



RECLAIMING THE
CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

THE LIBERAL

ARTS

A STUDENT'S

GUIDE

Gene C. Fant Jr.

Series Editor: David S. Dockery

The Liberal Arts: A Student's Guide

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SERIES PREFACE

Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition

The Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition series is designed to provide an overview of the distinctive way the church has read the Bible, formulated doctrine, provided education, and engaged the culture. The contributors to this series all agree that personal faith and genuine Christian piety are essential for the life of Christ followers and for the church. These contributors also believe that helping others recognize the importance of serious thinking about God, Scripture, and the world needs a renewed emphasis at this time in order that the truth claims of the Christian faith can be passed along from one generation to the next. The study guides in this series will enable us to see afresh how the Christian faith shapes how we live, how we think, how we write books, how we govern society, and how we relate to one another in our churches and social structures. The richness of the Christian intellectual tradition provides guidance for the complex challenges that believers face in this world.

This series is particularly designed for Christian students and others associated with college and university campuses, including faculty, staff, trustees, and other various constituents. The contributors to the series will explore how the Bible has been interpreted in the history of the church, as well as how theology has been formulated. They will ask: How does the Christian faith influence our understanding of culture, literature, philosophy, government, beauty, art, or work? How does the Christian intellectual tradition help us understand truth? How does the Christian intellectual tradition shape our approach to education? We believe that this series is not only timely but that it meets an important need, because the secular culture in which we now find ourselves is, at

best, indifferent to the Christian faith, and the Christian world—at least in its more popular forms—tends to be confused about the beliefs, heritage, and tradition associated with the Christian faith.

At the heart of this work is the challenge to prepare a generation of Christians to think Christianly, to engage the academy and the culture, and to serve church and society. We believe that both the breadth and depth of the Christian intellectual tradition need to be reclaimed, revitalized, renewed, and revived for us to carry forward this work. These study guides will seek to provide a framework to help introduce students to the great tradition of Christian thinking, seeking to highlight its importance for understanding the world, its significance for serving both church and society, and its application for Christian thinking and learning. The series is a starting point for exploring important ideas and issues such as truth, meaning, beauty, and justice.

We trust that the series will help introduce readers to the apostles, church fathers, Reformers, philosophers, theologians, historians, and a wide variety of other significant thinkers. In addition to well-known leaders such as Clement, Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and Jonathan Edwards, readers will be pointed to William Wilberforce, G. K. Chesterton, T. S. Eliot, Dorothy Sayers, C. S. Lewis, Johann Sebastian Bach, Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, George Washington Carver, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Michael Polanyi, Henry Luke Orombi, and many others. In doing so, we hope to introduce those who throughout history have demonstrated that it is indeed possible to be serious about the life of the mind while simultaneously being deeply committed Christians. These efforts to strengthen serious Christian thinking and scholarship will not be limited to the study of theology, scriptural interpretation, or philosophy, even though these areas provide the framework for understanding the Christian faith for all other areas of exploration. In order for us to reclaim and advance the Christian intellectual tradition, we must have some

understanding of the tradition itself. The volumes in this series will seek to explore this tradition and its application for our twenty-first-century world. Each volume contains a glossary, study questions, and a list of resources for further study, which we trust will provide helpful guidance for our readers.

I am deeply grateful to the series editorial committee: Timothy George, John Woodbridge, Michael Wilkins, Niel Nielson, Philip Ryken, and Hunter Baker. Each of these colleagues joins me in thanking our various contributors for their fine work. We all express our appreciation to Justin Taylor, Jill Carter, Allan Fisher, Lane Dennis, and the Crossway team for their enthusiastic support for the project. We offer the project with the hope that students will be helped, faculty and Christian leaders will be encouraged, institutions will be strengthened, churches will be built up, and, ultimately, that God will be glorified.

