

Lutherans and the Liberal Arts

Classical Education Movement: Re-discovering the Liberal Arts

The Consortium for Classical Lutheran Education

“The liberal arts cultivate the student’s mind and character with academic rigor, tools for learning, and formative content. Lutheran catechesis instructs and nurtures matters of the soul through the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran confessions, and the liturgy and hymnody of the Church. With the Seven Liberal Arts, the three sciences: moral, natural and theological, and the Small Catechism’s Six Chief Parts, classical Lutheran education prepares servant leaders for church and world.”

The Lost Tools of Learning, Dorothy Sayers 1947

“if we are to produce a society of educated people, fitted to preserve their intellectual freedom amid the complex pressures of our modern society, we must turn back the wheel of progress some four or five hundred years, to the point at which education began to lose sight of its true object, towards the end of the Middle Ages.”

“Is not the great defect of our education today... we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think.”

“modern education concentrates on teaching subjects, leaving the method of thinking, arguing, and expressing one’s conclusions to be picked up by the scholar as he goes along; medieval education concentrated in first forging and learning to handle the tools of learning, using whatever subject came handy as a piece of material on which to doodle until the use of the tool became second nature.”

Recovering The Lost Tools of Learning, Douglas Wilson

Logos School, Moscow ID (1981)

The Association of Classical Christian Schools (1994)

More

Great Books Program (Mortimer Adler)

Classical Conversations

Classical Latin School Association / Memoria Press

Classical Academic Press / Schole Academy

Veritas Press / Veritas Academy

Great Hearts Academies (Arizona, Texas)

CIRCE Institute

Society for Classical Learning

Colleges

Patrick Henry College; Hillsdale College; New St. Andrew’s College; Concordia University (Mequon, Ann Arbor)

Whither the Liberal Arts?

“Liberal Arts” Programs

Humanities in Higher Education

American Lutheran Education

“Walther and his fellow educationalists believed that a classical form of Lutheran education that included Latin, Greek, Hebrew, logic, and the rhetorical arts was essential for pastors and teachers. At the same time a more practical high school curriculum was sufficient for those children not being groomed for church work. The distinction was based on their future career. Pastors and teachers required a classical education to be faithful in their calling. The laity did not” (Korcok, 117).

Teachers College, Columbia University

John Dewey

Harold Rugg - “The Child-Centered School” (1928)

“In America three thinking men became the self-conscious exponents of the new industrial civilization: Charles Sanders Peirce—engineer, statistician, logician, inventor of pragmatism as a scientific method of thought; William James, the temperamental interpreter of the scientific study of conduct, and the chief rationalizer of the empirical character of the American mind; John Dewey, devotee of the scientific method and of the evolutionary principle, original-thinking organizer of the instrumental philosophy. These men built the substructure of a thoroughgoing rational philosophy of conduct. After 1900 the littler professors of education seized upon the central principle of evolution—the doctrine of adaptation—and phrased the supreme goal of education as “social efficiency.”

William Heard Kilpatrick - “The Project Method” (1918)

“The contention of this paper is that wholehearted purposeful activity in a social situation as the typical unit of school procedure is the best guarantee of the utilization of the child’s native capacities, now too frequently wasted. Under proper guidance purpose means efficiency, not only in reaching the projected end of the activity immediately at hand, but even more in securing from the activity the learning which it potentially contains.”

Horace Mann - Massachusetts Board of Education

Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852)

“The special destiny, as well as the particular vocation, of man as an understanding and rational being, is to bring his nature, the divine in him, thus God, and his destiny, his vocation, himself, to complete consciousness, to vivid recognition, to clear insight, and with self-determination and freedom to practise all this in his own life, to allow it to act, to manifest it.” (The Education of Man)

“So, parents, your children on whom you early impress form and vocation against their nature, and who therefore wander around you in languor and unnaturalness, might also become beautiful, self-unfolding, and all-sided self-developing beings.

All active, dictatorial, invariable, and forcibly interfering education and instruction must necessarily have a disturbing, checking, and destructive effect upon the action of the divine, in accordance with and upon the original, unviolated, and healthy state of the human being.”

