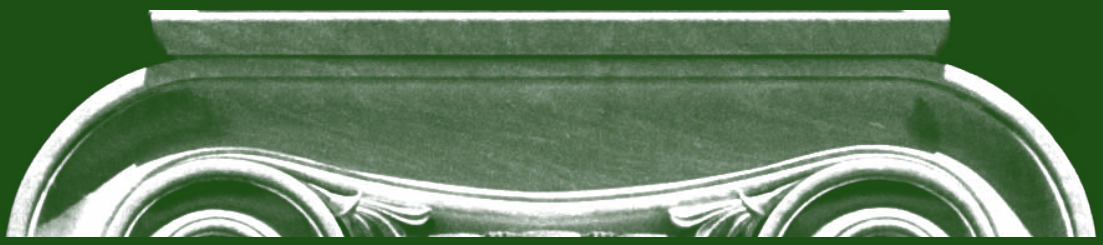
"SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO"

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER IV

CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

NOVEMBER, 2016



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ACCS

Classical Christian Education:
A New "Old-Way"

MISSION STATEMENT

The primary mission of this association is to promote, establish, and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

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HIDING GOD'S WORD IN THEIR HEARTS: AN APOLOGETIC FOR SCRIPTURE MEMORY IN THE UPPER SCHOOL

by Karen T. Moore, Grace Academy

"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 11:18-19)

THE COMMAND

This passage is arguably the most well known and oft quoted with respect to the education of our children. One day we as parents will stand before the Lord and answer for the responsibility given to us in training our children in the way they should go.[1] As educators in Christian schools we have agreed to partner with parents in the educational aspect of such training, and, to an extent, in the formation of their character. There are many verses that exhort us to train children in the knowledge of Scripture. There are few that provide instructions on how to accomplish this task. Within these verses from Deuteronomy we receive a two-fold command that not only gives an exhortation, but also provides instruction for how we should carry out training in Scripture.

1. Embed Scripture within the hearts and minds of our children. Learn the Scriptures; know them; love them. Make sure that Scripture is bound to our children and even to ourselves such that it will be with them wherever they go, guiding minds and directing actions.
2. Talk about what has been learned. Be watchful for teachable moments throughout the day and allow a scriptural lens to provide a better focus on the view of all that is around us, whether sitting at home or out along the road.

In these verses we read two instructions given by God in tandem, intended to be woven together throughout the many years of raising our children.

The second instruction comes to us rather naturally. If we ourselves possess a biblical worldview, we can address situations and questions that arise by not just asking, "What do you think Jesus would do?" but rather, "What does Scripture say?" Sometimes we have those verses ready on our tongue. At other times we sit with

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our children searching our open Bible (or iPhone). This second instruction cannot, however, be well accomplished without the first. We must fix God's words in our hearts and minds. We must know it such that it is with us always. Yes, we are blessed in this modern age with printing presses and search engines that far surpass what Guttenberg and his co-laborers could ever have envisioned. Yet, apart from a ready knowledge of what Scripture says we are in danger of speculating on what God might say. When anxiety arises, when conflict challenges, when the serpent hisses, "What did God actually say?"[2] will they be ready with the sword of the Spirit?[3] If they are to be ever ready with God's word, having the hilt of this sword within easy grasp, then we must hide His words in their hearts, fix them in their minds through the steady discipline of memory.[4]

Certainly, no one among us would disagree with the value of memorizing Scripture. Most of us would readily agree with the importance and even the necessity of memorizing some Scripture. This exercise seems to be emphasized particularly within the grammar school as our dear little sponges readily and eagerly soak up any data to be memorized from grammar chants to math facts to short poems, often using delightful ditties to ease the labor. However, the suggestion of asking older students to commit whole books of the Bible to memory might be considered daunting to say the least. Why? Perhaps because of the time commitment that we know this must take in addition to all the other things we *must* accomplish in school, work, duties to home and family, and social obligations. Perhaps also our culture is more comfortable with goals that can be accomplished rather quickly. The search engine is fast; memorizing takes time. We prefer the microwave to the Dutch oven, especially when hungry. Truly the biggest obstacle may be that in this postmodern era we have no cultural precedent for such a discipline of memory. This is a discipline so far removed from what we have learned that our frame of reference feels inadequate. How can it be done? Yet a reading of the New Testament must quickly reassure us that it can be accomplished.

