

A Catechism of Classical Christian Education

By Kyle Rapinchuk

Q1. What is education?

A1. Education is discipleship into a way of life.

Q2. What is Christian education?

A2. Christian education is the cultivation of godliness, wisdom, and virtue.

Q3. How do we cultivate wisdom and virtue?

A3. We cultivate wisdom and virtue by “nourishing the soul on the good, the true, and the beautiful.”^[1]

Q4. How do we nourish the soul on the good, the true, and the beautiful?

A4. We nourish “the soul on the good, the true, and the beautiful by means of the seven liberating arts.”^[2]

Q5. What are the seven liberating arts?^[3]

A5. The seven liberating arts are the three arts of the Trivium and the four arts of the Quadrivium.

Q6. What are the three arts of the Trivium?

A6. The three arts of the Trivium are the arts of language—grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric.

Q7. What are the four arts of the Quadrivium?

A7. The four arts of the Quadrivium are the arts of number—arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

Q8. Why are these arts called “liberating” arts?

A8. The arts are called liberating arts because they were the arts studied by a free citizen who is free to pursue truth, and they further free us to live lives of harmony and human flourishing. Thus, they can also be called “liberating arts of truth perception and harmony.”^[4]

Q9. How, then, do these seven liberating arts help us nourish the soul on the good, the true, and the beautiful?

A9. These seven liberating arts help us nourish the soul on the good, the true, and the beautiful because they “are the established paths that tutor the reason and train the mind in virtue.”^[5]

Q10. What, then, is a liberating education?

A10. A liberating education is “the cultivation of wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on the good, the true, and the beautiful by means of the seven liberating arts.”^[6]

Q11. What is classical Christian education?

A11. Classical Christian education is “the cultivation of wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on the good, the true, and the beautiful by means of the seven liberating arts so that in Christ the student is better able to know, glorify, and enjoy God.”^[7]

Q12. What is the chief end of man?

A12. “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”^[8]

Q13. Why, then, is classical Christian education important?

A13. Classical Christian education is important because it disciplines students to become fully human by aiming at and preparing them to flourish in their chief end.

Q5a. What is the purpose of cultivating the art of grammar?

A5a. The purpose of cultivating the art of grammar is to be at home in a language so that we can bring harmony to a thought.^[9]

Q5b. What is the purpose of cultivating the art of dialectic?

A5b. The purpose of cultivating the art of dialectic is to learn to ask and follow questions to their conclusions so as to bring harmony to the mind.^[10]

Q5c. What is the purpose of cultivating the art of rhetoric?

A5c. The purpose of cultivating the art of rhetoric is to produce clarity of expression and decision-making in community in order to bring harmony to a community.^[11]

Q5d. What is the purpose of cultivating the art of arithmetic?

A5d. The purpose of cultivating the art of arithmetic is to demonstrate by counting how to bring harmony to an equation.

Q5e. What is the purpose of cultivating the art of geometry?

A5e. The purpose of cultivating the art of geometry is to understand space and shape to bring harmony to our embodiment.

Q5f. What is the purpose of cultivating the art of music?

A5f. The purpose of cultivating the art of music is to understand the movement of numbers and their relationship to bring harmony to sound and soul.

Q5g. What is the purpose of cultivating the art of astronomy?

A5g. The purpose of cultivating the art of astronomy is to understand the movement of shapes within space to bring harmony between heaven and earth.

Note: I tried when possible to use quotation marks when using exact words from a source, though I have made exceptions (e.g., changing “liberal” to “liberating,” or standardizing the order of the transcendentals as good, true, and beautiful). I have footnoted when I took an idea (in full or in part) directly from a source, but did not use the source’s precise words. If there is no footnote, it is a more generally agreed upon or frequently stated maxim or my own contribution (which are admittedly few beyond the compilation and organization of the catechism).

Endnotes

[1] Andrew Kern, Ask Andrew Podcast, The CiRCE Institute.

[2] Kern, Ibid.

[3] See supplemental Q/A in 5a-5g.

[4] Kern, Ibid.

[5] Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain, *The Liberal Arts Tradition* (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2013), 36.

[6] Kern, Ibid.

[7] Kern, Ibid.

[8] Westminster Shorter Catechism.

[9] Based on Andrew Kern, Ask Andrew Podcast, CiRCE Institute.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.