specific pedagogical elements inherent in this methodology contribute to students’ Christian formation.

**Profile of the Current Study**

This study on classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation attempts to fill a literature gap in the important area of Christian education, a responsibility of parents and the church, as mandated throughout Scripture. It explored possible connections between the
distinguishing characteristics of modern classical Christian education and students’ spiritual understanding and development. A qualitative, multiple case study design was utilized, comparing findings from three K-12 ACCS-member schools. The following chapter will describe the data collection and analysis methods involved.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Classical Christian education is unique and has potential to inform and benefit those involved in Christian discipleship of the young, including church leaders, parents, or leaders of other youth-based ministries. As the revival of classical Christian schools has only been in existence since the 1980’s, minimal research exists on this approach to K-12 education, and no study has been conducted which specifically considers potential connections between its distinctive characteristics and students’ Christian formation. This study intends to fill that gap. This chapter will describe the qualitative research design, the setting and participants, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, data collection, and analysis.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

The discipleship of the young is an important and long-term responsibility of parents (Eph 6:4). The church too, plays an important role, through its efforts to train up children and youth in the ways of God and in its ability to equip parents in their own crucial role. Classical Christian education utilizes a distinct method toward the discipleship of young people. It integrates a biblical worldview in all academic disciplines (Wilson, 1996, p. 170). The Trivium, referring to the three levels of academic emphases throughout the K-12 grades, follows students’ God-given path of development, maximizing the child’s capabilities and natural desires of each stage. The grammar stage of elementary students focuses on memorization of facts, the logic stage of the middle school grades stresses critical thinking, and in the rhetoric stage, high school students learn how to speak and write persuasively. Can these methods be beneficial toward the students’ spiritual growth and their ability to thrive as strong Christians in adulthood? As
minimal research exists on classical Christian education and particularly its potential to influence Christian formation, this study adds to that limited but important knowledge base.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to determine if any perceived relationships exist between the distinguishing characteristics of classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation at three K-12 classical Christian schools. For this study, Christian formation is believed to be the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, from the early stage of faith – whether at a specific time or a process – and continuing through lifelong sanctification. This work of the Spirit is holistic, transforming a person toward Christlikeness in all of life: intellectually, morally, and aesthetically (Wilson, 2003). As it pertains to K-12 students of this study, Christian formation includes knowledge about God and the Bible, love for God and others, a growing faith, the ability to discern biblical truth from falsehood, sharing and defending one’s faith, and living the Christian in the world today.

Research Questions

The research questions cover the overarching characteristics of classical Christian education. They were chosen based on the Circe Institute’s descriptions of defining elements and principles of classical Christian education (Circe Institute website, n.d.b, n.d.c). Further information regarding the terminology used is provided in the Definition of Terms.

RQ1. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the Trivium methodology foster Christian formation?

RQ2. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian conviction of a high view of mankind foster Christian formation?
RQ3. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian element of curricular integration foster Christian formation?

RQ4. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian emphasis on Western civilization foster Christian formation?

RQ5. What, if any, are the perceived connections, in the cases studied, between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation?

**Research Design and Methodology**

This study utilized a qualitative multiple case study design. A qualitative design was chosen because the topic is yet to be explored and, being spiritual in nature, it fits one of Creswell and Poth’s (2018) criteria for qualitative research: “a problem needs to be explored and a complex, detailed understanding of the issue is needed” (p. 46). Concerning the nature of personal interviews and complex topics, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) propose that “complex reactions and feelings are best given meaning and are optimally articulated through a dialogue which encourages reflection on, rather than mere reporting of, experience” (p. 487). People’s spiritual development is highly personal and complex; furthermore, this study is specifically geared toward the spiritual growth of young people. The open-ended questions of qualitative interviews best permitted the free expression of people’s varied experiences while still adhering to the narrow and specific focus of the research questions.

Secondly, qualitative designs permit the validation of certain assumptions or theories, as well as potential problems within the area being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 253). Classical Christian education is itself an educational theory with assumptions concerning the Christian formation of its students. Potential problems could exist within this educational methodology which might deter genuine discipleship, such as pride or competitiveness.
A multiple case study was chosen as it is suitable for contexts not well understood or not well known (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 254). The modern renewal of classical Christian education is still fairly new; most people are unfamiliar with it. Additionally, case study research is fitting for educational contexts (p. 253).

Case study research is defined as:

a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 96-97.

A case is the specific unit being analyzed. It can consist of an individual, an organization or entire community, a process, or event. Each case is bounded, or defined by specific parameters such as location, or timeframe (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 97). For this study, each of the three schools served as a case.

**Setting**

Corresponding to the research topic, the setting for this study was comprised of classical Christian schools. To ensure homogeneity, the schools hold membership in the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS). With this affiliation, the participating schools hold the same Christian statement of beliefs, and the same classical methodology. According to the ACCS Member Handbook, the “ACCS is an evangelical Christian organization without denominational affiliation” (ACCS, 2016). Some ACCS schools require families to hold Christian belief while others do not mandate this requirement (ACCS, 2016). The ACCS Mission is as follows:

We promote, establish, and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in the light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. We promote the classical approach and provide accountability for member schools to ensure that our cultural heritage is not lost again. Through these various means, ACCS seeks to set an educational standard for a unified and directed approach to classical and Christian learning (ACCS, 2016).
The setting was restricted to three K-12 ACCS-member schools. The K-12 criteria was necessary as the research questions include matters relating to the Trivium, a scope and sequence which encompasses the full K-12 grade range. Pertinent demographic information from the participating schools is found in chapter four.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of K-12 classical Christian schools with membership in the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS). The sample was purposive, consisting of three K-12, ACCS-member schools. Purposive sampling is used in qualitative studies because it intentionally provides “a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148). These participants, or informants, are chosen because “they have special knowledge about a setting or a specific social practice, and they are thus positioned as experts” (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 113). Criteria for a school’s inclusion included the following: ACCS membership, grades K-12 offered, an enrollment of at least 80 students, has been in existence for at least four years, and its website clearly defines it as a classical Christian school.

Including three schools yielded an appropriate number of data sources and also provided a balance of homogeneity (being the same type of school) and heterogeneity within the otherwise similar characteristics. According to Robinson (2014), “The rationale for gaining a heterogeneous sample is that any commonality found across a diverse group of cases is more likely to be a widely generalizable phenomenon than a community found in a homogenous group of cases” (p. 27). Heterogeneity was also derived from parents’ perspectives. Since they were not employed nor trained by the school, their input provided a broader variation from that of teachers who work at the school.
For this multiple case study, each school served as one bounded case. A stratified sample was used in order to adequately address the research questions, particularly those concerning the Trivium methodology and curricular integration. The Trivium is an age-based division consisting of the grammar stage of early elementary grades, the logic or dialectic stage for middle grades, and the rhetoric stage for high school grades. For each Trivium stage, one to two units were utilized for both teachers and parents/students. Students were interviewed along with a parent. Stratification is described in the following tabular summary.

Table 1: Trivium-based Stratified Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Interview-based Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar Stage Requirement</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic Stage Requirement</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric Stage Requirement</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1 Actual Total</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2 Actual Total</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3 Actual Total</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Total</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of the Researcher

To gain the trust required in qualitative studies, researchers “need to find a role that is understood and accepted in the interviewees’ world” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 74). In this study, the researcher aimed to gain participants’ trust by establishing what she is not. The researcher made known the fact that she is not evaluating the effectiveness of the school, teachers, parents, or students. Rubin and Rubin (2012) advise researchers, “The role in which you present yourself is and should be part of who you actually are” (p. 75). The researcher in this study presented herself as a fellow Christian educator and a fellow parent exploring possible new methods for Christian education which could benefit the church and also parents.
Potential bias existed in the form of positive bias. The researcher has very limited, but positive, past experience with classical Christian education through her own years as a home educator and has an admiration for it. Positive bias, “can be just as blinding as strong negative opinions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 72). To offset positive bias, researchers can consider potential failures through appropriate interview questions (p. 72). Questions addressed possible negative outcomes which could deter students from true Christian formation. It is researchers’ responsibility “to report as fully, honestly, and fairly as possible” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 89). Ultimately, only truthful conclusions are of value.

**Ethical Considerations**

To protect research participants and ensure ethical research practices, universities are legally bound to utilize an institutional review board (IRB). Research must be submitted for approval to the IRB board before any data is collected (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 106) (see Appendix A). According to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board Handbook, “The three basic principles contained in The Belmont Report central to the ethics of research involving human participants and guiding the IRB in assuring that the rights and welfare of participants are protected include: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice” (p. 12).

Because of the openness of qualitative inquiry, interaction during interviews can evolve in unpredicted ways; unintentional harm can be experienced by participants (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 319). Employees, for example, may use the private interview as an opportunity to vent frustration about their work environment, colleagues, or supervisors (p. 319). Teachers in the study were assured in writing of confidentiality since they were revealing information about their school, its methods, and their perception of its effectiveness, although within a narrow framework.
All research participants were provided with an informed consent form (Appendices B, C. and D). This document provided a description of the research, the participant’s activity, the researcher’s contact information, a statement that participation is voluntary and could be freely terminated at any time, and a place for participant’s signature and date (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 103).

Parental consent is always necessary when children under age eighteen are involved (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 103). In this study, no interview with a student occurred without the presence of the student’s parent. Written informed consent was obtained for participating parents, and an assent agreement for students younger than high school age (Appendices C and D). Assent for high school-aged students was combined with their parents’ consent form.

**Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

A qualitative design was chosen for this study because the subject matter, classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation, is not quantifiable. Qualitative methods are best suited as they can facilitate in-depth descriptions and personal insight regarding complex phenomena such as the spiritual development of growing children addressed in this study.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research addresses a human or social problem in its natural setting, using multiple forms of data, and relying on the researcher as the key instrument. Data is analyzed inductively by forming categories and themes, then deductively by determining if evidence from the data base can support the emerging themes or if more is needed. Meaning is determined through the participants’ perspective, not through the researcher or the literature base (pp. 181-182). Qualitative study aims for a holistic account through varying perspectives and factors. The researcher’s goal was to “learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information” (p. 182).
Within the qualitative category, this research utilized a multiple case study approach. One bounded case refers to one classical Christian school.

**Collection Methods**

For this qualitative multiple case study, three cases, comprised of three K-12 classical Christian schools, were studied in a comparative manner. Each case provided embedded multiple data sources including teachers and parent/student groups, and data acquired through observations and documents. These sources were stratified in order to represent all three stages of the classical Trivium: early elementary or grammar stage, middle grades or logic stage, and high school or rhetoric stage.

**Instruments and Protocols**

Consistent with case study requirements, data was collected from multiple sources including observations, interviews, and written documents, specifically, students’ assignments. The triangulation gained through these varied sources will strengthen validity. Likewise, discrepant information and varying perspectives were sought (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 200-201). Since the research questions address the overarching aspects of classical Christian education, all methods of data collection were geared to inform all five research questions.

**Interviews.** Through interviews, researchers learn about complex or personal issues by listening to multiple perspectives. Gathering data through interviews “allows one to see life in the round, from all angles” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 4). Skillful interviewing requires “intense listening, a respect for and curiosity about people’s experiences and perspectives, and the ability to ask about what is not yet understood” (p. 6). Good interviews delve deeply; questions are geared to specific research questions. For case study interviewing, researchers need to function on two levels simultaneously; they need to stay focused on the line of questions necessary to the
case and also pose friendly, open-ended questions in a way which does not evoke a negative reaction such as defensiveness (Yin, 2018, p. 118).

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner (Appendices F and G). To ensure that all research questions were represented in a balanced and thorough manner, an interview protocol outlining the main research questions and relevant interview questions was composed and used in the interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 265). To gain depth, these main questions were followed by probes, consisting of expressions which encourage the participant to keep talking, and follow-up questions, which give the interviewee opportunity to elaborate on key themes or matters requiring further clarity (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 6). Research question five is more general in nature; the interview included this final general question which gave participants the opportunity to provide insight outside of the specific areas addressed in the other four research questions. To ensure clarity, the interview questions were field-tested and approved by three professional teachers, one of whom was also a parent.

To help participants refrain from natural defensiveness in questions seeking their varying and discrepant perspectives, interview questions were open-ended and worded sensitively to best allow participants to express both success stories as well as inherent challenges in their goals of fostering Christian formation in students through the classical Christian approach.

Interviews were recorded then carefully transcribed. Additionally, notes were kept on the interview protocol (Appendices I and J), organized to indicate both actual data and personal reflections of the researcher. Quoted remarks were included verbatim.

Participants were assured of confidentiality by means of assigned pseudonyms for all individuals. The three schools are identified only by case numbers.
**Observations.** Because case studies explore real-world phenomena, much data collection is conducted on-site through observations and interviews. Besides human behavior, data about culture or status, for example, can be gleaned from observing the physical environment or workspace (p. 122). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest the researcher use all of her own senses, and take note of the “physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and your own behaviors” (p. 167). An observational instrument is valuable to “assess the occurrence of certain types of behaviors during certain periods of time in the field” (Yin, 2018, pp. 121-122). This instrument, or protocol, helps the researcher keep a written record of actual data as well as his personal reflections, experiences, and hunches (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 168). The researcher observed the physical environment of the school rooms and also the activities, behaviors, and interactions of the participants in their natural setting of the school or home, and recorded such information and reflections on an observation protocol (Appendix H).

**Case Study.** This research will use a multiple case study approach. Case study methodology is fitting for this study, first, because the real-world setting is relevant to the research (Yin, 2018, p. 15). For this study, the educational theory of classical Christian schools is the subject matter. Data was collected at the schools as well as during one middle school camp-out. Secondly, case studies are best suited for “how” and “why” research questions (Yin, 2018, p. 21). This study asks “how” questions: How, if at all in the cases studied, do [the distinguishing characteristics of classical Christian education] foster students’ Christian formation? In-depth insight and explanation are possible from case study methodology. This advantage stands in contrast to experimental research which is limited in its ability to answer “how” and “why” questions (p. 21).

**Document Analysis.** Though documents are not necessarily accurate, they can be
useful to augment other data (Yin, 2018, p. 115). Documents of students’ written work provided insight, knowledge, beliefs, and experiences from students themselves on aspects concerning their views of God and the Christian life. Such documents served to triangulate tentative conclusions drawn from other data sources. Parental permission was obtained for any such documents (Appendices C and D).

**Procedures**

Securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission is mandated before research begins for any study involving human subjects. IRB approval was obtained (Appendix A). After IRB approval was granted, the researcher formally contacted the school officials to communicate the details of the study and request their participation. Permission for participation was secured from three school officials and data was then collected. The data was analyzed at each school sequentially; after analysis was made for the first school, or *case*, the process was replicated for the remaining two schools. Finally, the three cases were cross-analyzed and conclusions drawn.

**Data Analysis**

Data from the three cases was collected and analyzed sequentially. After themes were identified and tentative conclusions made for the first school, the method was replicated on the second and third schools to detect patterns of similarities or dissimilarities. Cross-case analysis was made and conclusions were drawn in answer to the study’s original research questions.

**Analysis Methods**

For qualitative research, analysis begins with a method to convert the data into forms which are easy to organize. To this end, recorded interviews were transcribed in a word-processing document. Copies of all transcriptions were saved on (two) removable flash drives and also in an organized, password-secured online file for safekeeping.
For each case, the data was sorted into clear categories, and labeled as codes and subcategories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, pp. 345-346). Yin (2018) suggests that one way to begin analysis is to start with the research questions rather than starting with the data. He advises the researcher begin with one question, identify the data that informs that questions, and make a general conclusion (p. 166). Following this pattern, the main categories for the codes were derived directly from the research questions, following Yin’s (2018) suggestion to “play” with the data in order to detect “patterns, insights, or concepts that seem promising” (p. 167). Within the outline of the research questions, open coding was used. Codes were assigned to themes as they naturally emerged from the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019, p. 346).