Soli Deo Gloria
David S. Dockery
Series Editor

INTRODUCTION

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

—2 Timothy 3:16–17

A few years ago, the father of a college freshman approached me with a question. His student was attending a fairly expensive private school that had retained only nominal relations with its original sponsoring denomination. He expressed disappointment with the lack of a strong religious presence on the campus but was particularly concerned with what his student had related to him about her classes and the general ethos of the campus, which could only be described as hedonistic or *fleshly*, to use an old-fashioned term.

“You’re an administrator at a Christian college,” he said. “Maybe you can answer this question that I keep asking myself. It follows a kind of syllogism. ‘Knowledge is power,’ right? That’s what we hear all the time; I think it was Francis Bacon who first said it, but I hear it all the time. But what does power do? It corrupts, right? Isn’t that what Lord Acton once said? So if ‘knowledge is power’ and ‘power corrupts,’ and ‘absolute power corrupts absolutely,’ of course, then can you explain to me why I’m paying tens of thousands of dollars to have my student corrupted? That’s what it feels like. I look at my child, and I don’t even recognize who I see after only a semester in that place. What is college for if all it does is foster corruption?”

At the time, all I could do was shake my head and say, “It doesn’t have to be that way,” but I pondered his words carefully over the next few weeks. I realized that a worldly goal, power, would always result in a fleshly education that is quite secular and selfish. Power corrupts because it is the great magneto that drives

our selfishness. Whether the power yields wealth or connections or fame or leverage in relationships, unfettered it always leads down the same path: destruction.

I decided to create my own competing syllogism, starting with an entirely different premise. “Education is the search for truth” (a sentiment reflected in the common use of *veritas*, Latin for “truth,” in college mottoes, such as that of Harvard). “The truth shall set you free” (a specific claim that John 8:32 makes in the New Testament). “Therefore, education can set you free” (freedom in Christ being one of the central themes of Christianity).

This paradigm possesses two distinct differences from the one with which I was originally confronted: the goal of the education and the result of such a pursuit. Truth is not worldly but rather is tied, particularly in the Christian tradition, to the person of Christ. Likewise, freedom is not found in this world but is effected by the divine rescue of persons from their selfish fallen natures, a rescue that is part of the priestly ministry of Christ. Freedom, genuine freedom that transcends the created order, may be found solely within the context of Christ-centered education rather than self-centered training.

The contrasting views of education that I have identified here are crucial to understanding the foundations of the Christian liberal arts tradition and the stark contrast it enjoys when compared against the reality of most educational approaches that are lived out in contemporary culture. Indeed, our culture is the poorer (and the more frail) because of a shift away from liberal learning in general and the Christian liberal arts in particular.

When I was growing up, I always liked Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movies because of their iconic lion’s roar at the opening. If you look closely, the lion’s head is surrounded by an ornate, circular ribbon panel inscribed with these words: *Ars Gratia Artis*, “Art for the sake of Art.” Next to *E Pluribus Unum*, these are the first words in Latin that I remember seeing. “Art for the sake of Art,”

which has been a rallying cry for millennia for artists as they have sought to balance their personal vision for their work against its practical value. If, as critics often ask, art is neither decorative nor practical in some way, then what value does it have? For artistic purists, art possesses an innate value that need not bear scrutiny from any source apart from the value that the artist him- or herself has assayed to the work.

Champions of liberal learning often repeat a version of this saying, proclaiming that learning should be undertaken for its own sake, that it has intrinsic value that stands apart from any purely practical values. Generally this is stated as a contrast of sorts between liberal learning and the vocational or practical arts that lead directly to employment. More times than not, the sense is that the latter is inferior to the former, that idealistic purity is superior to more mundane cares. This is the reverse, of course, of an opposite view of education: practicality trumps idealism and abstraction such as one might find in the liberal arts.¹

Christians will quickly see the flaws in both viewpoints. We are more than mere human resources, finding purpose in work and business. As the Westminster Catechism answers its opening query: “What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is that he glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.”² The same may be asked of any human endeavor, including education. The primary purpose of education is the glorification of God. The glorification of God typically finds an overflow in the edification of his people, whether the people of faith or humanity as a created race.

