



Series Introduction

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Once, 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 Christians 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 the study of theology, bible, or church history. What's more, Christian life 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 formation, we hope to give students resources that will help them to understand the often complex questions that arise in the context of theological study. These volumes assume no prior knowledge of their subject matter, but offer the essential ideas, events, and figures that comprise the disciplines of the humanities. Our hope in providing these resources is that they will be used 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.