



Charlotte Mason: A Liberal Education for All with Jason Barney

Lecture 3: Charlotte Mason and the Classical Tradition

Outline:

Is Charlotte Mason in harmony with the classical tradition?

- Charlotte Mason did reference her observations of children.
- She also looked to modern science.
- There are many places in Charlotte Mason's works where she looks to the classical tradition or to classical philosophers as the source for what she claims.
- In "Towards a Philosophy of Education", Mason says:
 - **"Some of it is new, much of it is old."**
 - She recognized that much of what she was saying was part of the classical tradition. There was no term for classical education at her time.
 - She uses terms of a liberal education in contrast with a utilitarian education.
 - We don't just rely on early authorities, and rule out other modern legitimate sources.
- A problem of pitting Charlotte Mason against the classical tradition is that we are taking one educational thinker and places her against a host of thinkers summarized in the tradition. You could do this with almost any educational thinker.
 - Every educational thinker has their own dialogue with the tradition.
 - It is valuable to listen to Charlotte Mason and engage with her principles and practices.
- Charlotte Mason claims that she has something new. We should remember that many educational thinkers have also claimed something new.
 - Sometimes when we look at the past, we can still make progress and come up with new insight.
 - Charlotte Mason did not reduce the mind to the brain.
- In using the phrase, "liberal education," Charlotte Mason was pointing backward to the riches of a classical education, but she is also looking at the unique challenge of the modern area (giving a real school education to all children).
 - People were dialoguing about what kind of education the poor should receive.



- She was saying, “Let’s keep the classical tradition, and find a new way to offer it to all children.”
- It is the man who has read and thought on many subjects who is the most capable in handling tools or keeping books.
- Education is for a life, not just for making a living.
 - This is the beating heart of Charlotte Mason and classical education.
- Ultimately, Mason calls for more of a liberal education than what might have been called classical education in her day.
- She is searching for a theory, a philosophy of education that has at its core this Christian, holistic view of the human person.