Analysis followed Yin’s (2018) case-based cross-case synthesis (p. 196). In contrast to a reductionist variable-based analysis common to quantitative research, case-based analysis takes a holistic approach: “the goal is to retain the integrity of the entire case and then to compare or synthesize any within-case patterns across cases” (p. 196). After a holistic analysis was made and tentative conclusions were drawn based on within-case patterns from the first school (case one), further analysis continued with the second and third schools “to examine whether there appeared to be replicative (literal or theoretical) relationships across the case studies” (p. 196).

**Trustworthiness**

Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative data is not measurable. Researchers rely on the words, ideas, recollections, and experiences of participants, along with their settings, and other varied sources for information. Trustworthiness is based on credible research measures, triangulation of multiple sources, confirmable evidence, and rich details with which to determine the transferability of conclusions (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).
**Credibility.** Credible case study research is accomplished through the triangulation of multiple data sources (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 260). Typical sources include documents, observations, interviews, artifacts, and audio-visual material (Yin, 2018, p. 113). Evidence from multiple sources which corroborate similar findings give the research validity: “By developing convergent evidence, data triangulation helps to strengthen the construct validity of your case study” (Yin, 2018, p. 128). To test emerging themes and gain thoroughness, the researcher asked participants for details, evidence, and examples as potential themes emerged during data collection. Furthermore, a range of varying perspectives was sought in order to formulate a balanced and thorough study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, pp. 62-63).

Reflexivity plays an important role; the researcher’s self-awareness and her notes of personal reflection throughout the data-collection process added credibility. This collection of written thought processes supplied “the rationale for decisions made, instincts and personal challenges that the researcher experienced during the research” (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 15).

**Dependability.** Research is considered dependable when data can prove that the conclusions drawn are “not the perception of just one person, but rather [are] confirmed that a number of participants held the same opinion” (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 15). Accurate transcriptions of interviews as well as detailed reflexive notes concerning the researcher’s thoughts regarding assumptions and decisions enhanced this study’s dependability (p. 16).

**Confirmability.** Case study researchers can maximize trustworthiness by maintaining a chain of evidence with the collected data. According to Yin (2018), this chain of data allows “the reader of the case study to follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study findings” (p. 134). To this end, a well-organized case study database for
all sources was maintained. This trail of data, comprised of careful notes, provides readers with
the researcher’s rationale for her interpretations and judgments (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 14).

**Transferability.** Transferability refers to the possibility of research findings being
transferable to another similar context while still retaining the meanings of the original study
(Houghton et al., 2013, p. 13). This determination is best made by rich, detailed, or *thick*
descriptions, especially regarding the study’s context. A strong presentation with ample
quotations aids transferability decisions (Houghton et al., p. 16). For this study, potential
transferability exists for other organizations involved in Christian education of children and
teens, such as the church, Christian education publishers, other Christian schools, or
parachurch organizations involving young people.

**Chapter Summary**

This study seeks to fill a research gap in the literature concerning the modern renewal of
classical Christian education and its possible connection to students’ Christian formation. A
qualitative design was used since the research explores an unquantifiable phenomenon: students’
spiritual development. This multiple case study utilized three cases: three ACCS-member K-12
classical Christian schools. Multiple sources of data were collected through observations,
interviews, and documents. Case study research is fitting for this study because in this method,
the setting is relevant and it works well with “how” and “why” research questions. These factors
are true of this study. A variety of perspectives were sought and obtained in order to provide rich
and thorough conclusions regarding the connections, perceived through these cases, between
classical Christian methodology and students’ Christian formation.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Compilation Protocol and Measures

Three classical Christian schools were used for this multiple case study. A tentative within-case analysis was conducted on the first case (school), then the study was replicated for the second and third cases. Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted comparing the findings of all three and conclusions were drawn.

Data compilation began with a careful transcription of interview recordings and the transcriptions, observation protocols, and documents were organized into separate files. Printed interview transcriptions were coded. Using patterns which emerged from the interviews, as well as observation notes and student assignments, codes were organized into broader categories. An inductive approach was used in order to “identify patterns and formulate explanations of those patterns” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 224). The categories were then organized under broader themes, each pertaining to the corresponding research question.

Codes were data-driven; no pre-determined codes were used, but “natural meaning units” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 235) were allowed to emerge from participants’ own perspectives. The interview protocols were, however, organized according to the four elements of classical Christian education named in the study’s research questions: Trivium methodology, a high view of mankind, curricular integration, and an emphasis on Western civilization. Any content particularly emphasized by the interviewee was noted and notable quotes were copied and filed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.191). Observation protocols and documents were also coded.

Demographic and Sample Data

Emails requesting participation were sent to headmasters of twenty classical Christian schools which met the minimal requirements of the study. Three schools were needed for the
study, and within a short time span, three headmasters responded affirmatively. These schools were used for the three cases. All are located in the United States, in three different states, and located between 250 and 800 miles from each other. No other school official agreed to participate.

Letters requesting interview participants were then emailed to the headmasters who in turn, sent them to their respective teachers and families. Ten interviews were conducted for case one, eight interviews were conducted for case two, and six interviews were conducted for case three. Interview instruments can be found in Appendices F and G. The interviewees, under pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, are briefly described as follows.

**Case One Interview Participants**

The classical Christian school of case one was located in a U.S. city of approximately 127,000 people. The school is a PreK-12, ACCS-member school of over 350 students and has been in existence over thirty years. Interviews were conducted with six students, each with their mother, and four teachers, covering all three levels of the Trivium. Providing further insight, this group included two mothers and one father (not interviewed) who were graduates themselves. Additionally, one teacher had two children recently graduate from the school, and one student’s mother was also a current teacher at the school. The following is a brief biography of the participants of case one.

**Logan and mother, Janice.** Logan is a fourth-grader, now in his second year at the school after transferring from a Montessori school. His mother Janice is a graduate of the school. She enrolled her son at the school because of the Christian environment as well as the critical thinking component which she emphatically noted was needed in today’s world.
Lucy and mother, Leah. Lucy is in fifth grade. Her father was a graduate of the school. Leah appreciated the fine arts emphasis and the classical model.

Ruby and mother, Madelyn. Ruby, a seventh-grader, has been a student at the school since grade three. Her mother Madelyn is a former graduate of the school, having attended from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Tim and mother, Allison. Tim is in eighth grade and has attended here since grade one.

James and mother, Emma. James is in ninth grade. Emma appreciated the influence of the teachers and that the school reinforced the parents’ training of the children. This family has had two other children graduate from the school. Emma gave two reasons for choosing this school: a Christ-centered focus was primary and the rigor component was secondary.

Sadie and mother, Jan. Sadie is a senior and has attended the school since kindergarten. Her mother Jan is a teacher at the school. Jan noted the partnership with parents as a key reason for enrolling her daughter.

Mrs. Hall. A grammar stage teacher, Mrs. Hall appreciates that this type of school helps children learn about the whole world as opposed to an overemphasis on just American history. Four of her children graduated from the school.

Mrs. Campbell. Another grammar stage teacher, Mrs. Campbell appreciates how the Bible is interwoven throughout the curriculum. Her children attended this school.

Mr. Hollings. A logic stage teacher, Mr. Hollings has prior experience teaching in a public school. Two of his own children are recent graduates of the school.

Mr. Albright. Mr. Albright, a high school teacher, has a doctoral degree and a theology background. He enjoys teaching students to think through current issues using a wide range of Western civilization sources as examined through a Christian worldview.
Case Two Interview Participants

The classical Christian school of case two was located in a U.S. suburban area of approximately 73,000 people. The school is a PreK-12, ACCS-member school of over 120 students and was founded in 2011. Interviews were conducted with four students, each with their mother, and four teachers, representing all three levels of the Trivium. Information on the participants of case two, under pseudonyms for confidentiality, is as follows.

**Chloe and mother, Jane.** Chloe, a first-grader, was the youngest participant in the study. Her mother Jane chose this school because of the Christian and classical emphases, and also because it had a close-knit ‘family feel.’

**Emily and mother, Heather.** Heather also expressed her appreciation for the school’s sense of community. She found the school to be more than a “private school kind of club;” she sensed the people there to have a genuine Christian faith. Emily is in second grade.

**Meghan and mother, Ashley.** Meghan, now in seventh grade, attended the school for the last six years. Their family has experience with other types of schooling. Meghan was homeschooled in kindergarten and attended a non-classical Christian school in first grade.

**Levi and mother, Liz.** Levi, a senior, is starting his third year at this school. Prior to that, he attended public school through the ninth grade.

**Mrs. Reynolds.** Now in her second year at the school where she teaches second grade, Mrs. Reynolds homeschooled her own children utilizing many classical methods.

**Mrs. Corwin.** Mrs. Corwin is the school’s music and choral teacher, teaching all grades. Before coming to this school, she taught for seven years in a non-classical Christian school. She also homeschooled her own children using classical integration for high school courses in history, literature, and theology.
Mrs. Lawrence. Mrs. Lawrence teaches Junior Kindergarten through eighth grade physical education and also middle school math. She is also the mother of two high school boys enrolled at the school. She has prior teaching experience in a non-classical Christian school.

Mr. Roberts. Teaching at the logic and rhetoric levels, Mr. Roberts has a background in Latin and classical studies. He has taught in classical schools for fourteen years.

Case Three Interview Participants

The classical Christian school of case three was located in a U.S. city of approximately 168,000 people. It is a Pre-K-12, ACCS-member school with over 200 students. The school was founded in 2001. Interviews were conducted with three teachers and three student/parent groups covering the three Trivium levels. Since one scheduled parent/student group had to cancel their interview, the headmaster and his grammar-stage son took their place. This opportunity added rich details from the headmaster’s expertise and years of experience within this methodology. Additional insight was gained from one mother who also taught at the school. Using pseudonyms, the participants are described below.

Colton and mother, Julia. Colton has attended the school since Pre-kindergarten and is in grade nine. He represented the logic stage for the interview. Julia provided rich data since she works at the school and also has had two daughters graduate from the school. One is in college and one is in graduate school. Comparing her own education in public school to her children’s classical model, she expressed, “I felt robbed. I didn’t learn half those things.” Colton’s father had prior knowledge of classical Christian schools but Julia did not. After reading “The Well-Trained Mind” (Bauer & Wise), she wholeheartedly wanted her children to attend this school.

Trent and father, Paul. Trent, a third-grader, has always attended the school. His father Paul, the school’s headmaster, provided insight not only as a father but as a long-term leader in
this educational setting. Since all the other parent-participants were mothers, Paul’s participation provided a father’s input.

**Annette and father, Paul.** Annette is in tenth grade and has attended the school since kindergarten. Paul, her father, is the headmaster as noted above. Though Paul provided the majority of the data in the interview with his young son, Annette was the primary speaker in this interview.

**Mrs. Melton.** Mrs. Melton has taught in all levels of the Trivium and also has prior experience as a substitute teacher in a public school. Regarding comparisons between public schools and classical Christian schools, she found that the public schools employ some new fad about every five years, but in the classical approach, there is no new fad. The focus is on that which is sacred. Rather than preparing students for college, they prepare students for life.

**Mr. Sawyer.** Mr. Sawyer’s teaching career has been solely within classical Christian education. He teaches primarily in the logic stage classes but also teaches at the rhetoric stage. Regarding his educational philosophy, he believes education is about forming people or “shaping the heart,” not just job preparation.

**Mr. Bennet.** Mr. Bennet formerly served as a pastor for many years and also ministered in foreign missions for ten years. Teaching at the rhetoric level, he finds that the classical Christian philosophy makes sense because it aligns teaching with students’ developmental stage, making learning easier.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

Data analysis for this study utilized categorical aggregation, a process in which “the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, hoping the issue-relevant meanings will emerge” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 206). Repeated concepts naturally found within the coded
data were condensed into broader categories. This “meaning condensation normally builds on coding and entails an abridgement of the meanings expressed by the interviewees into shorter formulations” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 233). These broader categories, emergent from the data, were again condensed into themes. The themes were assigned to a final layer, corresponding to the appropriate research question. Tables 2, 4, and 6 illustrate the layers of categorization and themes for the three cases.

**Case One Data Analysis and Findings**

The researcher spent two full days at the school, conducting ten interviews and observing three classes and three assemblies. Interviews were conducted with six parent/student groups and four teachers, covering the three levels of the Trivium. Overall, a sense of enthusiasm and cooperation was evident. In a morning grammar school assembly, various students were called upon for recognition of exemplary behavior, such as helping someone, or to recite a Scripture. Respectful applause was given. In a K-third grade convocation, students sang enthusiastically and listened to a children’s sermon on evangelism. The speaker creatively used candy as an object lesson for salvation and evangelism, and exhorted the children to be “chocolate ambassadors.” Nine themes emerged from the data and are described in the following narrative and then summarized in Table 2.

**Bible as the Source for All Truth.** Both grammar stage teachers noted the importance of teaching the Bible as the source of truth, and especially in the early grades. Mrs. Campbell, a fifth-grade teacher explained how the Bible served as their “balancing scale:” “We think of it as truth being the Bible and using the Bible as our balancing scale, so if we want to know something, we balance it against ‘what does the Bible say about that?’ …I feel like we do that a lot.” Third grade teacher, Mrs. Hall felt that Christian formation was built upon the school’s
emphasis on memorization in the lower grades including poetry and Scripture: “I think we are trying to teach them biblical truth by imprinting on their brains while they are young, and a lot of that [involves] whole passages of Scripture or poetry memorization.”

Madelyn, a mother and graduate herself, shared that, “the Bible is the basis for the truth that we learned.” Sadie, a senior who attended the school since kindergarten, believes the reason she feels so strong in her faith now was the influence of the intertwining of a Christian foundation “ever since elementary school” and the continual focus on biblical truth throughout the years in school.

**Reasoning Skills.** The Trivium’s focus on reasoning skills was found to be a factor of Christian formation in many of the participants. Four participants mentioned the importance of understanding both the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of one’s beliefs. Leah, a parent, explained that students learn to “understand their argument, and why they’re believing something.” These skills then form a foundation in the logic and rhetoric stages and serve as the “building blocks to the older age of being able to stand up for what you believe in.” James’ mother Emma, who compared her son’s classical Christian education to her own more emotionally-driven Christian background, asserted that the teachers “give you the best tool box possible when you go out into the world, to be able to defend what you believe and why you believe it.” Sadie’s mother expressed assurance about her daughter’s future exposure to worldly ideas in college because her daughter would be able to say, “This is what I believe and why I believe it.” Mr. Hollings felt assured that most students “have a firm foundation in what they believe and why they believe it.”

Reasoning skills were also found to be important in helping students find answers on their own and thereby strengthening their faith. Madelyn, mother and graduate, noted that her family attends a strong Bible-teaching church but she emphatically feels she received the training
to search the Bible for her own answers here at the school: “That’s when I go back to the Bible and like, I know what my friends are saying, I know what maybe even the church is saying. But what does the Bible say and what does God say about this?” Sadie expressed that the logic stage “was probably a turning point” in her faith journey. It was in the logic school that “they started to challenge us about making this faith our own. And we really delved deeper into the Bible and what it means to be a Christian.” This concept of thinking deeply emerged frequently. Regarding its possible connection to Christian formation, Sadie noted it helped her to study the Bible on a deeper level and apply her faith to her life.

Mrs. Campbell shared a story of two boys who wrestled with doubts but returned to faith mostly because they knew how to seek and find answers for themselves: “[Classical Christian education] gave them the ability to know how to question. The keyword there was ‘how’ to question. And then ‘how’ to – also a keyword – find the answer. I feel like we haven’t left them without knowing how to do that.”