Ephesians 4:11–25 describes the way that God uses the various gifts and callings to build up his people to his ultimate glory:

¹Booker T. Washington lampoons common images of liberal learning with a wonderful portrait: a man “with a high hat, imitation gold eye-glasses, a showy walking-stick, kid gloves, fancy boots, and what not—in a word, a man who was determined to live by his wits.” *Up from Slavery* (New York: Dover, 1995), 57–58. Washington emphasizes the distinct connection between both practical and abstract education elsewhere in the book but notably in the transcript of his famous Atlanta Exposition Address (105–9).

²*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, http://www.creeds.net/Westminster/shorter_catechism.html.

He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

This passage speaks to the unity of knowledge in Christ (v. 13), to the importance of sound doctrine (v. 14), to the pursuit of truth (v. 15), to the abandoning of intellectual futility (v. 17) and ignorance (v. 18), all in the context of an education (v. 20) that seeks after the renewal of the mind (v. 23) and that comports with the goal of godliness (v. 24). The overall purpose of this enterprise, where the gifts and callings work together in total harmony, is the equipping of the saints (v. 12) for service that glorifies God.

Liberal learning in a Christian context is not, then, learning

for the sake of learning but for the sake of glorifying God and the equipping of his people for good works. It is not merely a training ground for jobs and careers but also a proving ground for the skills that will one day be brought to bear on the unique calling and service that each Christ follower has in store for his or her life. Its goals are not bound to the created order but rather to the Creator, the source of truth and meaning, who calls and sustains each of us. Liberal learning equips the saints for the building up of the body and to the ultimate unity of the faith revealed once for all peoples and generations.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 speaks to the incredible power of Scripture to connect the theological with the practical: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” While the passage specifies the particular power of the revealed Word of God, we may reasonably extend the idea to the way that Scripture provides us with a lens for viewing the world correctly and for applying what we learn. Christ-centered learning, as viewed through the Scriptures, likewise is able to teach, to reprove, to correct, and to train in righteousness. In this way, the men and women of God may be prepared for their callings, and “equipped for every good work.” Liberal learning is a tool that may be employed to prepare us for the tasks that God has prepared for us. It allows us to connect orthodoxy (right belief) with orthopraxy (right behavior). It helps us to find our place in his world. An emphasis on liberal learning is of critical importance to our era, as we seek to engage our culture with the great Christian intellectual tradition that continues to provide a fertile culture for thought and action.

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THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.

—1 Kings 4:29–30

Education is one of the basic functions of both family and culture.¹ While the vast majority of human cultures have lacked a formal means of education (professional educators or institutions dedicated to the intellectual development of children), the process of passing to the next generation a culture's values, information, and traditional roles has always been of primary importance to the sustaining of every society.

The family was the primary place of education and acculturation. Girls were prepared to take on the responsibilities of adulthood in the company of women, who taught them the domestic arts. Female literacy was late in coming to most cultures, the world of reading and writing being the realm of men and even then only a certain portion of that population. Women raised boys to an age where they were introduced to the crafts and responsibilities of their fathers or other male family members. Occupational stratification was a genuine reality for most families: daughters became

¹An earlier version of this chapter and chapter 6 appeared as "The Heartbeat of the Christian College: The Core Curriculum," in *Faith and Learning: A Handbook for Christian Higher Education*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 2012).

mothers while sons followed their fathers into work as shepherds, farmers, butchers, or smiths. Geographical mobility was likewise a factor that circumscribed most persons, as travel was dangerous or costly, and outsiders were not particularly welcome in most cultures, making employment difficult.

INTELLECTUAL FLOURISHING AND EDUCATION

History confirms that influential cultures have always enjoyed intellectual flourishing. The biblical record itself includes an amazing panorama of cultures: Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and many others. Every populated continent's dominant cultures have produced advancements that continue to be studied. While what we call "liberal learning" in the West is directly connected to the Greco-Roman and Christian traditions, many cultures have produced incredible epics, works of art, scientific and engineering advancements, and philosophical breakthroughs. The world has teemed with the amazing creativity and curiosity of humankind since the earliest days of human experience.