THE PRECEDENT

Consider the numerous times in which Jesus readily cites the writings of the Law and the Prophets. He has a command of Scripture that goes beyond familiarity into an intimate understanding of these writings. Of course, one might argue, He was and is the Son of God, in existence before all things were made and all things were written. Christ is indeed fully God, but He also walked during His ministry on earth as fully man. He had to undergo the same discipline and training as His fellow Hebrews. Nonetheless, if His lofty example seems beyond our grasp, then let us look also at Paul. Paul too quoted the Old Testament with ready ease. He makes frequent references to the stories of Abraham (21 times) and Isaac (3 times). By name he cites Moses (13), King David (8), and Isaiah (6). Altogether Paul quotes the Old Testament approximately one hundred times, and gives another one hundred allusions.[5] Paul was a mere mortal, like us. Paul was a sinner, like us. However, he had the same education as Jesus of Nazareth.

Memory was the foundation of Jewish education in the ancient and classical period. Young Jewish boys (and sometimes girls) would begin attending school about age six. They attended a Jewish school built as an annex alongside the local synagogue. They called this school Beth Ha-Sepher (House of the Book) for its primary purpose was to teach children the Torah.[6] The Torah formed the center of their education as they used Scripture to learn to read and write Hebrew. Jewish boys in areas such as Tarsus and Galilee would have also read from the Septuagint[7] as they learned Greek. The education of the common Jewish boy far exceeds what most moderns would have expected for ancient blue-collar workers such as fishermen, carpenters, and tent-makers. Much of the Mediterranean world,

including Judea, valued an education that would prepare the mind and shape the character of every citizen as valued by that civilization. Thus, the Jewish children attending Beth Ha-Sepher would not only read, but also memorize the Torah. This came through constant repetition for approximately four years until the young pupils could recite the Torah with great fluency. While various mnemonic devices were used, the primary method for memorization was repetition. He "who learns the Torah without repetition is like one who sows, but does not reap."[8]

The cultivation of memory was not unique to Judea. Memorization and oral tradition were central elements of education throughout the Mediterranean world. In Greece there was an emphasis on memorizing the great epic traditions of Homer. In Book VI of his *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* Julius Caesar notes that the Celts wrote nothing of great importance down. Their laws and their religious traditions were all committed to memory. Caesar thought one of the reasons the Celts held so tightly to this practice was that they believed once they started relying on the written word, they would lose their diligence in learning important things thoroughly and would weaken the discipline of memory.[9] Roman orators such as Cato, Cicero, and Seneca were well trained in the art of memory. As students they were required to memorize and deliver famous orations from their predecessors. As orators themselves they regularly gave speeches from memory of two hours in length. Lest we think this memorization might have been by topic and not by words, we read this advice from Cicero in his work on rhetoric titled *Ad Herennium*.[10]

"Now, lest you should perchance regard the memorizing of words either as too difficult or as of too little use, and so rest content with the memorizing of matter, as being easier and more useful, I must advise you why I do not disapprove of memorizing words. I believe that they who wish to do easy things without trouble and toil must previously have been trained in more difficult things." (Cicero)

To this day memory is considered one of the five canons of rhetoric, the art of speaking. Before memory are listed invention, arrangement, and style. The final canon, often listed after memory, is delivery. The training of young orators often required the memorization of excellent orations from famous predecessors. Aspiring young Romans often looked to Demosthenes and others of the Greeks. They studied the techniques of art and invention by learning their work thoroughly. Having memorized their speeches, they then practiced the art of delivery. Seneca the Elder recounts in his later years, even as his memory waned, that he could still recite parts of one hundred practice speeches from his early studies of rhetoric.[11] Our modern rhetoric classes tend to focus more on the art of writing than the art of speaking. We still practice invention and arrangement. We still look to the ancient orators as to muses. Yet the exercise of memory seems to have escaped our attention in our own schools of rhetoric. Perhaps this is a skill which we should seek to retain. The God-inspired words of Scripture would surely be a most excellent means of doing so.

MODERN DAY RESPONSE

In part to better train our memory as per the education of the ancient Mediterranean world, and in greater part to answer the commands given to us in Deuteronomy, Grace Academy has developed a Scripture Memory Program for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Since our earliest days our grammar students have memorized passages of increasing length such as Psalms 101, Hebrews 11, and James 3. These are regularly delivered in choral recitation before fellow students, teachers, and proud parents. Several years ago we recognized the need, based on the reasons provided above, to expand this program into our schools of logic and rhetoric. We wanted to see our student's knowledge

of Scripture expanded in a meaningful way. We desired their skills of memory likewise to be strengthened. Most of all we wanted to see them equipped for every good work the Lord should have for them.[12]

Students in the schools of logic and rhetoric memorize whole books of the Bible or lengthy passages so as to better learn Scripture in the context in which it was written. The habits and formation of such memorization must necessarily change from the grammar school days to reflect the stages of learning and maturity of older students. Scripture memory in the upper school ceases to be limited to grade-level homeroom classes. Instead this becomes a corporate study intended to build unity through study and worship among students of various grade levels, but within the same sub school. The students within the schools of logic and rhetoric are divided into eight devotional groups (four for each school respectively). The logic school groups are assigned one book. The rhetoric school is assigned another. These devotional groups meet three mornings each week to read, discuss, and memorize the assigned Scripture for the year. Works for memorization have thus far included James, Philippians, Colossians, 1 John, and Matthew 5–7 (The Sermon on the Mount).