**Ability to Articulate Thoughts and Beliefs.** Mrs. Campbell spoke of the connection between speaking skills and evangelism. She teaches students the reasoning behind that: “You look at grammar, you think, ‘Why would we want to speak well?’ ‘Well, because we want to communicate well.’ ‘Well, why?’ ‘So you can tell people about Jesus.’” She also emphasized the importance of the early years which brings about a confidence: “From the very little, littlest person that goes to school here to the oldest person, we are always asking them to share... There’s a confidence, I think, that is built in sharing and talking...” Mrs. Hall feels that because public speaking is practiced at every developmental stage in the classical model, students develop confidence and familiarity for sharing their faith and conversing in general.
**Human Value.** The theme of human value encompassed the doctrine of mankind being made in God’s image, God’s attributes of truth, goodness, and beauty, respect for others, and educational rigor. Mrs. Hall asserts that they teach children that they are made in God’s image, and with that privilege, comes the responsibility to live the Christian life in the world. Similarly, respect for human life was underscored, though not overtly, in a high school music history class during an observation. In a lecture segment comparing the French and American Revolutions (integrating curriculum of music history, art history, and political history), the teacher compared the brutal tactics of the French at the time, such as the guillotine, to the more civil tactics of the Americans who voiced their stance “by throwing tea into the ocean.” Discussion also included the responsibility of governing oneself.

Rigor was a common concept which emerged. Janice, a mother and graduate, asserted that “every student is expected to devote themselves fully and then produce a lot.” With a knowing chuckle, she shared that “that perspective of what they’re capable of, like being made in God’s image is fully taken advantage of.” She added, “The workload, even for the little ones . . . It should be infusing this perspective that they *are* capable. They are able and worthy of learning.” Regarding the belief in students’ God-given capabilities and the classical approach, Mr. Hollings shared, “You’re challenging kids to be better, to rise up. I always talk to the upper portion of the class, not to the lower, and I try to bring them up.” He finds that students appreciate that expectation. During a high school convocation, a speaker exhorted the students that “self-discipline was a virtue which carried over into all of life.”

**Self-identity.** A more specific aspect related to human value that emerged was self-identity. Mr. Hollings, for example, promotes the rigor aspect, but also stressed that he wants students to realize that they are valued as human beings, “not just for their academic excellence,
or their desire to be good at athletics, or whatever, but in all aspects of their life that they are a child of God and it’s important to think of themselves as such.” Emma, James’ mother, commented on the connection between self-value and rigor: “When you are in an environment that teaches you that you have value and purpose, it changes how you view work…”

To help students form a correct self-identity, Mr. Albright expounded on the “delicate balance” between seeing oneself as a sinner while at the same time a human made in God’s image. Seeing it as a maturing process, he hopes students will not confuse an understanding of sinfulness with a poor self-image. He stresses to the students: “No, you’ve been created in the image of God. You are an important person. You are gifted by God with skills that you can use.”

Janice, speaking from experience as a former graduate, connected rigor, self-identity, and Christian formation. She asserted that students are expected to achieve, but also noted, “They’re not just being pumped out as generic human beings. I feel like they’re being put in this environment where they’re experiencing so many different rich, like, knowledge and wisdom and it completely just flows with their identity in Christ.” She also discussed identity found in self-discovery: “…taking in current information, dissecting it, measuring it against what you’ve learned with philosophy and God’s Word, that’s part of your identity.”

The classical idea of teaching “the whole person,” as opposed to job training was expressed by Mrs. Campbell. “We’re not about the job. We’re about the person developing as a human, as a follower of Christ, as a person who’s out here to do the Father’s business.”

**Wholeness of God’s Creation.** In the realm of science, Mrs. Campbell enthusiastically described how her fifth-graders are taught to study an insect as part of creation rather than an annoyance: “You’re tying it to Christian formation. You’re giving God the credit, Christ the credit for every single thing.” Similarly, Mrs. Hall spoke of finding God in the “orderliness of
math” and, “of course, in the beauty of science.” She further discussed the integration found in their study of astronomy and ancient history in her third-grade class. While studying the Greeks and Romans in history, they learn constellations and the pagan Greek and Roman gods for which they’re named. She encourages the students to consider, “Isn’t it sad that they had to create so many false gods – a god of the sea, a god of the heavens, a god of the grain and harvest – when all they really needed was Yahweh.”

**Wholeness of History.** During the interview, Janice explained the classical idea of integration to her son Logan, a fourth-grader, who was simply used to it. Referring to the Bible being taught along with ancient history, Janice explained, “It’s amazing to me that you learn a timeline that starts with like, the Minoans, and Mycenaeans, and Phoenicians, and then Judah…” Logan added, “Trojan War, Rome.” “Yeah, and then it leads right in to Jesus. When a lot of kids your age hear about Jesus, they kind of maybe think of him as just like a fantasy character, not as a historical figure.” The use of timelines in the grammar stage aids young students’ comprehension of historical events.

**Equipped for Civil Discourse.** A current senior, Sadie well understood the concerns raised by the Dershowitz quote in the interview (Appendix E). Regarding civil discourse, she observes “how our society today is so unwilling to listen to all sides of an argument… It’s very important to hear all sides of an argument and hear it from everything before you decide what truth is. That’s something we do in a lot of our classes…” She explains:

> We read from all philosophers not just Christian ones. We read from pagans and atheists… And we take a science and theology class too in which we are just consistently discussing these different worldviews, about creation, and the beginning of the universe and things of that nature. So [uncivil dialogue] is something we really combat against.

One of Sadie’s teachers, Mr. Albright sees the value of teaching students to “really think through issues using authors from *all* kinds of sources in the Western civilization but then
examining them using thought, systematically, and at the same time, in the light of what the Christian faith teaches.” Furthermore, he mentioned the relevant Christian command to love and respect others. Instead of attacking, students learn to reason, based on Scriptural truth. He points out the classical practice of asking questions, noting Socrates and Jesus as examples.

Mr. Albright also believes that students are better able to engage the current culture through the study of Western civilization, which he views as “a tremendous heritage here, both Christian and non-Christian.” He explains, “It’s really helpful for students, as they think about the struggles they’re facing, or the opposition they face at times, to realize these aren’t new issues – and they’ve actually been answered.”

**Protection against Deception.** This theme evoked a degree of urgency in some of the adult participants. Phrases such as, “under attack or under influences,” “armed with,” or “swept away” were voiced.

Referring to students graduating and living as adults, Mr. Albright pondered a warning: “You’re going outside of [this school]. You’re going to be going to state universities. You’re going to be – in a way you’ve never experienced perhaps – under attack or under influences and you need to know how to respond.” He believes an understanding of the heritage of Western civilization will help them.

In response to the Dershowitz quote concerning the ability to discern truth from fantasy, Allison referred to Tim’s prior logic classes as a defense: “Just because something is said with intensity and big words doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s truth. And so, through their logic classes, that’s something that they are armed then with.” Repeating the thought that logic classes arm people against deception, she also credited this factor as God’s way of helping people discern truth from falsehood: “We need to test it against his Word.”
Janice expressed some urgency about this theme in answering question one about her reason for enrolling her son in this type of school and its emphasis on critical thinking:

Well, I’m sure all through history it’s been important, but living in the here and now, if we don’t teach our children to be able to dissect information and make their own decisions about it, then… they’ll just be swept away. I mean, it’s hard enough… it’s hard enough to not be swept away by the normal culture without being trained in this way.

The Christian formation factor of discerning truth from falsehood stood out to Janice, a graduate, as she remembered being presented with current events every day in high school. The students applied what they learned about moral or political philosophy and scrutinizing the articles, “and pulling, almost like interpreting… like, what’s really going on here? And calling things for what they really were, not just for what the media or the author was putting out there.”

Reflecting the emergent category of comparing Christian and non-Christian worldviews, Sadie wrote an assignment comparing the philosophies of Socrates, Aristotle, and Scripture regarding the role of the mind in the good life. In connection with Christian formation, she concluded that the three views acknowledge the mind as important but in the biblical view, human nature is dependent on divine sanctification to achieve the good life – unlike the man-centered views of the two Greek philosophers.

Two of the mothers expressed an appreciation for the classical school’s intellectual basis for the Christian faith since they both admitted to growing up in a more emotionally-driven faith. Referring to this rational basis in answer to the Dershowitz question (Appendix E), Leah commented (with a chuckle): “A lot of it is… it’s not emotional, all the time,” explaining that her own faith journey had been more emotionally-based. Emma’s comments were similar, adding that having an intellectual basis for one’s faith is “now more important than ever.” A somewhat divergent view was observed in a high school convocation when heart issues were addressed, first from an Aristotle quote: “Education of the mind without education of the heart is no
education at all.” The “moral compass side of education,” referring to the heart, was discussed, noting the need to control one’s emotions.

**General Findings.** In order to provide opportunity for divergent views concerning the ability of classical Christian education to foster Christian formation, an interview question was included concerning any challenges found toward that aim. As a probe when needed, the researcher asked specifically about intellectual pride. A variety of responses emerged and are described as follows.

Madelyn, a graduate herself, understood how a “rigorous college-prep school, how that could give you a big head,” but also noted that this school emphasizes biblical principles such as humbling oneself in the sight of the Lord. Her daughter Ruby, a seventh-grader, added an amusing insight. She noticed that it was easier in the early grades for a student to think of himself as, ‘I’m big stuff.’ However, that idea “starts to shrink” in middle school when the workload gets difficult. Both mom and daughter knowingly laughed, and Ruby asserted, “This is hard! And you realize you’re not big stuff!”

James, a ninth-grader, shared that he learned in class that pride was “an exaggerated view of yourself [which can] be exaggerated either high or low.” He explained, that while it shouldn’t be too high, “you also do have that innate value as a person created in the image of God and so you shouldn’t demean yourself too much.”

Mr. Hollings admitted that in prior years, arrogance was problematic. However, he credited new leadership with an improved environment in that regard. In his view, self-identity plays a factor in this area: “It’s what’s in your heart and what shows through in your attitude, your behavior, and how you think of yourself.” He believes students are encouraged to think of others first.
Sadie provided an interesting perspective. She pointed to her rhetoric-stage classes where the students begin every semester learning about the intellectual virtues, docility and humility:

“[The teachers] say, ‘What are the intellectual virtues and how are we going to apply that this year?’” She added,

One of the primary things we’re taught here is that in order to be taught, you not only have to be docile and teachable, but you have to be humble and you have to admit that you don’t know all the information… I think that, if anything, this school humbles you. It teaches you to take a look at all the arguments, and all the possibilities around you before deciding on your own.

Adding evidence to the general denial of the pride issue was an observation of a K-third grade convocation. After a time of singing, a children’s sermon was presented on the topic of evangelism. Using an illustration of chocolate candies which had been given to some of the children beforehand, the speaker explained that salvation was a gift to be shared. Emphasis was given to humility; it was the gift (the candy/salvation) that was special, not oneself. Further focus on humility was provided as the children were shown the fitting musical video, “Nobody” by Casting Crowns, a song about humbly witnessing for Christ.

Table 2: Emergent Themes and Categories for Case One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible as the Source of All Truth</td>
<td>Trivium Methodology (RQ1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of early grades</td>
<td>Establish the Bible as foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish the Bible as foundation</td>
<td>Maximize memorization ability in early grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning Skills</td>
<td>Trained to think deeply and question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize truth from falsehood</td>
<td>Learn to find one’s own answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know both what and why of Christian beliefs</td>
<td>Taught to make and defend arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Articulate Thoughts and Beliefs</td>
<td>Confidence speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-12 elocution training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High View of Mankind (RQ2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Human Value
- Man made in God’s image, reflect God’s nature
- Love and respect toward others
- Even those different views, regardless of achievement
- Truth, goodness, and beauty reflected in God’s nature
- Goodness and virtue are relational factors
- Rigor/high expectations of students
- Responsibility/discipline: Do one’s best to glorify of God

### Self-identity
- Child of God (regardless of achievement)
- Balance between man as a sinner and made in God’s image
- Whole person - not job preparation
- Sense of purpose
- Freedom to hold one’s opinion

### Curricular Integration (RQ3)
- God glorified/given credit for all creation
- Integrate Christian faith into all of life
- Orderliness and beauty of God
- Sacred/secular divide deemphasized

### Wholeness of God’s Creation
- Use of timelines in early grades
- World history, not overemphasis on American history
- Bible as history, not a story

### Emphasis on Western Civilization (RQ4)
- Preparation to engage current culture
- Articulate Christian beliefs within current culture
- Extensive literature exposure
- Evaluate world philosophies/worldviews through Scripture
- Show respect for others’ views
- Recognize that current ideas are not new through study of Western civilization

### Equipped for Civil Discourse
- Compare Christian and non-Christian worldviews
- Study/recognize worthlessness of man-made worship systems
- Intellectual vs. emotional Christian faith
- Critical acceptance of Western Civilization:
  - Ideas of great minds, both Christian and non-Christian
- Question to reveal errant ideas

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**Tentative Conclusions for Case One**

This research study aimed to explore the possible perceived connections between classical Christian education and Christian formation through the experiences of students, parents, and teachers in three classical Christian schools. For the study, Christian formation was
defined by the following six elements: 1) knowledge about God and the Bible, 2) love for God and others, 3) a growing faith, 4) discerning biblical truth from falsehood, 5) sharing/defending one’s faith, and 6) living the Christian life in the world today.

In case one, the Trivium methodology (RQ1) was found to strongly foster Christian formation in students. First, foundational knowledge about God and the Bible is taught throughout all grade levels, with particular emphasis on memorization in the early grades, leading to the theme, *Bible as the Source of All Truth*. The second theme, *Reasoning Skills*, an outcome of the logic stage, equips students to think deeply and question, thereby strengthening their faith when they come to understand both the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of their beliefs. Logic skills enable students to stand firm in their faith while recognizing biblical truth from falsehood. Finally, rhetoric skills enable students to confidently share their own ideas, leading to the theme, *Ability to Articulate Thoughts and Beliefs*. From the data from case one, the Trivium methodology fosters all six areas of Christian formation.

The themes pertaining to a high view of mankind (RQ2) include *Human Value* and *Self-identity*. Human beings, according to case one data, are viewed as intelligent beings, made in God’s image and capable of rigorous academic pursuit. Responsibility, discipline, and doing one’s best to glorify God were emphasized, traits which lead to living the Christian life in the world today. The theme of self-identity was found to foster Christian formation through a sense of value as a child of God, apart from personal achievement. Recognizing one’s sinfulness was acknowledge and balanced with this understanding of human value. According to the Bible’s Great Commandment to love God and love one’s neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:31), a balanced sense of self-love is implied. This classical element of a high view of mankind was found to
foster Christian formation through knowledge about God and the Bible, love for God and others, and living the Christian life in the world today.

Using timelines and memorization of key events in the grammar stage, this school intentionally intertwines Bible history within ancient history, reinforcing faith through its historicity. In courses of all levels, God is given credit for all creation and praised for his orderliness found in subjects such as math and science, thereby incorporating faith into all of life. Curricular integration (RQ3) thereby fosters Christian formation through knowledge about God and the Bible, a growing faith, and living as a Christian in the world today.

This school places a heavy focus on the emphasis on Western civilization (RQ4) particularly for high school juniors and seniors in a two-year Great Ideas class. This focus led to the themes, *Equipped for Civil Discourse,* and *Protection against Deception.* Here, students explore and compare philosophies and worldviews of Christian and non-Christian thinkers, learn to discern truth from falsehood, and articulate their views through respectful, intelligent discourse.