“from his first appearance on earth, [man possessed a] united life coherence with God, Nature, and humanity”

Johann C.W. Lindemann: “The friend of the kindergarten and the enemy of Christ and is Word is the same thing.” (*Schulblatt*, 1874)

Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841)

“Children have a natural antipathy to strife, malevolence, injustice, selfishness.”

Evening Prayer: “How has the day gone by? Well or ill, or only indifferently? O God, help me see how much better I ought to have been, how much better I could have been. Have I been idle or diligent? Have I scolded or been quarrelsome? Have I done anything against another, or in my heart desired another’s ill? O God, Thou knowest the hearts of men—Thou knowest all their feelings, even when unspoken. To Thee no heart can be well-pleasing which is not well disposed to all men, and does not desire their good. Thou hast said we must love our enemies. Therefore let me fall asleep with feelings of love and good-will, and to-morrow wake again.”

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827)

“God is of men, for men and by men. Man knows God only as he knows mankind, that is to say himself.”

“man is of himself good, and desires to be good, but he wishes to be happy when doing it; if he happens to be evil, surely it is because the road by which he sought to do good was blocked.”

“The instruction of man is then only the art of helping Nature to develop in her own way; and this art rests essentially on the relation and harmony between the impressions received by the child and the exact degree of his developed powers.”

“all educative instruction must be drawn out of the children themselves, and be born within them.”

“I learnt from them what a disadvantage this one-sided letter-knowledge and entire reliance on words (which are only sound and noise when there is nothing behind them) must be.”

“Surely the best catechism is the one children understand without their pastor.”

Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670) “The Great Didactic”

“Man, then, is in himself nothing but a harmony, and, as in the case of a clock or of a musical instrument which a skilled artificer has constructed, we do not forth- with pronounce it to be of no further use if it become disorganised and corrupt (for it can be put to rights) ; thus, with regard to man, we may say that, no matter how disorganised by his fall into sin, he can, through the grace of God and by certain methods, be restored again to harmony.”

“The exact order of instruction must be borrowed from nature, and must be of such a kind that no obstacle can hinder it.

“If we wish to reform schools in accordance with the laws of true Christianity, we must remove from them books written by pagans, or, at any rate, must use them with more caution than hitherto.”

Lutheran Liberal Arts

Medieval Liberal Arts

Augustine

“Let every good and true Christian know that truth is the truth of his Lord and Master, wherever it is found.” (*De Doctrina Christiana*, II, cap. 17)

Boethius

Cassiodorus

Abelard, Lombard, Aquinas

Luther on Education

To the Christian Nobility (1520)

“I would gladly agree to keeping Aristotle’s books, Logic, Rhetoric, and Poetics, or at least keeping and using them in an abridged form, as useful in training young people to speak and to preach properly.”

“In addition to all this there are, of course, the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, as well as the mathematical disciplines and history.”

To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that they Establish and Maintain Christian Schools (1524)

“So it was done in ancient Rome. There boys were so taught that by the time they reached their fifteenth, eighteenth, or twentieth year they were well versed in Latin, Greek, and all the liberal arts (as they are called), and then immediately entered upon a political or military career. Their system produced intelligent, wise, and competent men, so skilled in every art and rich in experience that if all the bishops, priests, and monks in the whole of Germany today were rolled into one, you would not have the equal of a single Roman soldier. As a result their country prospered; they had capable and trained men for every position. So at all times throughout the world simple necessity has forced men, even among the heathen, to maintain pedagogues and schoolmasters if their nation was to be brought to a high standard.

“All right,” you say again, “suppose we do have to have schools; what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? We could just as well use German for teaching the Bible and God’s word, which is enough for our salvation.” I reply: Alas! I am only too well aware that we Germans must always be and remain brutes and stupid beasts . . . Languages and the arts, which can do us no harm, but are actually a greater ornament, profit, glory, and benefit, both for the understanding of Holy Scripture and the conduct of temporal government—these we despise. . . .