The groups need not give choral recitations as they were accustomed to do in the grammar school, but may choose instead to interpret the assigned Scripture through creative dramatic performances so long as the Scripture itself is not altered.[13] When the goal has been accomplished the students recite not only for parents and the school body, but at times they recite for local churches. When they do, they never fail to receive a standing ovation. For it is truly an amazing blessing to see our young people speak the Word of God with passion!

THE FRUIT

Five years into this program we have graduates who have memorized the Sermon on the Mount plus multiple books of the New Testament along with a collection of Psalms. We do not expect that they will for the remainder of their adult lives be able to recite all of these wonderful verses at a moment's notice. We do expect that these words will remain hidden within their hearts and minds, ready to be called upon when needed. We hope that having gained a confidence from this exercise, they will continue to study God's Word, reviewing familiar passages and committing new ones to memory, for the rest of their lives. The fruit that has been born thus far is sweet. One graduate shared that memorizing James (his first such endeavor) "gave me a huge sense of accomplishment that helped me believe in myself . . . Reciting all of it individually in one take showed me what the mind was capable of with hard work and consistency." A fellow graduate marvels at how easily he is still able to call upon all he has memorized. "God has used it to speak to me when I need it, and to speak through me to others."[14] We pray this discipline will continue to equip these young men and our many other graduates for whatever calling God has placed upon their lives in the same manner in which Paul so praised Timothy.

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2Timothy 3:14-17).

NOTES:

1. Proverbs 22:6

2. Genesis 3:1

3. Ephesians 6:17

4. Psalm 119:11

5. Roy Zuck, *Teaching as Paul Taught* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), p. 50–52.

6. The first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

7. The Septuagint is the Old Testament translated into Greek from Hebrew by a group of approximately 70 Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt c. 200 B.C. Some Jews grew up only speaking Greek and this translation was created in order to allow them to read the Old Testament. In areas such as Galilee, children grew up speaking both Hebrew and Greek. It was not uncommon for them to read their religious documents in both before the spread of Christianity. Septuaginta means 70 in Latin and was the name given to their work.

8. *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought, The Letters of Benammi*, Second Series, 54, cited in Zuck, *Teaching as Paul Taught*, ibid.

9. Julius Caesar, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* VI.14. Caesar specifically identifies the Druid priest class as those responsible for committing to memory "a great number of verses" regarding laws, traditions, and the religious beliefs of the Celtic tribes.

10. Cicero, *Ad Herennium* III.16 is the oldest surviving Latin treatise on the art of rhetoric. Authorship, though uncertain, is largely attributed to Cicero and believed to have been written c. 80 BC. This text is used widely in rhetoric courses today whether in secondary schools or at the collegiate level.

11. Seneca, *Controversiae* 1. Pref. 2, 19. See also Chris Keener, "The Historical Reliability of the Gospels," in *Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics*, ed. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), p. 105-106.

12. 2 Timothy 3:17

13. Parts of this section are taken from the outline of the Grace Academy Scripture Memory Program, also written by Karen Moore.

14. Quotations are from 2016 Grace Academy Graduates Ben Hobbs and Michael Moore respectively.

BUILDING AN INSTITUTION THAT WILL LAST

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Running a school is a difficult, multi-faceted job. As a head of school, you're a culture setter, teacher of teachers, and supporter of students. Additionally, you are the administrative and financial leader of your school. You may have a clear vision for your school, but do you feel confident that you can plan for it financially?

A budget is a school's organization mission, put to numbers. It's where an organization's rubber hits the road; that new program might be a high priority in talk, but if it doesn't make it into the budget, it will never happen. However, when backed with a strong strategic plan, the budget can be a powerful document, merging mission with action. Budgeting, therefore, is one of the most important leadership functions a head of school takes on.