Table 3 portrays the perceived connections between the emergent themes of the data and the elements of Christian formation for case one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Perceived Connections between Themes and Christian Formation in Case One</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case One</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivium Methodology (RQ1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bible as the Source of All Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Ability to Articulate Thoughts and Beliefs | Love for God and others  
Sharing/defending one’s faith |
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High View of Mankind (RQ2)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Human Value                             | Knowledge about God and the Bible  
Love for God and others  
Living the Christian life in the world today |
| Self-identity                           | Love for God and others  
Living the Christian life in the world today |
| **Curricular Integration (RQ3)**        |                               |
| Wholeness of God’s Creation             | Knowledge about God and the Bible  
A growing faith  
Living the Christian life in the world today |
| Wholeness of History                    | Knowledge about God and the Bible  
A growing faith  
Living the Christian life in the world today |
| **Emphasis on Western Civilization (RQ4)** |                               |
| Equipped for Civil Discourse            | Love for God and others  
Discerning biblical truth from falsehood  
Sharing/defending one’s faith  
Living the Christian life in the world today |
| Protection against Deception            | Knowledge about God and the Bible  
Discerning biblical truth from falsehood  
Sharing/defending one’s faith  
Living the Christian life in the world today |

**Case Two Data Analysis and Findings**

The researcher spent two full days at the school of case two, conducting eight interviews and observing six classes and one assembly. The interviews included four student/parent groups and four teachers, covering all levels of the Trivium. Smaller and newer than case one, this school was observed to have a close-knit feel. In the hall before classes, students were greeted by their teacher with a handshake as they entered the room. Before chapel one morning, two little boys ran over to a teacher and hugged her. Eight themes emerged and are described in the following narrative and in Table 4.
Protection from Deception. This theme emerged from repeated emphases on teaching students to reason well, an element from the Trivium’s logic stage. Meghan’s mother Ashley explained that students at this school should have a better sense of discerning biblical truth from falsehood because they are taught to “think on a higher level,” referring to the ongoing practice of providing a rationale for an answer given: “Everything they do here, they have to think about how they got that answer... When they get called on in class, the follow-up questions is, ‘Why?’ ‘Why do you think that?’ And that’s just a trained element…” The method of asking students ‘Why?’ after they gave an answer was observed during an eighth-grade literature class.

Levi, a senior, describes the practice of questioning in his classes: “Basically, in each class we have some discussion and then we can give out points, and then students in that class also question you and you can think more about it. So, we challenge each other well.” Mrs. Corwin explained how questioning and discussion gave students freedom to question even what is in the textbook and to formulate their own conclusions. This emphasis on freedom to question parallels the 2017 Barna study in which over 90% of parents claimed safety as their highest desire in choosing schools. Within the Barna study’s safety category was “‘cultural safety,’ such as feeling safe to ask questions” (2017, p. 68).

Scriptural truth, emphasized from students’ earliest years, was noted as an integral element of this theme. Two young students and one teacher spoke about the recitations which all students give twice per year, one from the Bible and one from Scripture. Mrs. Lawrence pointed out that the scriptural recitations help with retention of God’s Word. Relying on scriptural truth to guard against deception was evident in an interview with second-grader Emily as she gave a convincing teleological argument for God’s existence which she had learned in kindergarten:

Well, in kindergarten, we were reading a book about science and there were some lies, like, that there was just a big explosion and boom and it turned into planets. So, she took
a pen and crossed that out and told us that that’s not true; God actually created that. It wasn’t just a big explosion. ‘Cause how would it be so perfect? If it was just a few feet closer to the sun, we’d be burned up and if it was, too far away, it would be too cold and we would all die. We wouldn’t be able to live. None of the other planets are just like ours.

Pointing to the importance of the early grades, Heather noted, “From a young age, they are learning what is true, what is not true, how to determine the difference between the two.” She also shared that she believes this school to be “our best hope” for students to be able to distinguish truth from lies. Echoing Dershowitz’s concern for the current generation (Appendix E), this mother expressed her similar concern regarding this topic of deception: “I don’t envy their generation. And I don’t envy my generation either, but I really don’t envy theirs.”

**Equipped for Civil Discourse.** The interview question regarding the Dershowitz quote on cultural and political engagement prompted similar thoughts on this theme. Heather spoke about civil discourse. While lamenting her own experiences with people who, having no basis for right and wrong, “just explode at each other on social media and then hide in their rooms with their phone,” she has found that the students at this school learn how to “argue their point, and defend their point… And being able to break that down and articulate in a respectful manner.” As adults she believes students will be able to say, “You now what? I respectfully disagree with you and here’s why.” Also alluding to attacks within social media, Jane asserts that these students learn to think for themselves based on facts.

Meghan, a seventh-grader, responded to Dershowitz’s thoughts. When a group conversation seemed to involve some false information, rather than join in or remain silent, she chose to “ask for clarification.” Her mother asserted that students are taught how to engage with others. They are taught to consider multiple points of view but to retain that which is true. She
added, “I think these kids come out different… [they] come out able to, I don’t know if debate is the right word, but they come out able to converse.”

The importance of early grades was emphasized, particularly students’ recitations which prepare them for public speaking. One subtle yet important public speaking skill was observed by the researcher in a kindergarten class. The teacher asked each of the nine students to introduce themselves to the researcher. Each little kindergartener looked the researcher in the eye and clearly stated, “My name is…” This practice was evidently something previously taught as the teacher then affirmed them for their eye contact.

**High Expectations.** Human value, stemming from “God’s stamp in us,” forms the motive for caring and serving others, according to Mrs. Corwin. Mr. Roberts spoke about students’ giftedness and God-given callings, desiring that students understand that living the Christian life “is not just this rubber stamp… that is going to be stamped onto their lives if they submit to Christ, but that He has gifted them… and that Christ calls us to become what he has made us to be.” Mr. Roberts also explained that the logic stage holds a crucial place in restoring the image of God in humans; strengthening a students’ reasoning ability helps by “turning them into human beings in the fullest sense… in repairing that image, in making it whole rather than highly fractured.” According to Liz, human value is a frequent topic, including concepts such as finding one’s identity in Christ, being God’s image-bearers, and then “trying to be a light to one another and then a light to the community.”

Students’ capacity to learn and the school’s academic rigor were discussed. Liz and her son Levi shared a knowing chuckle about the school’s motto, “Rigor with joy” and its emphasis on attitude. Levi admitted, “It’s a lot of work,” but added that all the teachers want the students to reach their full potential. Self-discipline was emphasized by Mr. Roberts as a trait of bearing
God’s image. He also expressed the ongoing struggle to build in students the confidence to take a “high view of themselves and their capabilities as extending beyond what they think they can do.” Attitude was also inherent in Mrs. Reynolds’ perspective that students are encouraged, in any subject, to do their best for the Lord. Whether the focus is math, handwriting, or writing a story, she admonishes her second-graders to give God their best. The researcher observed this theme of high expectations during an eighth-grade literature class in which students were kindly reminded to speak clearly when giving an answer. Similar data was observed in a math class in which the front wall displayed prominently, “We seek excellence for His Glory.”

**Students as Servant Leaders.** Though not a distinguishing characteristic unique to classical Christian education, this theme emerged from the data quite strongly in case two. Though most of the data did not use the term servant leadership or even leader, the researcher analyzed it as such, based on the interviewees’ descriptive accounts, and categorized it under the research question regarding a high view of mankind. All four teachers and two student/parent groups provided, with no prompt from the questions, stories of students engaging in self-initiated acts of service to other students and one staff member. Mrs. Reynolds shared a story in which she discovered that an upper level student consistently helped the janitor without being asked. The janitor told her, “Yeah, he helps me all the time. He just helps and never complains.” Mrs. Lawrence shared a scene from her physical education class in which one child had no experience with sports and other students “worked with him and helped him, and didn’t make fun of him.” Her own boys, who were new to the school soccer team, received ongoing help from a senior on the team who encouraged them and taught them about the game. During an observation of a music class, student groups were instructed to help each other.
A number of participants recounted the headmaster’s exhortation to the upper students to be more involved with the younger children, especially during lunchtime. Megan recalled his words to them: “You guys need to be more active with the little ones because they look up to you and they are going to turn out like you. So, you have to be kinder…” Meghan’s mother added:

He wanted them to step up as role models… These little kids are constantly all day looking up to them because it’s a family approach here. The littles eat with the older… There are no segregated lunch tables… And when you just watch this whole dynamic at lunch time, watch them talk and interact with each other, and just the way these littles just look at them. [The headmaster] wants to make sure that they’re being their best they can be because the little ones are constantly trying to emulate them.

Levi, a senior, specifically named this element as leadership. Admitting that it wasn’t always easy, he asserted that engaging with the young students “definitely has helped, at least for me, I think everyone too, but like, just to be a leader and like, a role model even if it’s hard.” Noting the resultant self-discovery, he added:

I learned that I’m definitely one of those people who like to talk to and get to know little kids, and let them have a fun time at lunch… I do notice that I’m like a leader and, so little kids do look up to me.

**Wholeness of God’s Creation.** It is of interest that this Christian school has no Bible class. Aligning with biblical integration of the classical approach, biblical truths are taught alongside everything else. Heather explained that Scriptures are found “everywhere you go in this school” and that teachers tie in Scriptures with the lessons: “It all goes back to the creator and Christian worldview and kind of shows that everything is connected and God has a hand in everything.” Regarding how his science classes, including biology, chemistry and physics, related to God’s creation, Levi expressed amazement at God’s intricate design of human beings.

Mrs. Corwin finds that curricular integration, based on Christ as the head of everything, “does contribute to Christian formation,” while a dichotomy of sacred and secular does not. Mrs.
Lawrence agrees, stating that Christ “is, or should be, in everything we do,” and students should recognize that “God is not in a box.”

Agreeing with the notion of integration, Mr. Roberts believes that the classical model best equips students to meet the world’s challenges because the integration of biblical truth into all areas is the only means to “establish Christ’s lordship over all truth everywhere,” and to demonstrate “its inflexible and unchanging nature as truth,” an important aspect since social media can alter notions of truth or ideas of right and wrong. As opposed to Christian education which falls into the “often secularizing tendency of seeing subjects as watertight compartments,” Mr. Roberts feels that curricular integration is necessary for Christian formation because it shows students the wholeness of creation: their subjects are “various lenses for studying God – the one whole creation of our one whole God.”

**Wholeness of History.** This theme pointed to God’s purposeful role as the designer of history thereby giving it meaning. In seventh grade, students learn that God is sovereign over history as part of their “four pillars of history.” Another pillar describes God as having a destination for history which gives all other historical events meaning. Classes in ancient literature and ancient history incorporate biblical events and concepts. During an observation of a ninth-grade ancient history class, Mr. Roberts lectured about the differences between polytheistic and monotheistic cultures and spoke about “putting God’s people in the context of everybody else.” Painted on his wall was a very large map of the ancient world.

**Connection with the Past.** For this theme, the study of Western civilization was deemed valuable to today’s students who are tempted to be too self-focused, according to Mr. Roberts, an assumption “which is directly contrary to the Gospel,” he adds. Matters of Christian history were prominent, including students’ connection with the past. Mr. Roberts believes “It’s crucial for
[students] to get a sense that Christ’s church is one whole, has been throughout the ages, that they are marching onward.” Students learn of martyrs, seeing them as examples of selfless devotion and also realizing their connection to them as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

According to Mr. Roberts, students learn that “this is just one more age when God’s providence in Western history is a great mercy, which we have not deserved any more than any other people, but… it is our responsibility now to carry it more effectively.” Students gain the realization that they are not alone in their struggles, temptations, and failures when they learn about Christians throughout history.

Ashley noted that history for her daughter, now in the logic stage, took on deeper meaning: “It’s not just history any more. It’s history with pillars. It’s history with purposes.” Mrs. Corwin noted that through the combination of history, literature, and theology, students could find “connecting points,” or people of the past who could serve as models to encourage young people of today who were trying difficult things.

**Unchanging Truth.** The aspect of biblical truth and Christian witness emerged from the data. Mr. Roberts believes that if students can grasp the “wholeness of truth, and the wholeness of history and literature…, it gives them a better grasp to reach out to bewildered people being bombarded with hogwash day in and day out.” Similarly, an apologetics class was observed to include study of contrasting worldviews including atheism, pantheism, deism, and theism while discussing C. S. Lewis and moral dilemmas. Connecting the classical element of truth, goodness, and beauty was found to contribute to Christian formation through exposure to exemplary works of art and music because those elements are attributes of God and thereby draw people to him.

**General Findings and Analysis.** General interview topics covered potential challenges found toward the pursuit of Christian formation. Interview participants pointed to occasional
conflict among students and the issue of academic rigor sometimes being a struggle for some
students. No participant affirmed the idea of intellectual pride. Meghan found the environment to
be the opposite: “[The students] are very humble.”

Table 4: Emergent Themes and Categories for Case Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Two</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trivium Methodology (RQ1)</td>
<td>Protection from Deception</td>
<td>Bible memorization in early grades</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish the Bible as truth foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trained to think deeply</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trained to question/not automatically accept ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognize truth from falsehood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped for Civil Discourse</td>
<td>Importance of early years/public speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation to engage current culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Taught to make and defend arguments</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engage with respect vs. uncontrolled emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Three pillars of school: Truth, Character, and Wisdom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consider multiple views but hold to the truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High View of Mankind (RQ2)</td>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>Made in God’s image/being restored</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop one’s full potential</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Rigor with Joy” /attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity to learn</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do one’s best for the Lord</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gifted by God</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students’ proper view of themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students as Servant Leaders</td>
<td>Curricular Integration (RQ3)</td>
<td>Self-initiated service to others</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture of familial care and service</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students as leaders/teachers to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholeness of God’s Creation</td>
<td>God’s Word integrated into all courses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connection of all creation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Christ’s Lordship over all vs. sacred/secular dichotomy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Truth, Goodness, and Beauty: God’s unchanging attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholeness of History</td>
<td>Emphasis on Western Civilization (RQ4)</td>
<td>God as Designer of history/sovereignty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bible/ancient literature/ancient history</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tentative Conclusions for Case Two

The following tentative conclusions were drawn for case two regarding the perceived connections between four distinctive features of classical Christian education and Christian formation of students. For this study, Christian formation was defined by the following six areas:
1) knowledge about God and the Bible, 2) love for God and others, 3) a growing faith, 4) discerning biblical truth from falsehood, 5) sharing/defending one’s faith, and 6) living the Christian life in the world today.

The data for case two indicates that the Trivium methodology (RQ1) strongly fosters Christian formation. The theme, *Protection against Deception* involves a combination of biblical foundation beginning with the earliest grades and the logic stage’s emphasis on critical thinking. Students learn how to question ideas they encounter rather than being easily swayed to believe something false. The theme, *Equipped for Civil Discourse*, also encompasses the logic stage’s focus on making rational arguments and the rhetoric stage’s emphasis on public speaking. With these skills, students learn to engage the culture in a respectful, informed manner. The Trivium methodology in case two contributes to Christian formation in the areas of knowledge about God and the Bible, love for God and others, an ability to discern truth from falsehood, sharing and defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today.
Significant findings emerged concerning a high view of mankind (RQ2) in case two. Its familial environment, intentionally upheld by its leadership, encourages service to others. Regarding the theme of High Expectations, students learn to do their best for the Lord, and to do so with a good attitude. Rigor and discipline are expected, though no one admitted finding significant examples of intellectual pride. For the theme, Students as Servant Leaders, students’ self-initiated acts of service to fellow classmates and staff – traits of servant leadership – were described as a natural part of the school’s culture. The Christian formation elements of love for God and others and living as a Christian in the world today were highly apparent.