“If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid!), we shall not only lose the gospel, but the time will come when we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German. As proof and warning of this, let us take the deplorable and dreadful example of the universities and monasteries, in which men have not only unlearned the gospel, but have in addition so corrupted the Latin and German languages that the miserable folk have been fairly turned into beasts, unable to speak or write a correct German or Latin, and have well-nigh lost their natural reason to boot.”

“For my part, if I had children and could manage it, I would have them study not only languages and history, but also singing and music together with the whole of mathematics [i.e. the quadrivium: arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy]. For what is all this but mere child’s play? The ancient Greeks trained their children in these disciplines; yet they grew up to be people of wondrous ability, subsequently fit for everything. How I regret now that I did not read more poets and historians, and that no one taught me them!”

Saxon Visitation Articles (1528)

“In the first place the schoolmasters are to be concerned about teaching the children Latin only, not German or Greek or Hebrew as some have done hitherto and troubled the poor children with so many languages. This is not only useless but even injurious.”

“The children are to recite these grammatical rules from memory, so that they are compelled and driven to learn grammar well.”

“Where the schoolmaster shuns this kind of work, as is often the case, he should be dismissed and another teacher found for the children, who will take on this work of holding the children to grammar. For no greater harm can be done to all the arts than where the children are not well trained in grammar.”

Large Catechism (1529)

“For if we want capable and qualified people for both the civil and the spiritual realms, we really must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and the world.”

A Sermon on Keeping Children in School (1530)

“Boys of such ability ought to be kept at their studies, especially sons of the poor, for all the endowments and revenues of the foundations and monasteries are earmarked for this purpose. In addition, though, other boys as well ought to study, even those of lesser ability. They ought at least to read, write, and understand Latin, for we need not only highly learned doctors and masters of Holy Scripture but also ordinary pastors who will teach the gospel and the catechism to the young and ignorant, and baptize and administer the sacrament. . . .”

“Even though a boy who has studied Latin should afterward learn a trade and become a craftsman, he still stands as a ready reserve in case he should be needed as a pastor or in some other service of the word. Neither will such knowledge hurt his capacity to earn a living. On the contrary, he can rule his house the better because of it . . .” (p. 231)

“At this point I should also mention how many educated men are needed in the fields of medicine and the other liberal arts. Of these two needs one could write a huge book and preach for half a year. Where are the preachers, jurists, and physicians to come from, if grammar and other rhetorical arts are not taught? For such teaching is the spring from which they all must flow.”

Matthias Illyricus Flacius (*Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*, 1567)

“He similarly in 2 Timothy 2:4 wants the expositor of Sacred Scripture to be apt to teach, which involves an understanding of the entire field of logic, or grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric, joined as well with a certain natural aptitude.” (83)

“Yet we dare not in this regard follow the fanatics, as if the human sciences were utterly useless or even detrimental to the knowledge of Holy Scriptures and heavenly teaching. It is certainly

necessary to study languages and well-informed grammars. Dialectic, rhetoric, and familiarity with the rest of philosophy is beneficial as well, and even quite necessary.” (100)

“It will also be very beneficial to apply to an obscure place or to an entire writing the Lydian stone of the rules of logic, whether grammar, rhetoric, or finally, dialectic. Since these arts are indeed made known to us through the beneficence of God and lit from the natural light that is all the time over us, and since they conform with the nature of things and the order that God has assigned to them, and finally, since they accommodate themselves to the human ability for comprehension (as the Sacred Scriptures), they will necessarily be of great benefit to us in the illumination of the Sacred Scriptures, if we apply them piously and cautiously.” (111)

Martin Chemnitz - Church Order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbütel, 1569

“Forasmuch as the holy ministry of preach, secular authority, temporal offices, government, and management call for just, wise, learned, skilled, and God-fearing men; and schools are the proper means, ordained and commanded by God, in which such people may be raised up...” (213)

“After the boys have practiced the *Grammatica* well in the lower four classes, and been trained so that they speak and write Latin tolerably well, they shall, in the first class, also be trained in the *Dialectica* and *Rhetorica*.” (226)

“above all, grammar, as the most crucial component, be thoroughly emphasized and practiced, so that the boys become good and confident grammarians.” (232)

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