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Keith Nix - Head of School, Veritas Richmond

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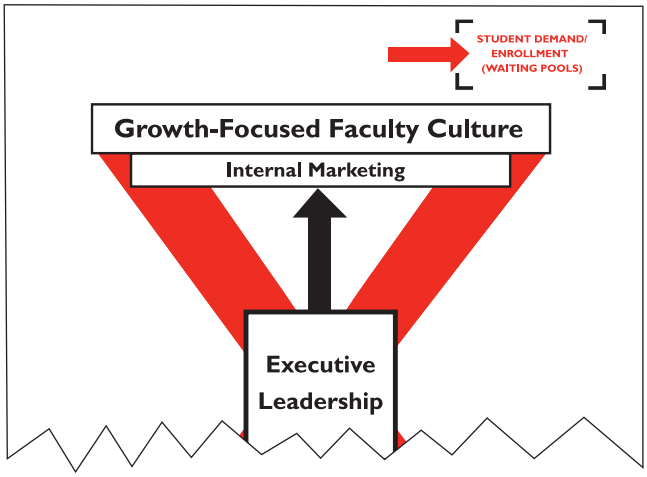
THE ROLE OF FACULTY IN ADMISSION

by Independent School Management

In the strategic roles given to various functions within a private-independent school, teachers are not left out. The Board provides the resources (money, facility, and management structure) to support the school head and management team, and the school head/management team provides a predictable and supportive environment within which exceptional faculty can thrive. The faculty's strategic role is to *be aware of and drive successful student re-recruitment and new student recruitment*. During these uncertain economic times, teachers **must** understand how critical their roles are in the admission process.

ISM would go so far as to say that a growth-oriented faculty culture is a precondition for healthy enrollment numbers, and that the internal marketing that teachers do is essential as they demonstrate the value of the education they provide. (We can see this illustrated in the ISM X™, particularly in the strategic outcome variables [student demand, enrollment, waiting pools] on the top right-hand side of X.[1])



The admission office can often have a poor relationship with faculty. This is usually due to the admission director's assumption that faculty should be supporting him/her in the admission process. This is often associated with frustration as materials (stories and photos) are asked for to inform the web site and the marketing materials distributed by the school. This is, in and of itself, a worthwhile endeavor. There

Published in Ideas & Perspectives, *an advisory letter for private-independent school administrators published by Independent School Management, 1316 N. Union St., Wilmington, DE 19803 ph. 302-656-4944, www.isminc.com.*

is nothing more apt to sell your school than up-to-date testimonials, current-event narratives, and arresting images of the school's mission being delivered in the lives of students. The admission director in this scenario, however, has the whole thing backwards. As your school's admission director, your role is to support the faculty culture and recognize that the relationship between the admission office and the faculty is a service relationship. The teachers' task is so all-embracing that they actually don't have time to find the stories and photos that you seek. Consider therefore doing the following.

- Make a habit of spending time at least every two weeks in visiting classrooms—not as part of campus tours, but out of genuine interest in what teachers do,in the interest of building relationships with the faculty,and to be better able to verbalize to prospectiveparents the powerful relationships between teachersand students that enhance educational outcomes. Over the course of every semester, visit each classroom at least once.
- Talk with faculty, students, and those parents with whom you established a strong relationship during the admission process. Collect those stories and create a photo journal to accompany them; ask teachers, parents, and students to help you edit and select stories and photos for publication, both electronically and in print.
- Once a year, ask the division directors and the school head for time to talk with the faculty about the admission profile—the basis on which you and your department make admission decisions. Encourage your teachers to supply feedback on students from the past, both good (fit the profile) and questionable (did not fit) attributes.
- Encourage teachers to invite you to special classroom events—the first grade poetry recitation; the seventh grade presentation of its original drama written in English/history; the chemistry lab started, run, and finished by the students themselves.

The interesting thing is that, once teachers perceive and believe that your attitude is one of service, they will do those things they didn't "have time for" before. They will become your partners in the job of recruiting new students, and they will be more focused on internal marketing to retain current students (making your job as easy as it can possibly be).

So what should faculty do in their strategic retention role (at the top of the ISM X)? Let's go back to the beginning. Faculty must do two things and you have a role in each.

1. Faculty must commit to their own growth and renewal—you don't have any influence over whether they do or not. However, your role is to publicize, celebrate, and affirm those who make that commitment by profiling those teachers and highlighting their professional excellence.
2. Faculty must know the "30-second speech" that sells to parents the daily value of what is happening in their classrooms. Your role is to coach the faculty and model the proper use of this critical communication.

Teachers have an important role to play in admission As admission director, you have a responsibility to engender the appropriate relationship with them. When you do that, you expand your own power to fill your school with mission-appropriate students, and make allies in every classroom who will support you.

NOTES

1. For a full description of the ISM X, see "The Private-Independent School Headship: A Management and Leadership Xcellence Formulation," *Ideas & Perspectives*, vol. 32, no. 1, https://isminc.com/pdf/unsorted/ISM-Theory-for-Consortium.pdf .