Curricular integration (RQ3) was found to have strong emphases. In fact, there are no Bible classes in this school; instead, God’s Word is integrated into all courses. The classes, whether math, physical education, or biology, are described as “various lenses for studying God” thereby fostering knowledge about God and the Bible. This integration led to the theme, Wholeness of God’s Creation. Christian formation elements of a growing faith, discerning truth from falsehood, and living the Christian life in the world today would be fostered as students learn to see the world as one unified whole, connected with its Creator, and all under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As mankind is the highest form in God’s created order, a love for God and others would be a reasonable response, first as they realize their own worth and also the worth of human beings in general.

A similar concept of unity surfaced within the area of curricular integration: Wholeness of History. Studying ancient history and ancient literature with correlating Bible content would support knowledge about God and the Bible. A growing faith would be strengthened as students realize the historicity of the Bible and also as they recognize God’s sovereignty and purpose throughout history.
The emphasis on Western civilization (RQ4) in case two focused on showing students their *Connection with the Past* and on *Unchanging Truth*, specifically of God’s Word as compared to other worldviews. Christian formation is fostered when students realize their Christian heritage – the Gospel being birthed in Western civilization – and learn of martyrs and other heroes of the faith. Through this connection, faith is encouraged to grow when students realize they are part of something much bigger than their present existence. Furthermore, students understand their own responsibility to carry on God’s work, thereby fostering incentive to live the Christian life in the world today. As students discover God’s providential work throughout history, they grow in their knowledge of him.

Through the study of Western civilization, students learn about non-Christian worldviews in comparison to the truth of God’s Word, equipping them to recognize truth from falsehood, to share and defend their faith, and to live the Christian life in the world today.

Table 5 portrays the perceived connections between the emergent themes of the data and the elements of Christian formation for case two.

### Table 5: Perceived Connections between Themes and Christian Formation in Case Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Elements of Christian Formation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trivium Methodology (RQ1)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection against Deception</td>
<td>Knowledge about God and the Bible&lt;br&gt;Discerning biblical truth from falsehood&lt;br&gt;Sharing/defending one’s faith&lt;br&gt;Living the Christian life in the world today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped for Civil Discourse</td>
<td>Love for God and others&lt;br&gt;Discerning biblical truth from falsehood&lt;br&gt;Sharing/defending one’s faith&lt;br&gt;Living the Christian life in the world today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High View of Mankind (RQ2)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>Love for God and others&lt;br&gt;Living the Christian life in the world today</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Students as Servant Leaders | Love for God and others  
|                            | Living the Christian life in the world today  
| Curricular Integration (RQ3) |  
| Wholeness of God’s Creation | Knowledge about God and the Bible  
|                            | Love for God and others  
|                            | A growing faith  
|                            | Discerning biblical truth from falsehood  
|                            | Living the Christian life in the world today  
| Wholeness of History | Knowledge about God and the Bible  
|                            | A growing faith  
| Emphasis on Western Civilization (RQ4) |  
| Connection with the Past | Knowledge about God and the Bible  
|                            | A growing faith  
|                            | Living the Christian life in the world today  
| Unchanging Truth | Discerning truth from falsehood  
|                            | Sharing/defending one’s faith  
|                            | Living the Christian life in the world today  

**Case Three Data Analysis and Findings**

The researcher spent one full day at the school, conducting six interviews and observing three classes including a kindergarten classroom, a logic class, and a high school ethics class. The interviews included three teachers and three parent/student groups representing each level of the Trivium. Teachers and students exemplified a sense of warmth and respect. As their normal practice for visitors, each time the researcher entered a classroom, students immediately stood to show respect while friendly introductions were made. The students were well-mannered, sometimes working quietly as observed in the kindergarten class, or exuberantly debating an issue as observed in the seventh-grade logic class. During a visit to the high school ethics class, students easily spoke with the researcher about the topic of morality in the Bible which they were researching with a partner. From the data collected, seven themes emerged and are described in the following narrative and summarized in Table 6.
Bible as the Source of All Truth. The place of Scripture as the foundation for truth was emphasized. Annette asserted, “At this school, everything… there’s nothing we can learn that doesn’t have to do with the Bible or with what God has for us.” In the grammar stage, the young students memorize over 100 Scripture verses each year. Sixth-graders memorize the book of James. Third-grader Trent remarked that they read the Bible nearly every day. During the interview, he related the biblical accounts of King Saul and the medium of Endor, David and Goliath, and Moses who, with God’s help, “saved all of God’s people.” Colton’s ninth-grade class was assigned to report on a minor New Testament character, considering their background and how they met Jesus. Colton chose the woman at the well.

In describing a recent rhetoric class discussion on the roles of logic versus emotion, Annette pointed out the primary and underlying role of the Bible, noting that neither logic or emotion were considered primary grounds for truth: “We say that Scripture rules our head and emotions. And at the same time, emotion and logic can reveal truth, but we have to make sure that those things are in line with Scripture.” She shared a similar example from a theology class which involved discussion of Calvinism versus Arminianism. Though the discussion became somewhat heated, the students were encouraged to ultimately build their conclusions on Scripture: “Whatever conclusion we came up with was our own thinking. And after we looked at it from every angle, and after we read the Scripture, we have to make a choice. And it had to be in line with Scripture.”

This example aligned with an observation of an ethics class. There, students were assigned the topic of morality and used Bibles and copies of Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance to formulate their conclusions. The Bible is also used in discipleship classes in which students can bring up more personal issues which may not be addressed in the classroom.
Colton emphasized the school’s Bible emphasis: “Everybody’s taught the Bible and even if you start talking to somebody else, like a teacher or someone about it, they’ll always point towards the Bible for the answer.” He notes that in science, the Bible is “always present.” More specifically, he attributes the school’s Scripture emphasis to helping dissolve interpersonal conflicts: “I feel like if we didn’t have [consistent Bible emphasis], I feel like there would be much more like, drama and stuff in our school.”

Reasoning Skills. Learning to find one’s own answers and conclusions is consistently emphasized at this school. To this end, students learn how to question well. Even as early as third grade, young students are starting to make the transition from taking in information to learning to raise questions. During the logic stage, students learn to argue respectfully. This was evident in an observed logic class when Mr. Sawyer consistently advised students to look at the person when speaking to them. He likewise trains these students to listen well, asking them if they can repeat back what the opponent said.

In explaining his own philosophy of teaching, Mr. Bennet explained that he gives his students tools through which ultimately, they will no longer need his instruction:

They’re making those connections… instead of me telling them how to make those connections. And that, to me, is what education is all about…I work myself out of a job. My best teaching is when I’m not speaking; it’s when they’re speaking.

Annette described how teachers provide guidance to class discussions but let the students think through issues themselves. While discussing the bioethics of Crispr, a gene-editing tool, she indicated that the teacher did not specify whether the practice was right or wrong, but “he said, ‘All right guys, discuss.’” She believes that these reasoning skills help students discern biblical truth from falsehood, noting, “[The teachers] don’t shoot us a Bible verse to gobble up… or say, ‘This is the truth. You need to believe it. Now you’re good.’” Mr. Bennet, she asserted, is
“not going to stand there and preach to the choir [saying], ‘All right, this is what you need to believe. This is right. This is wrong. This is what God said,’ and not give any Scripture to support it.” Rather, the teachers will have students open their Bibles and explain their own beliefs. With a chuckle, Annette added, “I kind of made it sound like they’re willy-nilly: ‘Believe whatever you want to believe,’” and re-emphasized their adherence to Scripture.

Connecting reasoning skills to faith formation, Paul noted that “this kind of education makes you struggle with your faith at an earlier age. When you’re safe at home, with your parents you can address it.” Recounting his own college years when he realized he only believed what he was taught, he now aims to help students make their faith their own while they are still young. He explains: “Because we all at some point, if we’re going to make our faith our own, you have to question it. Even if it’s not questioning it in an ugly way, just, why is it that we believe what we believe.”

**Equipped for Civil Discourse.** Agreeing with the Dershowitz quote presented in the interview (Appendix E), Mr. Sawyer believes, “We have lost the ability to civilly disagree and we’ve lost the ability to be able to argue with each other and still value each other because we reduce people to whatever the argument is.” He has talked with former students who return for a visit and share their experiences of college. He described the students’ reaction:

> They are kind of shell-shocked whenever they leave our world and realize, ‘Oh, people don’t argue about things all the time? ‘Cause I’ve spent my entire education arguing with people and that’s not what you do?!’ It is kind of funny. [They say] ‘People just don’t think. They don’t talk. They don’t know how to do these things.’

Along with being able to argue points, Mr. Sawyer connects love to that skill: “The answer is to love them, but part of love may be being able to speak well to them.” Annette made a similar point concerning the need for love-motivated civil discourse when addressing controversial social issues, such as homosexuality:
We can’t back down… they’re a person in sin, but so are we… If we just do like that Baptist church and hold signs, “God hates fags,” that’s a problem. That is not showing the love of Christ and so it’s not just to do that. It’s to have the dialogue.

At the rhetoric stage, Mr. Sawyer pointed out the desire to know who a person is, particularly if he holds a different view: “We want to stand in their shoes, know why they are making their argument, and if they’re arguing for something false, we want to be able to winsomely and beautifully articulate what is true to that individual.”

**Human Value.** Human value is an important pillar of this school. One practical element of that aim is the etiquette class, taught at every grade, not as a list of rules, but as a point of loving one’s neighbor. Two teachers mentioned their aim was “people formation” as opposed to job preparation. According to Mrs. Melton, they are not concerned with the latest teaching “fad,” but rather, “We focus on what is sacred. So, not the fad, but what is ultimately important, not what’s going to prepare them for college or prepare them for high school, but prepare them for life.”

Individuality is celebrated. Annette appreciate how the school encourages students’ gifts and accepts everyone as a unique individual. Relating cases of students dealing with academic struggle, Mr. Sawyer understands that young people, made in God’s image, have inherent capabilities yet to be discovered and “you don’t know what God is going to do with that.”

In classes like logic, students learn to value others even as they learn how to appropriately disagree. Students are trained to question skillfully, but also respectfully. Mr. Sawyer intentionally deals with poor attitudes at this critical logic age, when students are tempted to “look smarter than everybody else.” He explains, “You’re teaching them to question, but you’re also looking at a heart issue.”
A prominent topic was that of the balance between challenge and struggle. Students are both loved and challenged. When one particular student was struggling in Mr. Sawyer’s class, he recognized how hard she worked and encouraged her for persevering instead of quitting. He equates love with challenge and believes students will be prepared for adulthood because of that. Mrs. Morris recognizes students as God’s creation and therefore aims to help them persevere in any academic struggle:

I’m going to teach them through this struggle of math, how to persevere and how to do all things to the glory of God even when it’s hard – which, again, it’s growing in faith, growing in their relationship with the Lord because even through the hard things… If I didn’t feel like they were smart or created in the image of God, or if I didn’t have a high view of their importance, I would say, “Hmmm, you’re probably not smart enough for this” [chuckles].

**Wholeness of God’s Creation.** Paul, the headmaster and interviewed parent, emphatically expressed the school’s practice of curricular integration: “These aren’t separate subjects that are not related, but every single subject that we teach is related in some way.” Connecting that approach to Christian formation, he explained: “God created everything and so the links that we see are because the same Person created them all.” Both Mrs. Melton and Mr. Bennet spoke of teaching a biblical worldview. For Mr. Bennet, starting with a biblical worldview provides a filter through which everything else points to God. For Mrs. Melton, “Worldview is a big part of what we do. We’re learning about science, but how does it relate to our Lord? So, worldview is tremendous. Everything we do, it’s not compartmentalized into math and science. It’s all one world.” She emphatically believes that presenting integrated subjects in accordance with the centrality of Christ leads to Christian formation in students.

Mr. Sawyer refuted the notion of secular and sacred division, noting a connection to living a genuine Christian life. Holding that distinction “is incredibly dangerous for kids to believe.” He asserts that it gives them the license to behave differently depending on the
context. They behave correctly within some Christian setting but “in my business, then, it’s
dog-eat-dog.”

**Future Christian Leaders.** Newton’s phrase regarding “standing on the shoulders of
giants” was raised in three interviews, indicating a humble appreciation for the achievements and
ideas of the great minds of the past. By studying the history and literature of Western
civilization, Paul explained, students encounter the “living ideas” and learn, as expressed in
Ecclesiastes, that there is ‘nothing new under the sun.’ Furthermore, they understand the
struggles of the past as well as the solutions. Taking that idea further was the emergent theme
concerning students serving as the leaders of the future and making an impact on their world.
Mrs. Morris stated, “We want to create thinkers and workers – people who are willing to, not just
be fed answers, but to actually come up with them themselves.”

Leading students to recognize God’s hand in history, Mr. Bennet explained that students
can study ancients Greeks, for example, and compare their sense of citizenship and duty to the
present day, as well as the call to influence the culture for Christ:

The students are making connections with present day, and they say, “I don’t do things
out of a sense of duty. I do things for myself.” We’re very independent in our thinking.
Greek culture was not like that. You did it for the good of everyone, for the city-state.
And they make those connections. Now, if they’re making those connections, when they
go out into the world and they’re faced with a changing culture that they’re living in, we
see them doing the same thing… [They’ll consider] “How can I, as a forgiven, blood-
bought, rescued sinner now share Christ’s love through that culture?”

Though students learn from the past, Mr. Bennett envisions students thinking through the
information they’ve been given, “come up with original thought,” and within whatever career
path they choose, “be leaders with the skills that they’ve been given to God’s honor and praise.”

Tenth-grader Annette displayed the vision of a future Christian leader. She voiced the
temptation of Christians to live in the “bubble” of Christian friends and family:
We’re all going to just stay over here and let the world, you know, take care of itself. We’re not concerned with that. But if we just stay in that bubble, the world is only going to get worse. We’re going to have to get out there at some point and tell the world what we believe.

Similarly, Annette stressed the need to address the “hard topics” of the current culture, citing as an example, the school’s plan to do a spring drama on the topic of abortion: “It’s going to be hard to talk about. I mean, this is a real subject and it’s going to be hard to portray, but we don’t shy away [from the hard topics].” Abortion was also the topic she chose for a class assignment. It depicted her passion for Christian involvement in this area, thereby providing further evidence for the emphasis on Christian leadership. She also expressed urgency concerning evangelism:

So, all human life, even unsaved people, are made in God’s image and that’s why we have to fight so hard to take that Gospel to other places. We have a reason to go out there and preach the Gospel to all nations and even within our own country.

**Protection from Deception.** Critical thinking is an emphasized skill. Responding to Dershowitz’s concern about being able to distinguish truth from fantasy (Appendix E), Mrs. Melton believes that this type of school “teaches students how to think and how to work” so as adults, when they encounter their peers and others who present every truth claim imaginable, these students will be equipped to test and tactfully refute false ideas:

They will know how to say, “Let’s test this. Does it meet the test?” And if it doesn’t, we’re going to walk away from that. And not only are we not going to accept it as truth, but we’re going to defend against it, and be able to tell you why.

Annette noted the danger, once students leave the safety of the school, of being swayed by harmful ideas, noting the danger of becoming the “next target of the Enemy” if a person does not strongly know what they believe. However, she credits the school’s emphasis on teaching students how to think on their own as a strong deterrent for that.

