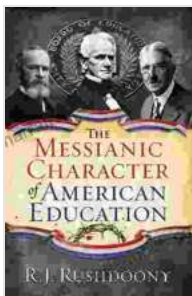


# The Messianic Character of American Education: A Long-Standing Belief and Its Enduring Legacy

American education has long been infused with a messianic character, a belief that it holds the key to unlocking a bright future for the nation and its citizens. This belief has its roots in the early days of the republic and has been reinforced throughout history by various social, political, and economic forces. In this article, we will explore the historical roots of this conviction and examine its lasting impact on the educational landscape.



## The Messianic Character of American Education

by R. J. Rushdoony

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
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## Historical Roots

The messianic character of American education can be traced back to the nation's founding fathers. Thomas Jefferson, for example, believed that education was essential for maintaining a democratic society. He argued

that "an enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the preservation of our liberties." This view was shared by many other early American leaders, who saw education as a means of ensuring the success of the new republic.

In the 19th century, the messianic character of American education was further strengthened by the Common School Movement. Led by Horace Mann, this movement sought to establish a system of free, public education for all children. Mann believed that education was the key to social progress and economic prosperity. He argued that an educated populace would be more productive, more responsible, and more likely to participate in civic life.

### **American Exceptionalism and the Cold War**

The belief in the messianic character of American education was reinforced during the Cold War. In the wake of the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik in 1957, American leaders became convinced that the nation's educational system needed to be reformed in order to meet the challenges of the space race. This led to the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, which provided funding for science, math, and foreign language education.

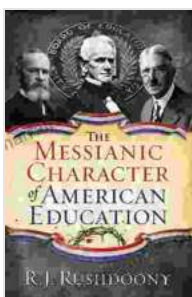
The Cold War also helped to fuel the belief in American exceptionalism. Americans saw themselves as a beacon of democracy and progress in a world divided by communism. This belief extended to education, as Americans came to believe that their educational system was superior to those of other nations.

### **The Accountability Movement and Standardized Testing**

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the messianic character of American education was further strengthened by the accountability movement. This movement, which gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s, sought to improve educational outcomes by holding schools and teachers accountable for student performance. This led to an increase in standardized testing and a focus on data-driven decision-making.

Standardized testing has become a controversial issue in American education. Critics argue that it is a poor measure of student learning and that it has led to a narrowing of the curriculum. However, proponents of standardized testing argue that it is necessary to ensure that all students are receiving a quality education.

The messianic character of American education is a long-standing belief that has had a profound impact on the nation's educational landscape. This belief has been reinforced by various social, political, and economic forces throughout history. While the messianic character of American education has led to some positive outcomes, it has also been criticized for leading to unrealistic expectations and a narrowing of the curriculum. As we move forward, it is important to critically examine the messianic character of American education and to find ways to ensure that our educational system is meeting the needs of all students.



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