A “Modern Education” vs. A Classical Christian Education
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C. S. Lewis described the phenomena of modern education in his book, *The Abolition of Man*, as that which produces “men without chests.” In contrast to a Classical Christian education, those with a merely modern education are left with head knowledge void of right sentiment or “heart.” Hence, those with a modern education, like the main character Mark in *That Hideous Strength*, become “men without chests,” men who do not have the chest, the moral wherewithal, to consistently choose the courageous, right, or noble course of action. Like so many of us who were educated in secular “modern education” settings (or in Christian schools that borrowed many of the values and pedagogies of their secular counterparts unwittingly), Mark has developed a disjointed soul: weak intellect, shriveled heart, and correspondingly impotent hand. He seeks personal pleasure and acceptance above all—until it ruins him and his marriage. Lewis gives the reader hope for Mark’s redemption; it must come through a strengthening of the moral muscle, the heart, through hard choices and right actions over time. Classical education is not a cure all for the modern condition, but it can be a strong dose or preemptive strike against the disease of the shriveled heart. As for Mark, Lewis indicates that his education was directly related to, though by no means entirely responsible for, his feebleness of character.

STAR Torrey Academy takes a preemptive strike against the modern disease of the soul by enabling high school students to begin to integrate head, heart and hand. As tenth grade students begin to think independently of their parents and to make sense of their faith and how it jives with the world around them, STAR Torrey Academy presents them with the writings of Lewis, Williams, Sayers, Vanauken, and Tolkien and challenges them to articulate answers to hard questions about faith and reason, about faith and everyday life, about faith and relationships. Later, the same students are stretched even further to examine the philosophies and ideas behind the founding of our government and culture and then to dive into medieval and early church texts. The content of the texts read are a powerful tool on their own to help students examine their beliefs and sentiments. Combined with class discussions led by passionate Christian tutors, three years with Torrey Academy can be life changing for those who are hungry for truth and are willing to work hard and choose the right. The STAR Torrey Academy is interested, not in producing smart alumni, but in enabling students to integrate head, heart, and hand—true knowledge, right sentiment, and right action—in whole souls.

Currently in its third year of operation, STAR Torrey Academy continues to see a positive result in the heads, hearts and lives of its students. Even though the curriculum is very demanding, families keep reenrolling and spreading the word because Christian high schoolers, of all intellectual abilities, hunger for integrity in the life of the mind; they want to be challenged and stretched. Youth group socials, evangelism, and small groups only go so far; STAR Torrey Academy (TA) enables students to combine their faith with their academic studies and to earn credit for reading books such as *Mere*
Christianity and The Great Divorce. The holistic approach of TA to integrate faith and the humanities in a Christian academic setting reduces the compartmentalization that is often present even with Christian textbooks. By focusing on great primary texts with the tool of Socratic dialogue, TA helps students integrate their Christian experience, their intellects, and their beliefs about contemporary life and culture. One TA student voiced the epiphany of many who go through the program: “I learned that there’s more to being a Christian than evangelizing . . . like using your mind to its full potential to praise God.”

Students in STAR Torrey Academy don’t become “heady” or stuffy intellectuals; by and large they become more integrated whole souls alert to the world around them. Students in TA report such diverse results as development of hermeneutical skills, growth in personal discipline and diligence, advances in cultural awareness, improvement in communication skills, increased confidence to articulate and defend ideas, improvement in writing skills, maturity in considering different view points, and progress in spiritual growth. “I have learned,” one student explained, “that beauty is objective.” Another claimed that STAR Torrey Academy “introduced me to a passion for knowledge and the world around me!” “I have become more firmly rooted in my faith,” said another, “by the questions the tutors have challenged us with.” The results are practically universal and they demonstrate effects far beyond head knowledge; Classical Christian education produces wholeness and integration of head and heart.