**General Findings.** As part of the interview protocol, participants were asked about any perceived challenges to Christian formation in this type of school. The issue of pride was often
presented as a probe. In this school, five of the six interviewees brought up the topic of humility before the researcher asked about it. Humility was therefore found to be an innate part of this school’s inner workings. Julia stated, “I just think the humbleness is a big part of classical Christian education, and realizing that we’re all sinners.” She added, “I definitely don’t think that there’s ever been any kind of a ‘We’re better than them’ thing especially at this school. This school’s very, it’s a humble school.” Mrs. Melton spoke of the value of teaching history completely rather than choosing to say, “Those dirty pagans… We’re not going to talk about that. That doesn’t look beautiful or good [laughs].” Instead, she noted how making those connections can humbly strengthen one’s walk with the Lord: “We can see, we’re kind of like those dirty pagans back then. So, when we can apply that to our own lives, and say, ‘Oh, we need that too,’ how can we not grow in our walk with the Lord?”

Responding to the challenge question, Mr. Bennett spoke of the temptation for pride in a rigorous classical school: “There’s a tendency in classical education… because you’re being equipped – I mean, you understand things that other people just don’t understand – for there to be an issue with pride. And, where there’s this kind of tone.” As a teacher, he addresses that tendency, particularly through the Bible electives he teaches. Paul spoke of the dual-condition of being made in God’s image but also being fallen and sinful, which brings about a humility. Mirroring Mr. Bennett’s view, Paul asserted that, “In this kind of education, if you don’t have that piece of it [humility], then all this stuff that we’re doing just makes them, as C.S. Lewis calls it… basically, [chuckles] a ‘smarter reprobate.’” According to Julia’s long-term connection to this school, leadership was key to enforcing a humble environment.
Table 6: Emergent Themes and Categories for Case Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Three</th>
<th>Trivium Methodology (RQ1)</th>
<th>Bible as Source of All Truth</th>
<th>Reasoning Skills</th>
<th>Equipped for Civil Discourse</th>
<th>High View of Mankind (RQ2)</th>
<th>Human Value</th>
<th>Curricular Integration (RQ3)</th>
<th>Emphasis on Western Civilization (RQ4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
<td>Scripture emphasis in all classes</td>
<td>Scripture memorization in early grades</td>
<td>Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td>Confidence speaking</td>
<td>Made in God’s image</td>
<td>Glorify God as creator of all</td>
<td>Lessons gained from Western civilization / history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Categories</strong></td>
<td>Use Scripture to find theological answers in any class</td>
<td>Objective truth, goodness, and beauty</td>
<td>Students not told what to believe / self-discovery of answers</td>
<td>Empathic and respectful listening</td>
<td>Students are both loved and challenged</td>
<td>Christian worldview as filter for all else</td>
<td>Adhere to God’s view of ethics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objective truth, goodness, and beauty</td>
<td>Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td>Less teacher lecture, more student dialogue</td>
<td>Articulate views accurately and winsomely</td>
<td>Celebrate unique identity</td>
<td>No sacred/secular division, no compartmentalization</td>
<td>Address the hard topics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td>Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td>Learn to question everything, appropriately and respectfully</td>
<td>Self-initiated conflict resolution</td>
<td>‘Family feel’ in school</td>
<td>Orderliness and coherency of creation recognized</td>
<td>Influence culture/devise original solutions, evangelism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td>Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td>Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td>Self-initiated conflict resolution</td>
<td>K-12 etiquette classes / love and respect for neighbor</td>
<td>Balance of high expectations and grace for struggles</td>
<td>Honor God with life and work</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Protection against Deception

- Test ideas/think critically vs. blind acceptance
- Recognize absolute truth from opinion
- Think for oneself
- Know well what you believe
- Recognize current ideas may not be new

**Tentative Conclusions for Case Three**

This research study aimed to explore the possible perceived connections between classical Christian education and Christian formation defined as: 1) knowledge about God and the Bible, 2) love for God and others, 3) a growing faith, 4) discerning biblical truth from falsehood, 5) sharing/defending one’s faith, and 6) living the Christian life in the world today.

For case three, the Trivium methodology (RQ1) was found to strongly foster Christian formation in students. The theme, *Bible as the Source of All Truth*, was easily evident. Young children memorize over 100 verses each year. Older students explore lesser known biblical characters, allowing them to dig deeper into scriptural accounts. The Bible is considered to be the source of objective truth, goodness, and beauty, and also a source for practical and relational matters. Older students are trained in biblical resources such as an exhaustive concordance.

Independent thinking is a strong educational aim. Students are taught to question well and respectfully, and to make their own conclusions. Through *Reasoning Skills* students make their faith their own. Being *Equipped for Civil Discourse*, students love their neighbor first through sensitive listening and then through comfortable yet skillful means of sharing their own views, even when they are conflicting. From the data from case three, the Trivium methodology fosters all six elements of Christian formation.

The theme *Human Value*, pertaining to a high view of mankind (RQ2), emerged from the school’s emphasis on love and respect for others. This aim was apparent by the ‘family feel’ described by participants, by the students’ training to honor visitors, and the educational methods
involved in respectful debate and dialogue. Teachers desire to form students as human beings, rather than to prepare them for future career paths. Grace and encouragement for students’ academic struggles was evident, noting God’s yet unseen plans for all students. This classical element of a high view of mankind was found to foster knowledge about God and the Bible, love for God and others, a growing faith, and help in living the Christian life in the world today.

The theme, *Wholeness of God’s Creation* referred to the school’s strong belief in God as the Creator of all and the source of all truth. Students are pointed to God as the designer of all their subjects, thereby fostering faith through curricular integration (RQ3). There are no sacred/secular divisions and the Christian worldview serves as their foundational lens for everything. Curricular integration, in this case, leads to Christian formation elements of knowledge of God and the Bible, love for God and others, a growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, and living the Christian life in the world today.

Regarding an emphasis on Western civilization (RQ4), the school of case three depicted humble appreciation for the great thinkers of the past, the source of “living ideas.” Students learn to apply this knowledge to their own context in history and society. A vision of future leaders, created from this focus on Western civilization, was apparent, leading to the theme, *Future Christian Leaders*. Students are being prepared to influence their culture with their own ideas and solutions, and with experience addressing difficult topics. At the same time, they are being equipped to think, to test ideas, to recognize – from study of the past – that many new ideas are really not new. These skills lead to the theme, *Protection from Deception*. For case three, all six elements of Christian formation are fostered through an emphasis on Western civilization.

Table 7 portrays the perceived connections between the emergent themes of the data and the elements of Christian formation for case three.
Table 7: Perceived Connections between Themes and Christian Formation in Case Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Three</th>
<th>Elements of Christian Formation</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trivium Methodology (RQ1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sharing/defending one’s faith</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Living the Christian life in the world today</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasoning Skills</td>
<td>Knowledge about God and the Bible</td>
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<td>Future Christian Leaders</td>
<td>Love for God and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A growing faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discerning biblical truth from falsehood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing/defending one’s faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Living the Christian life in the world today</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Protection against Deception

Knowledge about God and the Bible
A growing faith
Discerning biblical truth from falsehood
Sharing/defending one’s faith
Living the Christian life in the world today

Cross-case Analysis

This cross-case analysis will follow Yin’s (2018) holistic case-based method which retains the integrity of individual cases rather than “decomposing them into separate variables” (p. 196). The three cases were analyzed for patterns of similarity and dissimilarity across the four areas of the first four research questions: Trivium methodology, a high view of mankind, curricular integration, and an emphasis on Western civilization. This comparative analysis is described in Table 8 and the following description. Research question five is an overarching inquiry for the study and will be discussed in the conclusions section of chapter five.
Table 8: Cross-case Analysis for RQs 1 - 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-case Analysis</th>
<th>Case One Themes and Categories</th>
<th>Case Two Themes and Categories</th>
<th>Case Three Themes and Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trivium Methodology (RQ1)</strong></td>
<td>Bible as the Source of All Truth</td>
<td>Protection against Deception</td>
<td>Bible as Source of All Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Importance of early grades</td>
<td>▪ Bible memorization in early grades</td>
<td>▪ Scripture emphasis in all classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Establish the Bible as foundation</td>
<td>▪ Establish the Bible as truth foundation</td>
<td>▪ Scripture memorization in early grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Bible memorization in early grades</td>
<td>▪ Trained to think deeply</td>
<td>▪ Use Scripture to find theological answers in any class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Trained to think deeply and question</td>
<td>▪ Trained to question/not automatically accept ideas</td>
<td>▪ Objective truth, goodness, and beauty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Recognize truth from falsehood</td>
<td>▪ Recognize truth from falsehood</td>
<td>▪ Reasoning Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Learn to find one’s own answers</td>
<td>▪ Taught to make and defend arguments</td>
<td>▪ Opportunity to struggle with faith early, in safe environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Know both <em>what</em> and <em>why</em> of Christian beliefs</td>
<td>▪ Learn to question everything</td>
<td>▪ Students not told what to believe / self-discovery of answers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Taught to make and defend arguments</td>
<td>▪ Make/defend respectful arguments</td>
<td>▪ Less teacher lecture, more student dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Ability to Articulate Thoughts and Beliefs</td>
<td>▪ Consider multiple views but hold to truth</td>
<td>▪ Learn to question everything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Confidence speaking</td>
<td>▪ Three pillars of school: Truth, Character, and Wisdom</td>
<td>▪ Make/defend respectful arguments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ K-12 elocution training</td>
<td>▪ Consider multiple views but hold to truth</td>
<td>▪ Equipped for Civil Discourse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Confidence speaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Empathic and respectful listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Articulate views accurately and winsomely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Self-initiated conflict resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>High View of Mankind (RQ2)</strong></th>
<th>Bible as Source of All Truth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Scripture emphasis in all classes</td>
<td>Bible as Source of All Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Scripture memorization in early grades</td>
<td>Bible as Source of All Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Use Scripture to find theological answers in any class</td>
<td>Bible as Source of All Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Objective truth, goodness, and beauty</td>
<td>Bible as Source of All Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Value</td>
<td>High Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Man made in God’s image/reflect God’s nature</td>
<td>▪ Made in God’s image/being restored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Love and respect toward others, even those with different views, regardless of achievement</td>
<td>▪ Develop one’s full potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Truth, goodness, and beauty reflected in God’s nature</td>
<td>▪ “Rigor with joy” / attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Goodness and virtue are relational factors</td>
<td>▪ Capacity to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Rigor/high expectations of students</td>
<td>▪ Do one’s best for the Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Responsibility/discipline: Do one’s best to glorify God</td>
<td>▪ Gifted by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Students’ proper view of themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students as Servant Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Self-identity</td>
<td>▪ Self-initiated service to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Child of God (regardless of achievement)</td>
<td>▪ Culture of familial care and service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Balance between man as a sinner and made in God’s image</td>
<td>▪ Students as leaders/teachers to each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Whole person – not job preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Sense of purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Freedom to hold one’s opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Curricular Integration (RQ3)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wholeness of God’s Creation</th>
<th>Wholeness of God’s Creation</th>
<th>Wholeness of God’s Creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ God glorified/given credit for all creation</td>
<td>▪ God’s Word integrated into all courses</td>
<td>▪ Glorify God as creator of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Integrate Christian faith into all of life</td>
<td>▪ Connection of all creation</td>
<td>▪ Christian worldview as filter for all else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Orderliness and beauty of God</td>
<td>▪ Christ’s Lordship over all vs. sacred/secular dichotomy</td>
<td>▪ No sacred/secular division, no compartmentalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Sacred/secular divide deemphasized</td>
<td>▪ Truth, Goodness, and Beauty: God’s unchanging attributes</td>
<td>▪ Orderliness and coherency of creation recognized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wholeness of History**

**Wholeness of History**
| Use of timelines in early grades | God as Designer of history/sovereignty | Bible/ancient literature/ancient history |
| World history, not overemphasis on American history | Bible as history, not a story |

**Emphasis on Western Civilization (RQ4)**

**Equipped for Civil Discourse**
- Preparation to engage current culture
- Articulate Christian beliefs within current culture
- Extensive literature exposure
- Evaluate world philosophies/worldviews through Scripture
- Show respect for others’ views
- Recognize that current ideas are not new through study of Western civilization

**Connection with the Past**
- History of the Church within history/martyrs as examples
- God’s providence
- Encouragement/“You are not alone”

**Unchanging Truth**
- Guard against relativism and secularism
- Historical literacy
- History with purpose
- Evaluate worldviews
- Evangelism/apologetics

**Future Christian Leaders**
- Lessons gained from Western civilization/history
- Adhere to God’s view of ethics
- Address the hard topics
- Influence culture/devise original solutions, evangelism
- Honor God with life and work

**Protection against Deception**
- Test ideas/think critically vs. blind acceptance
- Recognize absolute truth from opinion
- Think for oneself
- Know well what you believe
- Recognize current ideas may not be new
**Trivium Methodology (RQ1).** In this category, four elements emerged across all three cases. First, the theme, *Bible as the Source of All Truth* was found in cases one and three, and also in case two as a category within the theme *Protection from Deception*. Secondly, all three schools emphasized the importance of the early grades in teaching the Bible as the foundation of truth, beginning this educational thrust through memorization. Thirdly, all three schools trained students to think and question. Finally, in all three schools, the Trivium’s focus on reasoning skills was credited with helping students make and defend arguments. *Reasoning Skills* was a named theme for both case one and three. Two categories – confidence speaking and finding one’s own answers – emerged in cases one and three.

The themes, *Ability to Articulate Thoughts and Beliefs* of case one and *Equipped for Civil Discourse* of cases two and three, are obviously similar. The three themes formed in cases one and three easily align with the three levels of the Trivium methodology. In case two, the themes, *Protection from Deception* and *Equipped for Civil Discourse*, also covered the Trivium aims but the data were found to fit better under these more specific application-based outcomes of the Trivium. It is noteworthy that these two themes of case two emerged identically in case one under the category of RQ4 and will be discussed in that segment.

The only dissimilarity regarding Trivium methodology involved a heavier leaning toward relational factors in cases two and three. Examples include controlling emotions in case two, emphatic listening in case three, and showing respect in both case two and case three.

**High View of Mankind (RQ2).** The themes, *Human Value* and *Self-identity* from case one, *High Expectations* and *Students as Servant Leaders* from case two, and *Human Value* from case three emerged from the data.
In all three schools, human value was strongly emphasized, particularly through the doctrine of humans being made in God’s image and through the belief that humans are capable of academic rigor. All schools shared high expectations for their students though each realized that academic rigor does pose a challenge for some. The sinful nature of man is acknowledged but with the balanced view of restoration and in concert with being made in God’s image therefore holding value regardless of achievement.

No two schools are identical and this area of high view of mankind revealed some unexpected data. Unique to case one, the pattern of students’ self-identity emerged. It was important for students to hold a correct understanding of themselves, including their purpose, and their self-discovered opinions. Unique to case two was the theme, Students as Servant Leaders, an outcome of the familial culture of the school set in place by its leadership. This theme of intentionality in servanthood aligns with this school’s other theme of High Expectations in this category.

**Curricular Integration (RQ3).** All three schools emphasize the idea of wholeness and orderliness in all of creation. God is glorified for creating everything. Likewise, the secular/sacred dichotomy was viewed in terms of Christ’s lordship over all. Teachers from all three schools rejected a sacred/secular division, though one teacher in both cases one and two noted a distinction, either regarding appropriateness and inappropriateness, or a distinction between that which is holy and that which is just part of creation. The theme, Wholeness of History emerged from cases one and two.

**Emphasis on Western Civilization (RQ4).** Themes included Equipped for Civil Discourse and Protection against Deception for case one, Connection with the Past, and Unchanging Truth for case two, and Future Christian Leaders and Protection from Deception
for case three. For all three cases, high school students are taught that elements of the study of Western civilization equip them to engage their current culture. Students in all schools learn about both Christian and non-Christian worldviews and how to evaluate them in light of Scripture. Sharing one’s faith in the current culture was emphasized in all three schools. Case two emphasized the value of studying Church history and case three emphasized students as future leaders.

