

Classical Meets Charlotte Mason

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Dorothy Sayers

The Lost Tool of Learning



Is it not the great defect of our education today that although we often succeed in teaching our pupils “subjects,” we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think? They learn everything, except the art of learning.

The Lost Tool of Learning



Trivium and Quadrivium

- ✦ *Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric*
- ✦ *Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, Music*

The contents of the syllabus at this stage may be anything you like. The “subjects” supply material; but they are all to be regarded as mere grist for the mental mill to work upon.

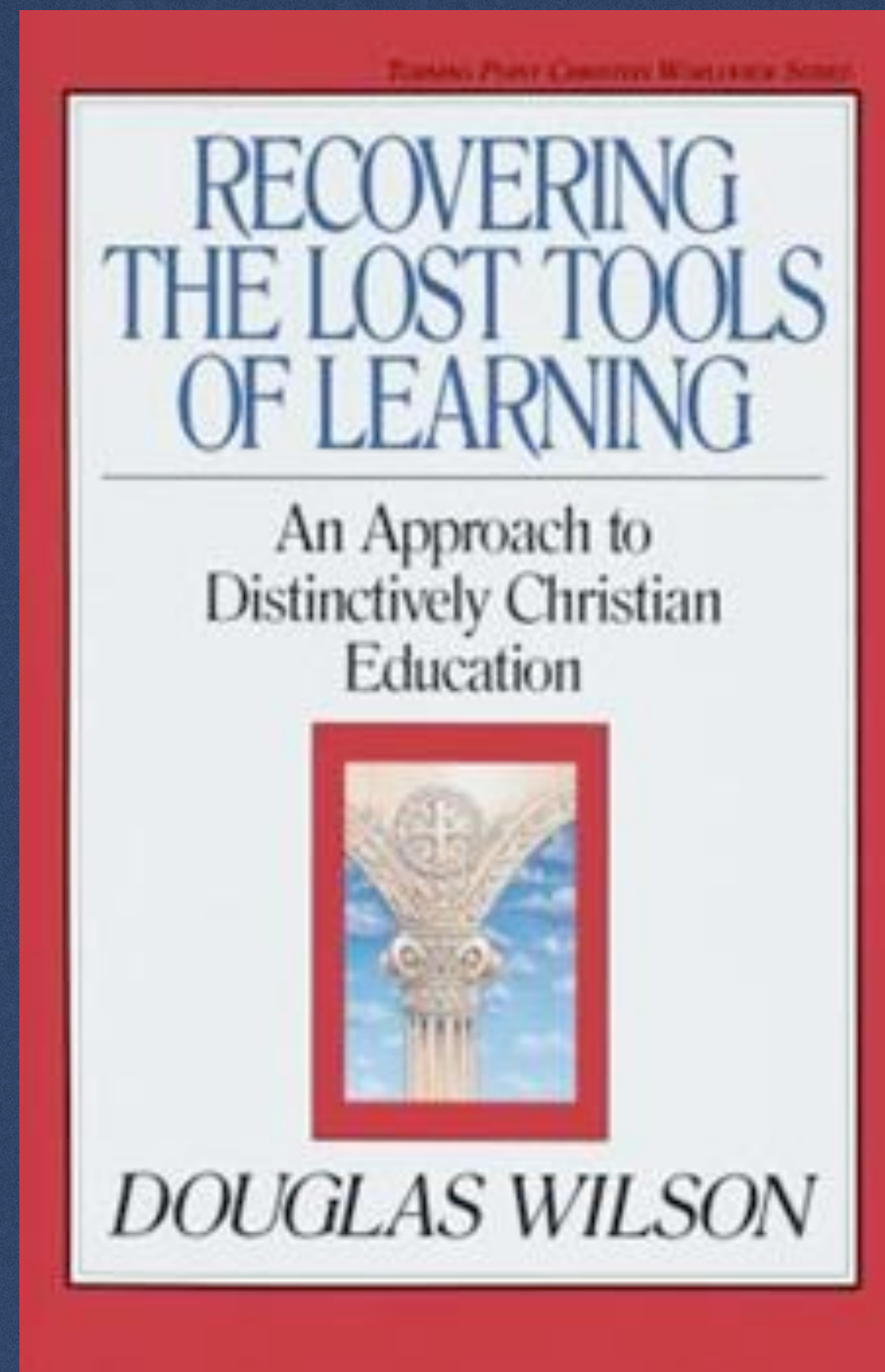
The Lost Tool of Learning



Grammar-memorize
Logic-analyze
Rhetoric-communicate

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Douglas Wilson

Charlotte Mason

Are her teachings Biblical?