In ancient Greece, however, a new development impacted how education was perceived by the aristocracy in particular. The sons of freemen, the leading citizens of the day, were often taught by household slaves who specialized in education. These teacher-slaves, called "pedagogues" (a term which derives from the phrase "to lead or guide a child"; the English word *pedagogy* comes from this term), were more than mere tutors of information; they prepared young men to become leaders whose skill sets moved beyond the practical trades, allowing them to deal with civic matters that required more abstract thought and focused reflection. These children of free citizens undertook learning that was directly connected to their citizenship status. The term we now use to describe the legacy of these pedagogues is *liberal learning*, *liber* being the Latin word for "free."

Liberal learning, sometimes called the liberal arts (as distinct

from the practical arts), aimed at a breadth of knowledge that included a wide range of subjects that trained the mind to analyze challenges and formulate solutions or to anticipate future opportunities and strategies. The Romans substantially codified their inheritance from the Greeks, and then early Christians updated the pagan approaches in ways that reflected their theological distinctiveness. In all cases, liberal learning used extensive readings, memorization, dialogues, and emulations of great works (called *exempla*) to prepare thinkers for effective leadership. The foundational outcomes fostered by liberal learning emphasized critical thinking and rational analysis, as well as an aptitude for reflective thought. In this way, future actions would be informed by rigorous pondering and hindsight analysis of past events. The learning process, then, was conceived of as a living stream connecting the past with the future through the education of the very leaders who would one day shape their eras. The Greeks sometimes called this fulsome view of the nature of knowledge the *enkuklios paideia*, the “circle of scholars” (from which English derives the term *encyclopedia*), that produced knowledge both fulsome in scope and communal in methodology. An additional characteristic of this approach was intellectual humility, because scholars saw their work in the context of many centuries’ worth of thought.

By the Christian Middle Ages, the liberal arts were a fairly codified set of educational guidelines. Seven basic “arts” dominated this understanding and were arranged in a very specific order that proceeded toward the goal of higher learning. The first three subjects included grammar, rhetoric, and logic, called the *trivium* or “three roads” or “paths”; the next level was the *quadrivium* or “four roads”: arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry. These two groupings provided a progressive sequence for the learning process. The trivium’s grammar prepared students to grasp the functionalities of language itself; logic (sometimes called “dialectic”) cultivated skills in analysis of thought; rhetoric combined

the other two arts by training students to communicate effectively with others. Mastery of those subjects initiated the learner into the quadrivium's advanced subjects, which explored how the universe itself functioned and was ordered, with mathematics providing the primary tool for this exploration. Mastery of the physical world then led to the higher forms of exploration, the world of ideas themselves (philosophy) and of the supernatural or divine (theology). Indeed, the latter field, theology, was once termed the "queen of the sciences," the purest form of thought and abstraction.

The late Middle Ages saw a retreat of some of liberal learning's energies (though certainly less so than is widely thought), but the Renaissance brought a world-shaking resurgence of intellectual pursuits. Fueled by the religious passion of the Reformation, the liberal arts pursued a theological goal as never before, providing an explosion of innovation and thought throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In England in particular the Christian humanistic tradition took root in intellectual circles through the work of men such as Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), Roger Ascham (c. 1515–1568), Edmund Spenser (c. 1552–1599), Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Isaac Newton (1643–1727), and many others who viewed the divine order of the universe as the highest intellectual discovery possible. It is no coincidence, then, that English letters saw a profusion of writers who reflected a distinctively Christian view of the world, writers such as Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593), William Shakespeare (1564–1616), Ben Jonson (1572–1637), John Donne (1572–1631), and John Milton (1608–1674). Taken as a whole, this incredible intellectual movement formed one of the pinnacles of the Christian intellectual tradition, a view that the pursuit of truth is, in fact, the pursuit of God himself because all truth flows from the Author of all that is true.²

²Christian humanism is distinct from secular humanism. What makes us human is our relationship with God, not our status as so-called wise men, from whence the term *homo sapiens* derives. Christian humanism emphasizes humanity's spiritual essence, not merely its mental prowess.