Similar findings arose in all three schools concerning the themes of Protection from Deception and Equipped for Civil Discourse, but they were assigned to different research question topics. In case one, these themes clearly fit into the area regarding an emphasis on Western civilization. In case two, the patterns forming these themes were presented as direct outcomes of the Trivium methodology. For case three, Equipped for Civil Discourse emerged as part of the Trivium methodology while Protection from Deception was found within the emphasis on Western civilization. The most significant difference within these themes stemmed from case one’s heavy emphasis on the study of Western civilization through a two-year, “Great Ideas” course for high school juniors and seniors. While parents and teachers in general voiced concern about students’ Christian faith in today’s culture, case one has, over its decades-long existence, developed a strong educational defense toward that concern.

Evaluation of the Research Design

Within this three-case study, credibility was sought through structural corroboration, the use of “multiple types of data to support or contradict the interpretation” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 256). The study utilized interviews of both student/parent groups and teachers, as well as classroom and assembly observations, and documents consisting of written class assignments. Reflexively, the researcher found the interviewees to sound genuine. Students seemed to speak
freely. They did not appear to say something just to meet their parent’s or the school’s expectations. Additionally, observations of student groups confirmed the data gathered in interviews. Interviews were limited to one to two parent/student group and one to two teachers in each of the Trivium levels per case.

Though interviews were open to any volunteer, it would stand to reason that only those with a positive experience at their school would volunteer, thereby increasing the chance of positive bias and reducing the level of credibility. Engagement within the field was limited to two full days in the schools of cases one and two, and one full day in the school of case three.

One weakness involved some degree of overlap in the themes, stemming from similar interview questions. For example, there is close proximity of the general theme, *Ability to Articulate Thoughts and Beliefs* (theme #3 of case 1) and the more specific theme, *Equipped for Civil Discourse* (theme #7 of case 1). Since these reflected a subtle but important nuance within the research topic and the data, they were retained individually.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to determine if any perceived relationships exist between the distinguishing characteristics of classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation at three K-12 classical Christian schools.

Research Questions

The research questions cover the overarching characteristics of classical Christian education. They were chosen based on the Circe Institute’s descriptions of defining elements and principles of classical Christian education (Circe Institute website, n.d.b, n.d.c). Further information regarding the terminology used is provided in the Definition of Terms.

RQ1. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the Trivium methodology foster Christian formation?

RQ2. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian conviction of a high view of mankind foster Christian formation?

RQ3. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian element of curricular integration foster Christian formation?

RQ4. How, if at all, in the cases studied, does the classical Christian emphasis on Western civilization foster Christian formation?

RQ5. What, if any, are the perceived connections, in the cases studied, between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

This study revealed significant perceived connections between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation. As defined by this study, Christian formation
includes knowledge about God and the Bible, love for God and others, a growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today. As a system, classical Christian education was found to foster all six elements. The conclusions to the research questions are addressed as follows.

Conclusions to RQ1: Trivium Methodology

The first research question considered the Trivium methodology and its possible connection to Christian formation. For this study, the Trivium methodology was found to foster all six elements of Christian formation. The Trivium follows students’ God-given stages of human development and each stage contributes to Christian formation when directed toward that goal. Memorization of Scripture in the grammar stage naturally leads to knowledge about God and the Bible and also serves as the bedrock of truth on which the other two stages rest. Young children, according to the findings, are generally quite capable of extensive memorization, a skill which can be made enjoyable through songs and other group activities.

Students in the logic stage are encouraged to question and to think deeply, thereby gaining deeper theological truths as opposed to a mere surface understanding. The reasoning skills learned in this stage play a key role in Christian formation. Young people are bombarded with unbiblical worldviews and worldly enticements, a certain ploy of the Enemy of their souls (Gen 3:1, 2 Cor 2:11). A similar perspective on the value of reasoning skills was asserted in the literature review by Bauer and Wise (2004): “… instead of passively accepting [information], she’ll be interacting with it – deciding on its value, its purpose, and its place in the scheme of knowledge” (p. 233). Logic and reasoning skills equip students to recognize truth from falsehood while holding to the truth ingrained in their minds from earlier training.
Lastly, the confidence gained from long-term K-12 elocution training and practice equips students for civil discourse. They can interact with those holding non-biblical and even hostile views. Love for others is strengthened since they have learned to engage others not just with knowledge but with respect, speaking with calm assurance rather than with uncontrolled emotions or attacks. They can better share and defend their faith equipped with foundational truth of the Bible, the ability to make and defend arguments, and to speak confidently, looking people in the eye while speaking and listening respectfully.

**Conclusions to RQ2: High View of Mankind**

The second research question explores how, if at all, the classical emphasis on a high view of mankind fosters Christian formation. While all efforts of Christian education would generally emphasize human value and the doctrine of the image of God in man, classical Christian education uniquely connects a high value of mankind with Christian formation in more specific ways. First, a high view of mankind equates to academic rigor and the expectation that these students are capable of diligence and self-discipline, traits which lead to deepened faith. The Christian life can be hard; perseverance is commended (Rom 5:4, James 1:12). The classical Christian principle of a high view of mankind acknowledges the immense capacity for learning but at the same time, students are assured of their worth regardless of achievement. Sin is acknowledged but in balance with God’s image being restored.

A high view of mankind affects relational factors of Christian formation. Learning to love and respect others through the emphasis on mankind’s value heightens students’ Christian witness and influence in the world. Students in the classical environment learn that they are gifted for God’s purposes. They learn that this comes with responsibility and are urged to do one’s best for God’s glory. Leadership plays a crucial role. Participants in each school conceded
that poor attitudes in students were something every school must address but that leaders and teachers hold great influence in establishing a culture conducive to displaying godly attitudes toward others.

**Conclusions to RQ3: Curricular Integration**

Curricular integration’s potential to foster Christian formation is the subject of the third research question. Classical Christian students discover deep concepts about God through an integrated study of his creation. This practice aligns with Dernlan’s (2013) study comparing modern Christian schools and classical Christian schools. With regard to teaching the Bible as a separate class without integration, Dernlan cautions: “By removing God from the subjects in Christian schools, He is removed from all of life and becomes irrelevant in the life of a student” (p. 74). Learning the Bible within all subjects, as well as the integration of subjects in general, leads students to a growing faith as they begin to see the world, not as random purposeless fragments, but as one whole design displaying evidence of its Creator.

Students increase their knowledge about God and the Bible and also deepen their faith when they learn history in a holistic manner. Bible accounts cease being “stories” in children’s minds when they are learned as historical events alongside concurrent ancient history. This effect is magnified in classical methodology as parallel ancient literature is included and discussed with biblical comparison. The early grades are important for laying the groundwork. The literature review emphasized the role of the grammar stage in learning history; when young children memorize history dates, events, and stories, they have a ‘peg’ on which later information can be hung (Hart, 2006, p. 78).
**Conclusions to RQ4: An Emphasis on Western Civilization**

The fourth research question examines the classical emphasis on Western civilization and its potential to foster Christian formation. It was found to foster Christian formation through two areas. First, knowledge about Western civilization provides a protective aspect. Through exposure and study of both Christian and non-Christian philosophies and literature, students develop the ability to recognize and evaluate that which is man-made and changing against the unchanging truth of God. A growing faith would be nurtured. Secondly, the study of Western civilization enables an outward focus: students are equipped to engage their world in an intelligent, informed, yet respectful manner, thereby loving others. Sharing and defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today are more likely when students understand the underlying philosophies they encounter.

**Conclusions to RQ5**

The final research questions asks, ‘What, if any, are the perceived connections, in the cases studied, between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation?’ For this overarching question, the divisions of the first four research questions are removed allowing the emergent themes to be freely rearranged and thereby show the most significant patterns of similarity. These cross-case conclusions are depicted in Table 9 and described below.
Table 9: Cross-case Conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-case Conclusions (RQ5)</th>
<th>Case One Themes</th>
<th>Case Two Themes</th>
<th>Case Three Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bible as the Source of All Truth / Unchanging Truth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection against Deception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped for Civil Discourse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholeness of God’s Creation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasoning Skills</th>
<th>Reasoning Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Value</td>
<td>Human Value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wholeness of History</th>
<th>Wholeness of History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students as Servant Leaders</td>
<td>Future Christian Leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most significant perceived cross-case connection points are *Bible as the Source of Truth / Unchanging Truth*, *Protection against Deception*, *Equipped for Civil Discourse*, and *Wholeness of God’s Creation*. These four themes emerged from all three cases. Learning the Bible as the sole source of truth builds a Christian worldview in students at a young age. Teaching students, through curricular integration, to see God’s world as an intricately designed whole strengthens their faith as they come to comprehend God’s beauty and purpose for all parts of life. The dual themes of *Protection against Deception* and *Equipped for Civil Discourse* emerged in different RQ areas due to the educational leanings of the schools. However, they indicate a strong intention of these schools to prepare and equip students to live the Christian life in today’s culture. Both the Trivium and the emphasis on Western civilization fostered these elements. These themes were particularly weighted by the emotional tone of many parents and teachers concerned about students being able to live as strong Christian adults in the world. A
number of participants indicated their belief that the classical Christian environment was their best means toward that end.

The second most significant set of perceived cross-case connections included *Reasoning Skills, Human Value, Wholeness of History*, and two similar themes regarding student leadership. These four concepts emerged from any two of the three cases. Reasoning skills were considered important toward enabling students to detect fallacious ideas as well as to formulate and respectfully express valid opinions of their own. This fosters Christian formation elements of love for God and others, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today. Love for God and others is fostered when students understand human value, including their capacity for learning as well as the humble understanding of people’s sinful nature in need of a Savior. The topic of leadership emerged in the study’s findings; students were encouraged to cultivate this mindset and school leadership was heavily credited with maintaining an environment of humility and/or service.

**Implications and Applications of the Research**

The study implies potential new alternatives in Christian education to address the problems concerning faith formation in young people revealed in recent research (see Significance of the Study, p. 30). This study’s conclusions directly address those problems such as a lack of genuine faith (Dean, 2010, p. 6), the inability to articulate their faith and integrate it into their life (Smith & Denton, 2005, p. 131), being ill-prepared to follow Christ in the current world (Kinnaman, 2011, p. 28), not being able to express doubts concerning faith (Kinnaman, 2011, p. 192; Barna, 2018, p. 33), and the increasing rate of atheism in young people (Barna, 2018, p. 25).
Regarding other implications, the study revealed the importance of how Christian educators should view very young children. According to this study’s findings, young children are quite capable of learning, memorizing, and retaining educational content. This ability should be maximized; any assumption that teachers of this age group are merely babysitting is not appropriate and will lead to missed opportunities for true and lasting discipleship.

Christian education efforts should not stop at only “spiritual” matters. Teaching about God’s general revelation – his created world as a unified whole – holds countless possibilities for teaching and deepening students’ faith as they come to understand its complex design as one interconnected system. Teaching the Bible within its historical setting fortifies students’ understanding that the Bible is non-fiction and thereby strengthens trust in the Bible’s validity.

Likewise, Christian educators should not be fearful of teaching students about non-Christian philosophies or worldviews; this can strengthen students’ ability to guard against deception and also to engage and influence their culture. However, it is imperative that students be given a strong biblical foundation alongside such efforts thereby allowing God’s timeless truth to guard their hearts and minds while revealing falsehoods.

Leadership is important. Within this highly rigorous environment, headmasters, as well as faculty and parents, need to set the groundwork for genuine Christian formation to flourish. This would include a proactive initiative of setting expectations of a godly environment, and also intentionally guarding against attitudes which impede Christian formation such as pride, apathy, as well as discouragement. The motive of doing one’s best for God’s glory is appropriate.

In general, Christian education in any context can be maximized when broadened to include the following four-pronged strategy: 1) a deep biblical foundation, 2) a holistic
curriculum including a study of the created world and ancient history, 3) reasoning and speaking skills, and 4) teaching on both Christian and non-Christian worldviews along with theology.

**Research Limitations**

Within the sample, ten interviews were conducted for case one, eight interviews for case two, and six for case three. More insight would have been helpful by including the maximum number of teachers and student/parent groups. Another limitation also pertains to the sample which involved younger children. Though some spoke freely, others tended to be less talkative. Lastly, no data was collected regarding the participating parents’ socio-economic status nor is it known how much tuition, if any, was provided through outside sources such as scholarships. Since, however, the schools are private and funded by tuition, a potential limitation exists that the participants include only people able to afford private education for their children.

**Further Research**

This study raised questions in need of further research to explore how Christian education to the young can be more effective. The following list provides suggestions for further research related to this field of study.

- The current study explored a broad sweep of classical Christian education. Any of the four areas covered – Trivium methodology, a high view of mankind, curricular integration, and an emphasis on Western civilization – could be explored individually so to delve more deeply into their specific impact on students.
- How does the study of classic literature, known as the Great Conversation, benefit children and teens?
- How does the understanding of the classical aims of truth, goodness, and beauty impact students and teens?
• In the classical Christian environment of academic rigor, how do teachers and administrators foster student motivation to meet the demands? How do they foster a love of learning?

• How do classical Christian school graduates perceive their own Christian formation was affected by their education?

• The study could be conducted within specific demographic settings such with urban-centered classical Christian schools.
REFERENCES


Dershowitz, A. (Guest speaker, Liberty University convocation, March 22, 2019). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSo9BRJDzIE


APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 11, 2019

Melody Smith
IRB Approval 3885.091119: Classical Christian Education and Students' Christian Formation

Dear Melody Smith,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

Your study involves surveying or interviewing minors, or it involves observing the public behavior of minors, and you will participate in the activities being observed.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Classical Christian Education and Students’ Christian Formation
Melody Smith
Liberty University
Rawlings School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study to explore possible connections between classical Christian education and students’ Christian understanding and development. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a teacher or parent of a student at [school name]. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Melody Smith, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore possible connections between specific characteristics of classical Christian education and students’ faith, their understanding about God, and their spiritual development as a Christian.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an interview with the researcher. It will last no longer than 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded.

2. If applicable, allow the researcher to use any school work assignments your child/teen has completed which would be relevant to this study. Any such written documents will be used under a pseudonym. No real names of participants or schools will be used.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
• Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:**
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Melody Smith. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [phone] or [email]. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair, [name] at [email].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

**Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
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<th>Signature of Investigator</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>________________________</td>
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APPENDIX C

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Classical Christian Education and Students’ Christian Formation

This research study is being conducted by Melody Smith, a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University. Your child was selected as a possible participant because he/she is a student at [name of school]. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow him/her to be in the study.

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of this study is to explore possible connections between classical Christian education and students’ understanding of God, personal faith, and the Christian life.

What will my child/student be asked to do?
If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, he/she will be asked to do the following things:

1. Participate in an interview, along with one or more parents, about his/her experiences and ideas concerning his/her education, God, and the Christian life. The interview will last no longer than 30 minutes and will be recorded (audio only). No real names will be used. Parents may review the questions before they are presented to the student.

2. Share a copy of any applicable written classwork pertaining to the research topic. Any such document will be kept confidential; no participant’s name will be disclosed, nor will the school be identifiable.

What are the risks and benefits of this study?
Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.
Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Will my child be compensated for participating?
Your child will not be compensated for participating in this study.

How will my child’s personal information be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. In keeping with federal regulations which require research data to be retained for three years, all data will be so kept for three years and then deleted.
• Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary? Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect his/her current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he/she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should I or my child do if I decide to withdraw him or her or if he or she decides to withdraw from the study?
If you choose to withdraw your child or if your child chooses to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should your child choose to withdraw, any data collected from or about him or her, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do I contact if my child or I have questions or problems?
The researcher conducting this study is Melody Smith. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [phone] or [email]. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, [name] at [email].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child as part of his or her participation in this study.