Teacher Beliefs (Filter)

- ✿ *Nature of the learner*
- ✿ *Role of the teacher*
- ✿ *Goal of education*

Metaphors

- ✿ *Children are sponges*
- ✿ *Children are vessels to be filled*

Metaphors

✿ *A child is a person*

*Are they
compatible?*



What is narration?

Question: “If you had to describe narration to someone else, what would you say?”

Abby: In class, we read a portion of whatever book we’re reading, then our teacher asks us to close it and calls on someone to orally sort of repeat in your own words what we just read.

Caleb: “But you are trying to use the author’s language and have good detail.”

Teacher: Let’s go back to this idea—the ideal narration. We have had Caleb say that it uses the language of the author. Then we have this term of *your own words*. So, what is the ideal narration?

Meghan: Author’s language.

Teacher: So, Abby, what do you mean when you say *your own words*.

Abby: If we read a long portion or something like what we just read, we wouldn’t be able to repeat it exactly in our own words. But if it said, “The storm was tremendous,” if you remember, you would use the word *tremendous*.

Caleb: But you want to make sure you know what the word means. Because if you don’t understand it, based on the context, then there is almost no point of using that word. Well there is, because it is remembering something from the text.

How do we assimilate ideas?

- ✿ *In the narration?*
- ✿ *In the discussion?*

“This telling shows that a spiritual process has taken place; something new, some little touch of originality, some quaint expression, shows that spontaneous mental activity has been set up...”

*Charlotte Mason
Parents' Review, June, 1914, p. 410*

Moral Stance

- ✿ *A disposition towards what is good or valuable and how one ought to live in the world.*

Classical Filter

- ✦ *Mold and shape students toward the goal of virtue*
- ✦ *Conform thoughts to an ideal text*

Classical Filter

- ✿ *Narration turned into repeating the author's language*
- ✿ *Discussion became opportunity for teachers to incorporate their ideas*

Progressive Principles

- ✿ *Value children as individuals*
- ✿ *View children as natural doers, makers and creators*
- ✿ *Believe education should be designed to reflect the nature of the child*

“Rousseau’s Emile’s early exploration of the natural world and Pestalozzian respect for children’s personalities taught her that education depended upon engaging their imagination, curiosity and interest in ‘things.’ Wordsworth, Arnold and Ruskin inspired her to pass on her love of literature, pictures, and poetry.”

Margaret Coombs, *Charlotte Mason: Hidden Heritage and Educational Influence*, p. 60

Why do classical educators want to claim Mason as their own?

- ✦ *Progressive education is secular*

“The rise of progressive education became linked to the neglect of basic academics and a tendency toward destructive permissiveness. Confidence in the natural goodness and wisdom of children led to a reduction of adult restraint and discipline in classrooms.”

Dean of the school

“Those who do not regard education as a vital whole but as a sort of conglomerate of good ideas, good plans, traditions and experiences, do well to adopt and adapt any good idea they come across... Therefore, every plan rises out of a principle, and each such principle is a part of a living educational philosophy and does not very well bear to be broken off and used by itself.

A Liberal Education for All: The Practical Working, PNEU, p. 33

“Narration, for example, which is to us a no more than simple, natural way of expression, giving habit of clear and consecutive speech, might easily become the dead mechanical exercise which has been imparted from elsewhere, designed to teach all sorts of things, vocabulary, composition, and so on.”

A Liberal Education for All: The Practical Working, PNEU, p. 33