CHALLENGES TO LIBERAL LEARNING AND THE CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

In the wake of secular-leaning thinkers, notably the inheritors of René Descartes (1596–1650), liberal learning struggled to maintain a connection with divine truth. For many Enlightenment thinkers, religious faith contradicted or was irrelevant to the rational inquiry of scientific empiricism. In particular, the biblical text itself was increasingly viewed as merely one of the great literary works of human culture, a viewpoint that deepened under the influence of nineteenth-century German higher criticism. Christian liberal arts education shed the first part of its identity, Christian, and moved steadily toward a secular view of knowledge before eventually leaving behind the liberal arts with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, which held such idealistic education to be an impractical holdover from a more romantic era. A fierce pragmatism that merged with a distinctly practical strain of American self-identity further weakened liberal learning, propelling the professional and vocational arts into a much-strengthened position in the late nineteenth century.

While most American universities continued to offer degrees such as the bachelor of arts (emphasizing languages, fine arts, or humanities) or bachelor of science (emphasizing mathematics or science), professional degrees moved to a new level of prominence. The more traditional arts and sciences degrees prepared students for further education in graduate or professional schools, and professional degrees prepared students for careers immediately following their college years. The liberal arts tended to move into a diminished role, part of a core curriculum that forms the general education component of a student's degree. For many students, the only portion of liberal learning left in the college experience is the increasingly small general education core.

Secondary education has suffered a similar loss, with liberal learning's more traditional subjects such as reading, writing, and

arithmetic subjugated to the practical arts. Perhaps the most common goals placed on secondary education are either the production of educated citizens for a democracy (which hearkens somewhat back to the original goal of liberal learning for the Greeks) or, perhaps more likely, the production of an educated workforce for the economy. The latter viewpoint tends to produce students with a much more vocational bent, where students prepare for specific jobs. Indeed, this has been reflected in the proliferation of magnet high schools focusing on careers in technology or health care, as well as vocational tracks that provide paths to licensure in fields such as cosmetology, auto repair, and service industries, or even business.

The core curriculum's liberal learning foundations reflect a tepid view, however, of the core's origins, particularly in secular settings that eschew the former capstone of liberal learning: theology. The term *core* itself derives from the French *couer*, "heart," which is related to the Greek *cardia* and Latin *cor*. The core curriculum, taken historically and literally, eschews education that limits discussions to the head and the hands but rather includes matters of the heart: the conscience, the soul, and even the psyche. The core curriculum's heart is a kind of symbol for students' entire lives, including their minds. In this way it hearkens directly to Scripture: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

Education as a whole was once thought to be a formative process that sought students' moral and spiritual refinement, which was linked directly with their theological formation. Indeed, at many campuses, the university's president often taught a senior course in morality or ethics each year.³ The development of the

³For a helpful survey of the arc of moral development and higher education in the United States, see George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

intellect was never detached from the development of the conscience. Even pre-Christian education typically emphasized a clear link between the head, the hands, and the heart, cogently arguing that a fully developed person maintained a sense of balance. The Christian assertion of distinctively theological contexts for this enterprise provided a means through which Christian principles have yielded the bulk of Western civilization's intellectual achievements since the Romans.⁴

This balanced approach to education protected against the production of morally handicapped individuals lacking in conscience. C. S. Lewis called these kinds of persons "men without chests."⁵ Martin Luther King Jr. likewise viewed such persons skeptically: "The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals."⁶ Liberal learning sought to prepare morally wholesome persons according to the appropriate culture's standards.

Intelligence and morality do not automatically go hand in hand, of course. Certainly the criminal justice system has not lacked for brilliant criminals, and the need for an educational system that addresses morality has not diminished. Further, the need to place that moral development into the context of a Christian viewpoint is also undiminished.⁷ Christian colleges that empha-

⁴This view of the West has been outlined clearly in works such as Philip J. Samson, *6 Modern Myths about Christianity and Western Civilization* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001). Indeed, even secularists admit this debt to Christianity. For two examples, see John D. Steinrucken's essay "Secularism's Ongoing Debt to Christianity," *American Thinker* (July 30, 2010), http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/secularisms_ongoing_debt_to_ch.html; and Camille Paglia's "Religion and the Arts in America," *Arion* 15.1 (Spring/Summer 2007): 1–20, <http://arts.ccpblogs.com/files/2008/08/paglia-religion-and-the-art.pdf>.