_______________________________________________________  ________________________________________________
Signature of Minor                                           Date

_______________________________________________________  ________________________________________________
Signature of Parent                                           Date

_______________________________________________________  ________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator                                      Date
APPENDIX D

ASSENT OF CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?
The study, conducted by Melody Smith, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, is entitled, Classical Christian Education and Students’ Christian Formation.

Why are we doing this study?
We are interested in studying how classical Christian education could encourage students’ development as a Christian.

Why are we asking you to be in this study?
You are being asked to be in this research study because you are a student at a classical Christian school.

If you agree, what will happen?
If you are in this study you will be asked some questions, along with your parent(s), about what you learn at school and your thoughts about God and being a Christian.

Do you have to be in this study?
No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher. If you don’t want to, it’s OK to say no. The researcher will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It’s up to you.

Do you have any questions?
You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher. If you do not understand something, please ask the researcher to explain it to you again.

Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

____________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Child                        Date

Researcher: Melody Smith
Phone:     Email:

Faculty Supervisor:
Email:

Liberty University Institutional Review Board,
1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515
or email at irb@liberty.edu.
APPENDIX E
INFORMATION CARD FOR INTERVIEWS

For this study, *Christian formation* includes:

- knowledge about God
- love for God and others
- a growing faith in God
- discerning biblical truth from falsehood
- sharing/defending one’s faith
- a desire to live as a Christian in the world throughout life

Alan Dershowitz quote:

We’re living in an Orwellian age today, when the news and the media have become weaponized against political enemies. The criminal justice system (which I have been teaching for fifty years) has become weaponized. If you don’t like somebody’s politics, indict them. That’s not the answer. The answer is, argue with them. Participate in the court of public opinion. Make your points known and then people will decide after hearing all the arguments, what the truth is. I don’t envy your generation. You’re going to have a very difficult time distinguishing truth from fantasy.
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHERS

Opening General Questions

Q1: Have you always taught in a classical school? What are some of your reasons for choosing this kind of school? [If participant has taught in non-classical school] What are some differences that stand out to you?

Q2: In reading about classical Christian education, I found that certain phrases came up often. I’m going to read three of those and after each one, I’d like you to give a quick, one-sentence explanation and then describe any ways (if any) you believe these concepts help foster students’ Christian formation.

- Centrality of Christ
- Secular verses sacred
- Truth, goodness, and beauty

RQ1: Trivium Methodology

Q3: [Teachers will be given a card listing the defining characteristics of Christian formation used in this study (Appendix E)]. For this study, Christian formation includes knowledge about God, love for God and others, growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today. You teach at the [grammar, logic, rhetoric] stage. What (if any) are some educational aspects of this stage that you find helpful in fostering students’ Christian formation?

RQ2: High View of Mankind

Q4: The Circe Institute website describes various characteristics of classical Christian education. They include a high view of mankind, curricular integration, and an emphasis on Western civilization. I’d like your insight on all three. First, a “high view of mankind,” means that human beings, created in God’s image, have a high value and great capabilities. As a classical educator, have you perceived this emphasis on a high view of mankind to foster, in any way, students’ Christian formation? [refer to card for categories]

RQ3: Integrated Curriculum

Q5: Concerning the next characteristic, curricular integration, can you describe any ways that integrating curriculum fosters students’ Christian formation? [refer to card for categories]

RQ4: Emphasis on Western Civilization

Q6: Concerning the third characteristic, an emphasis on Western civilization, can you describe any ways that the classical emphasis on Western civilization has fostered students’ Christian formation? [refer to card for categories]
Q7: I’m going to read a recent quote from Alan Dershowitz, Harvard law professor and commentator on cultural issues, and then I would like your thoughts, speaking as a classical Christian educator.

We’re living in an Orwellian age today, when the news and the media have become weaponized against political enemies. The criminal justice system (which I have been teaching for fifty years) has become weaponized. If you don’t like somebody’s politics, indict them. That’s not the answer. The answer is, argue with them. Participate in the court of public opinion. Make your points known and then people will decide after hearing all the arguments, what the truth is. I don’t envy your generation. You’re going to have a very difficult time distinguishing truth from fantasy.

How would you respond to that as a classical Christian educator? Are there ways that you believe the classical Christian approach would meet that challenge? How?

Concluding General Questions

Q8: As a classical Christian educator, aiming to lead students toward the Great Commandment, to love God and others, what would you describe as a success and what can you describe as a challenge that you’ve found, such as attitudes, relationships, or faith issues (or other issues)?

Q9: From your experience, are there certain aspects of a classical Christian education that you believe make a lasting spiritual difference in students’ lives, aspects that will help them become a stronger Christian more so than if they went to some other type of school?
APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Opening General Questions (Questions will be open to both student and parents. Both will be given a card with the study’s definition of Christian formation).

Q1: Has your [son/daughter] always attended a classical school? What are some of your reasons for choosing this kind of school? [If student has attended a non-classical school] What are some differences that stand out to you?

RQ1: Trivium Methodology

Q2: Can you describe a recent assignment in which you wrote or spoke about God, or the Bible, or living as a Christian? [Ask for a copy if applicable].

Q3: Can you think of ways that instruction about God in earlier grades helps you in your school work (or life in general) in your grade now?

Grammar Stage: Have you memorized anything about the Bible or God that you could recite for me? Perhaps a song, chant, or a list of people?

RQ2: High View of Mankind

Q4: In reading books on classical Christian education, I’ve read that this type of education holds a “high view of mankind,” meaning that human beings, created in God’s image, have a high value and great capabilities. Are there ways you have found that to be true in your [your child’s] schooling? If so, how?

Q5: A popular theme in books about classical education is Plato’s belief concerning “truth, goodness, and beauty.” Is that phrase/concept something you have [your child has] learned about? If so, can you describe for me what you have [he/she has] learned about that?

Grammar stage: In school, have you learned about beauty, or what makes something beautiful? Can you tell me about what you learned?

RQ3: Integrated Curriculum

Q6: Are there times, in any non-Bible/Theology class, when the Bible is taught or addressed? If so, can you give an example? Have you thought about God in some new way because of that? Please describe.

Grammar Stage: Can you think of a time in school recently when your class talked about God (or Jesus)? (If yes) What class was that? Can you tell me what you discussed? What did you think about God from that discussion? Ask parent for comments.
**RQ4: Emphasis on Western Civilization**

Q7: In school, have you heard the phrase, “the Great Conversation?” If so, can you explain to me what that means? Do you find any connection to the Great Conversation and living as a Christian? [Refer to card regarding Christian formation (Appendix E)]

Q8: I’m going to read a recent quote from Alan Dershowitz, a law professor and commentator on cultural issues, and then I would like your thoughts.

   We’re living in an Orwellian age today, when the news and the media have become weaponized against political enemies. The criminal justice system (which I have been teaching for fifty years) has become weaponized. If you don’t like somebody’s politics, indict them. That’s not the answer. The answer is, argue with them. Participate in the court of public opinion. Make your points known and then people will decide after hearing all the arguments, what the truth is. I don’t envy your generation. You’re going to have a very difficult time distinguishing truth from fantasy.

   How would you respond to that? Have you learned anything in school which you feel equips you meet this challenge?

Grammar Stage: In school, have you learned about the Egyptians who lived a long time ago? Did you learn about the pharaohs? What can you tell me about them or Egypt? Did you talk about Moses? What did you learn about him? Have you learned about the Greeks? What can you tell me about them? Have you learned about the Romans? Did you learn anything about Paul in the Bible during that class? Jesus?

**Concluding General Questions**

Q9: [Student] Are there times in school that you find it difficult as a Christian (perhaps regarding an assignment, having the right attitude, relationships with others, or your faith in God)?

Grammar Stage: [Parents] Please refer to the card regarding Christian formation (knowledge about God, love for God and others, growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today). Regarding your child’s spiritual growth in a classical Christian setting, can you describe a success and a challenge?

Q10: Please refer to the card regarding Christian formation (restate those definitions). Can you describe ways, if any, in which you believe your student’s education at this kind of school has influenced [his/her] Christian development, more so than if he/she went to some other type of school? Ask for student’s comments.
## APPENDIX H

### CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time:</th>
<th>Case #</th>
<th>Grade:</th>
<th>Class:</th>
<th>Observational data concerning classroom activities, dialogue, attitudes, reactions, the physical space (including what is present and what is not present)</th>
<th>Personal Reflections</th>
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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case #:</th>
<th>Grade/Class Taught:</th>
<th>Participant #:</th>
<th>Date/Time:</th>
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Teacher Initials: 

### Introductions

[Get signed consent/assent form] Make introductions. The questions are geared to get your perspective as a teacher in a classical Christian school concerning any connections you perceive between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation. [Give card/Appendix E] By Christian formation, I am referring to **knowledge about God, love for God and others, a growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today.** This is totally voluntary. You can choose to not answer something and you are free to stop at any time. You can go back and change something if you want.

Everything is confidential: your identity, and the school’s. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym. This is being recorded just so I have an accurate record. Do you have any questions before we begin?

### Questions

**INTRODUCTORY GENERAL QUESTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Have you always taught in a classical school? What are some of your reasons for choosing this kind of school? [If participant has taught in non-classical school] What are some differences that stand out to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q2: In reading about classical Christian education, I found that certain phrases came up a lot. I’m going to read three of those and after each one, I’d like you to give a quick, one-sentence explanation and then describe any ways (if any) you believe these concepts help foster students’ Christian formation.</td>
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<td>• Centrality of Christ</td>
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<td>RQ1: TRIVIUM METHODOLOGY</td>
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<td>Q3: [See card] For this study, Christian formation includes knowledge about God, love for God and others, growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today. You teach at the [grammar, logic, rhetoric] stage. What (if any) are some educational aspects of this stage that you find helpful in fostering students’ Christian formation?</td>
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<tr>
<th>RQ2: HIGH VIEW OF MANKIND</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q4: The Circe Institute website describes various characteristics of classical Christian education. Among them are a high view of mankind, curricular integration, and an emphasis on Western civilization. I’d like your insight on all three. First, a “high view of mankind,” means that human beings, created in God’s image, have a high value and great capabilities. As a classical educator, can you describe any ways that this emphasis on a high view of mankind has fostered students’ Christian formation? [refer to card for categories]</td>
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<tr>
<th>RQ3: INTEGRATED CURRICULM</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q5: Concerning the next characteristic of curricular integration, can you describe any ways that integrating curriculum fosters students’ Christian formation? [refer to card for categories]</td>
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<tr>
<th>RQ4: EMPHASIS ON WESTERN CIVILIZATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q6: Concerning the third characteristic, an emphasis on Western civilization, can you describe any ways that the classical emphasis on Western civilization has fostered students’ Christian formation? [refer to card for categories]</td>
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</table>

| Q7: I’m going to read a recent quote from Alan Dershowitz, Harvard law professor and commentator on cultural issues, and then I would like your thoughts, speaking as a classical Christian educator. |
We’re living in an Orwellian age today, when the news and the media have become weaponized against political enemies. The criminal justice system (which I have been teaching for fifty years) has become weaponized. If you don’t like somebody’s politics, indict them. That’s not the answer. The answer is, argue with them. Participate in the court of public opinion. Make your points known and then people will decide after hearing all the arguments, what the truth is. I don’t envy your generation. You’re going to have a very difficult time distinguishing truth from fantasy.

How would you respond to that as a classical Christian educator? Are there ways that you believe the classical Christian approach would meet that challenge? How?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CONCLUDING GENERAL QUESTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q8: As a classical Christian educator, aiming to lead students toward the Great Commandment, to love God and others, what would you describe as a success and what can you describe as a challenge that you’ve found, such as attitudes, relationships, or faith issues (or other issues)?</td>
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<td>Q9: From your experience, are there certain aspects of a classical Christian education that you believe make a lasting spiritual difference in students’ lives, aspects that will help them become a stronger Christian more so than if they went to some other type of school?</td>
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</table>

Closing Remarks

Thank participant(s). Provide email and phone number for future additions, deletions.
APPENDIX J

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case #:</th>
<th>Participant #:</th>
<th>Student’s Grade:</th>
<th>Date/Time:</th>
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Parent’s Initials:  
Student’s Initials:  

Introductions

[Get signed consent/assent form] Make introductions. For these interviews, the questions are geared to get your perspectives as a parent and a student in a classical Christian school, specifically concerning any connections you find between classical Christian education and students’ Christian formation. By Christian formation, [give card with the following description] I am referring to knowledge about God, love for God and others, a growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today.

As we go through the questions, both/all of you should feel free to answer.

This is totally voluntary. You can choose to not answer something and you are free to stop at any time. You can go back and change something if you want. Everything is confidential: your identity, and the school’s. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym. This is being recorded just so I have an accurate record. Do you have any questions before we begin?

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<tr>
<td>Q5: A popular theme in books about classical education is Plato’s belief concerning “truth, goodness, and beauty.” Is that phrase/concept something you have [your child has] learned about? If so, can you describe for me what you have [he/she has] learned about that?</td>
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<td>Grammar stage: In school, have you learned about beauty, or what makes something beautiful? Can you tell me about what you learned?</td>
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<th>RQ3: INTEGRATED CURRICULM</th>
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<td>Q6: Are there times, in any non-Bible/Theology class, when the Bible is taught or addressed? If so, can you give an example? Have you thought about God in some new way because of that? Please describe.</td>
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<td>Grammar Stage: Can you think of a time in school recently when your class talked about God (or Jesus)? (If yes) What class was that? Can you tell me what you discussed? What did you think about God from that discussion? Ask parent for comments.</td>
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<th>RQ4: EMPHASIS ON WESTERN CIVILIZATION</th>
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<td>Q7: In school, have you heard the phrase, “the Great Conversation?” If so, can you explain to me what that means? Do you find any connection to the Great Conversation and living as a Christian? [Refer to card regarding Christian formation (Appendix E)]</td>
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Q8: I’m going to read a recent quote from Alan Dershowitz, a law professor and commentator on cultural issues, and then I would like your thoughts.

_We’re living in an Orwellian age today, when the news and the media have become weaponized against political enemies. The criminal justice system (which I have been teaching for fifty years) has become weaponized. If you don’t like somebody’s politics, indict them. That’s not the answer. The answer is, argue with them. Participate in the court of public opinion. Make your points known and then people will decide after hearing all the arguments, what the truth is. I don’t envy your generation. You’re going to have a very difficult time distinguishing truth from fantasy._

How would you respond to that? Have you learned anything in school which you feel equips you meet this challenge?

Grammar Stage: In school, have you learned about the Egyptians who lived a long time ago? Did you learn about the pharaohs? What can you tell me about them or Egypt? Did you talk about Moses? What did you learn about him? Have you learned about the Greeks? What can you tell me about them? Have you learned about the Romans? Did you learn anything about Paul in the Bible during that class? Or Jesus?

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**CONCLUDING GENERAL QUESTIONS**

Q9: [Student] Are there times in school that you find it difficult as a Christian (perhaps regarding an assignment, having the right attitude, relationships with others, or your faith in God)?

Grammar Stage: [Parents] Please refer to the card regarding Christian formation (knowledge about God, love for God and others, growing faith, discerning biblical truth from falsehood, sharing/defending one’s faith, and living the Christian life in the world today). Regarding your child’s spiritual growth in a classical Christian setting, can you describe a success and a challenge.
Q10: Please refer to the card regarding Christian formation (restate those definitions). Can you describe ways, if any, in which you believe your student’s education at this kind of school has influenced his/her Christian development, more so than if he/she went to some other type of school? Ask for student’s comments.

### Closing Remarks

Thank participant(s). Provide email and phone number for future additions, deletions.