

# Statement of Confidences

## The End of Education

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### Purpose

The ultimate end of Christian Classical education is to enable the student to better know, glorify, and enjoy God.

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### Grace

God cultivates the students' souls toward holiness, using human instruction. In this sense, learning can be a means of grace.

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### Ordo Amoris

Aristotle wrote, "the character, then, must somehow be there already with a kinship to virtue, loving what is noble and hating what is base."

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### Subordination

Schooling is not the purpose of life or of childhood, and it has value only to the degree to which it enables the child to fulfill his purpose as a particular human being.

## The Nature of Education

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### Christian Classical Education

Christian classical education is the cultivation of wisdom and virtue by nourishing the soul on truth, goodness, and beauty by means of the seven liberal arts and the four sciences so that, in Christ, the student is enabled to better know, glorify, and enjoy God.

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## Logocentricity

Christian Classical educators are logocentric. In a word, that means they believe that the world makes sense, that the sense it makes is knowable, and that Christ is that sense.

## Students

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### High View of Humanity

To the Greeks, mankind possessed a divine spark; to the Christian and Jew, he is the Divine Image.

Thomas Aquinas wrote, “Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.”

St. Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is the man fully alive.”

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### “Children are born persons.” -Charlotte Mason

The child is a living and eternal soul to be nourished, not a product to be molded. Organic metaphors are much more suited to reflection on the nature of a child than industrial metaphors or statistical data.

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### Seasons of Growth

Education should correspond to the growth of the child. Dorothy Sayers identified three stages of growth: parrot, pert, and poet.

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### Taste

Education begins with the cultivation of good taste—that is, a taste for truth, goodness, and beauty.

In the classroom, no privilege is granted to self-expression.

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### Moral Greatness

As A. N. Whitehead wrote, “Moral education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness. If we are not great, it does not matter what we do.”

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## Discipline

Discipline is the foundation of every kind of creativity and maturity.

## Pedagogy

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## Cultivation

Education is the cultivation of the soul.

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## Assessment

Students' work and performance should be assessed by instructors who are qualified to assess what has been taught. If teachers are unable to assess students' performance, they should not be teaching. If they are able, they must be trusted, because only a person with judgment can exercise the discretion necessary for successful instruction.

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## Authority

The ideal Christian Classical educator speaks with authority on the arts and sciences he teaches, because he understands not all but enough.

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## Growth

No skill should ever be free from further development.

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## Modes of Learning: Didactic

Didactic instruction guides students to remember knowledge and artifacts by repeatedly beholding and recalling them.

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## Modes of Learning: Mimetic

Mimetic instruction guides students to learn skills by imitating examples and to contemplate examples of ideas in embodied forms.

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## Modes of Learning: Dialectic

Dialectic, or Socratic, instruction guides students to contemplate ideas.

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## The Three Columns

Mortimer Adler identified three kinds, or columns, of things that can be learned: knowledge, skills, and ideas.

## Community

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### Vocation and Commission

The Christian Classical community is driven by the demands of its vocation (calling) and commission (task), not by the circumstances in which it finds itself (though one cannot reach one's destination while ignoring the road he is driving on and failing to keep gas in the tank!).

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### Reverence

Reverence, awe, sublimity, and joyful solemnity describe the atmosphere of this school. Dignitas and nobilitas are demanded of every member of the school community.

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### Social Hierarchy

Teachers do not seek to sink down to the level of the student but to raise the student to the level of the teacher.

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### Historical Perspective

This school recognizes that it lives in a historical continuum and that it must honor both its ancestors and to its descendants.

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### Propriety

The Christian Classical educator deliberately cultivates a formality in the atmosphere of the school.

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### Accountability

Saint Luke wrote, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

## Curriculum

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### Curriculum Proper

The wise person understands the world he lives in (natural science and history) and has standards by which to distinguish what is from what ought to be (ethics and politics). The wise person knows the causes of things, and therefore is able to order things rightly and to judge things justly.

The virtuous person is disciplined, purposeful, and focused in his thinking and behavior. In education we cultivate the moral virtues, the physical virtues, and the intellectual virtues.

Young people become wise and virtuous when their souls feed on truth, goodness, and beauty.

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### Practical Curriculum

Great books and works of art are those that most explicitly and vividly embody truth, goodness, and beauty.

This school prefers old things, especially old books and works of art.

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### Multum, Non Multas

Christian Classical education focuses on few things deeply rather than many shallowly.

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### Western Tradition

This school takes responsibility for the Western tradition: to receive it, to assess it, to preserve it, and to hand it on to the next generation.

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### Order of the Curriculum

By nature, learning begins with poetic knowledge. It then lays its foundation in the seven liberal arts, after which it ascends in order through the natural sciences, the humane sciences, the philosophical sciences, and the theological sciences. No one can ascend this ladder in another order.

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## Poetic Knowledge

The foundation of all learning is what Dr. James Taylor has called “poetic knowledge,” which is a personal kind of knowledge, not merely a cognitive form of knowing with the mind.

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## The Seven Liberal Arts

The seven liberal arts are the arts of thinking. When a person learns an art, he directs his attention to learning a skill, not content or information about a “subject” (even if that subject is called “art”).

The liberal arts are liberal because they free people to rule themselves.

The two groups of the seven arts are the Trivium and the Quadrivium.

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## Trivium

The arts developed to refine one’s ability to use language are the three arts of the Trivium—Grammar, Dialectics, and Rhetoric.

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## Quadrivium

The arts developed to refine one’s ability to use numbers, shapes, and their relations are the four arts of the Quadrivium—Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy.

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## Order of the Sciences

A student can study any of the sciences only to the degree to which he has mastered the seven liberal arts. A younger student can, in varying degrees, read, so he can read about the sciences; however, the teacher must understand that a student is not learning to do science when he is reading about science.

The younger student should poetically encounter the world, whole and alive through his senses. Later he will dissect dead things and engage in analytical studies.

## Science

A science is a domain of knowing that results from inquiry. The goal of a science is to understand the causes of the things in that domain.