⁵C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man, or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1974).

⁶Martin Luther King Jr., "The Purpose of Education," in *Maroon Tiger* (Jan.–Feb. 1947): 10, http://mlkpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_470200_000/.

⁷For an excellent collection of essays on this topic, see Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beaty, eds., *The Schooled Heart: Moral Formation in American Higher Education* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

size the historical triumphs and the contemporary opportunities of the Christian intellectual tradition distinctively engage culture with both the hope of the gospel and the edification of our fellow persons.

CHALLENGES IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the United States, college curricula presumed a moral and spiritual dimension until well into the twentieth century. Prior to the Civil War, most colleges and universities were built on the liberal arts, including at least a token foundation in Christian thought. The first college in America, Harvard, had as its motto *Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae*, “Truth for Christ and Church”; Princeton and Brown both had very specific connections with Christian sects, as did most of the smaller colleges scattered across the American frontier.⁸

A distinct drumbeat led a more secular course for many religious institutions, even as a more practical bent undermined the liberal arts perspectives of the same institutions. For Christian colleges, however, a fairly unique challenge to their role as shapers of society came from within the religious community, with the rise of early-twentieth-century religious fundamentalism. American culture has always held a persistent suspicion toward formal education, but the rise of post-Enlightenment viewpoints and other staunchly anti-religious philosophical stances created a particular skepticism among religious leaders who embraced a conservative viewpoint theologically. For these leaders, the term *liberal* was associated with those anti-religious thinkers who had “overtaken” American institutions. In our own time, the term *liberal* has specific political connotations that create misperceptions about the content of liberal learning and reinforce the suspicion

⁸For a survey of American Christian education, see William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006).

that politically and theologically liberal viewpoints dominate the American higher education system.⁹

Liberal learning, however, predates all of these objections, and when it is carried out in a Christian context of faithful orthodoxy, it strengthens one's faith in God and dedication to high views of both Scripture *and* tradition. The key is the definition of the term *liberal*, and for Christians this must occur within the context of theological faithfulness. It is, however, a struggle that has unfolded throughout the history of the church, as thinkers have wrestled with the Scylla and Charybdis of paganism and emotionalism on either side of the path toward the education of the believer.

⁹Several studies have documented that the professorate leans left on the American political scale; on January 18, 2010, the *New York Times* titled an article, "Professor Is a Label That Leans to the Left," http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/18/arts/18liberal.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print.



An excellent liberal arts education holds purpose-giving and society-shaping power. But how do we tap into that power and make the most of liberal learning for the glory of God?

Professor Gene Fant teaches how to maximize a liberal arts education by outlining its history, criticisms, purposes, and benefits. Ultimately, he shows that liberal learning equips us to become spiritually and intellectually empathetic people who are passionate about serving God, the church, and the world.

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“This series meets a significant need, not only for students, but also for ministers and academics who are charged with the responsibility of helping us think and live faithfully as followers of Christ.”

Robert B. Sloan, President, Houston Baptist University

GENE C. FANT JR. (PhD, University of Southern Mississippi) teaches literature at Union University, where he is vice president for academic administration. A prolific writer, he holds earned degrees in Renaissance literature, biblical studies, English, anthropology, and education.

The Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition series

is designed for Christian students and those associated with college campuses, including faculty, staff, and trustees. These guidebooks address the common challenges in major academic disciplines by reclaiming the best of the Christian intellectual tradition—demonstrating that vibrant, world-changing Christianity assumes a commitment to the integration of faith and scholarship. With illustrations, reflection questions, and a list of resources for further study, this series is sure to be a timely tool in both Christian and secular universities, influencing the next generation of leaders in the church, the academy, and the world.

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