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Not too long ago, to be an educated person in Western culture meant to be educated in the liberal arts. The classical educational system of European society, passed down from the medieval university system to the modern age, emphasized a broadly based grounding in the humanities. Knowledge of history, literature, philosophy, and art were all seen as being the essential building blocks, not simply of a university degree, but of a well-lived life. Over the past several decades that presupposition has eroded significantly as Western education has undergone significant changes. It is no longer assumed that students entering seminaries or graduate religion programs in the United States in the early part of the twenty-first century have the kind of background knowledge that was once taken for granted in introductory theology, bible, or church history classes. What's more, ministry in the twenty-first century requires an expanded base of knowledge beyond what was once deemed adequate. In particular, in a global society, students increasingly need to know about cultures and religions outside of European Christianity.

Christianity and the Liberal Arts is intended to address this need. By offering a series of easy to read and accessible introductions to subjects that are crucial to theological education, we hope to give students resources that will help them to understand the often complex questions that arise in the context of seminary education. These volumes assume no prior knowledge of their subject matter, but offer the essential ideas, events, and figures of the disciplines of the humanities. Our hope in providing these resources is that students will use them both as aids to their study as well as guides into a deeper exploration of the liberal arts, so that they may be not only well prepared for theological study but also humanely educated participants in the Christian life.