UNLEARNING: CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

by Douglas Wilson, Christ Church

KEY ISSUES

- The need for reform in education is radical, not superficial.
- True reform means trying something different, not trying the same thing over again.
- Recognize that many of the things that need to be questioned are invisible to you, because they are part of our generation's shared assumptions.

Will Rogers once famously said that "it isn't what we don't know that gives us trouble, it's what we know that ain't so." Nowhere is this problem more pressing and evident than in the task we have of rethinking what is meant by true education. The problem is a common one, and so we have many proverbs or phrases to express it—from straining at gnats and swallowing camels to rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. When it becomes obvious that we have a true problem, we try to address that problem with superficial solutions.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between radical and drastic? Why is this distinction important?
2. What are three unspoken assumptions that parents might bring to a private Christian school? Can you cite any others?
3. If many of our assumptions are invisible to us, what is the best way to make them visible?

RADIX MEANS ROOT

Our word *radical* comes from the Latin word *radix*, which means root. A radical solution, if it is truly a radical solution, means something quite different than drastic. If you discovered that your house was invested with termites, to burn the house down as a solution to the problem would certainly qualify as drastic. But it wouldn't be radical—it would not address the problem at the root.

Often, if a problem gets bad enough, there will be

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many drastic solutions proposed. But principled thinkers want a solution that goes to the root. If our first graders are not learning to read, to spend an extra billion dollars to do much more of the same thing that we were already doing is drastic, but not radical. To switch from a look/say method of teaching to a phonics program is radical, and drastic to some, but it would address the problem.

LEARNING TO CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS

Many Christian parents have come to the point where they first consider private Christian education because they have a series of bad experiences in the government schools. There was one drug deal too many in the school parking lot, or one condom too many in the latest sex ed promotion, or one politically correct history too many in the classroom. So they finally say "that's it, we're out of here." And so they go down the road to a classical Christian school, knowing that all the things they object to will not be present there.

But there are many assumptions about things they never objected to that they might bring along with them. They never made a connection between these things they believe to be "good" and those things which they know to be bad. Someone has wisely said that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, while expecting a different result. An illustration I have often used is that of renting a movie that someone recommended to you. You watch it for half an hour and a wildly inappropriate scene comes on. Whatever it is you usually do, it is probably not going back to the menu and starting the movie over again. It is *going* to come to that scene again.

The government schools we have today came from the government schools that Ozzie and Harriet sent their children to. If we are simply wanting to "get back," we are still working with unchallenged assumptions.

SOME EXAMPLES

What are some examples of this? Here are just a few. One of the common questions that administrators of private schools are asked by prospective parents is this one: "Is your school accredited?" But the entire reason they are there in the first place is that they are thoroughly unhappy with the accredited schools their children are stuck in. Accreditation doesn't mean what people think it means.

Another example might be the matter of religious neutrality. They believe that the government schools began intrusively teaching a hostility to Christianity, but they do not yet see that this was inevitable and necessary. Education is one of the most innately religious things we do, and the idea of a "secular" neutrality was a fraud from the beginning. Secularism is not neutral; secularism is necessarily hostile to biblical Christianity. So Christian parents might show up at a Christian school because they wanted a place where their child would not be bullied on the playground, but they do not yet see the necessity of the Christian faith permeating every subject in every classroom. Consequently, they might like the "nice" atmosphere, but believe that the Christian school is overdoing it on the Jesus things.

A third example is that the education of children can be completely farmed out or delegated entirely to a school. The government schools encourage this, but a good private school wants to attract parents who want to be intimately involved in the ongoing education of their children. A good school wants to attract parents who are taking their parental responsibilities seriously. This means more than an occasional parent/teacher conference. So an unspoken assumption might be that you are going to drop off your children, just like always, but now you drop off a tuition check. No, that tuition check is not a pay-off—it is a symbolic statement that bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of

the Lord is a profound, parental responsibility (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:1-4).

NOT ALL ASSUMPTIONS ARE VISIBLE

A story is told about a man in the nineteenth century who successfully perpetrated an archeological fraud. He manufactured an Etruscan artifact and successfully passed it off. The fraud was not discovered until the next century. When the museum curator was asked how they discovered it, he replied that the culprit had put into his artifact every Etruscan feature he could see . . . and every Victorian feature he couldn't see. Of course, at the time, he was successful because his fellow Victorians couldn't see those things either. But as time passed, the observers came to the point where the previously invisible features came to light, and one day somebody asked what that ancient Etruscan king was doing in a top hat.

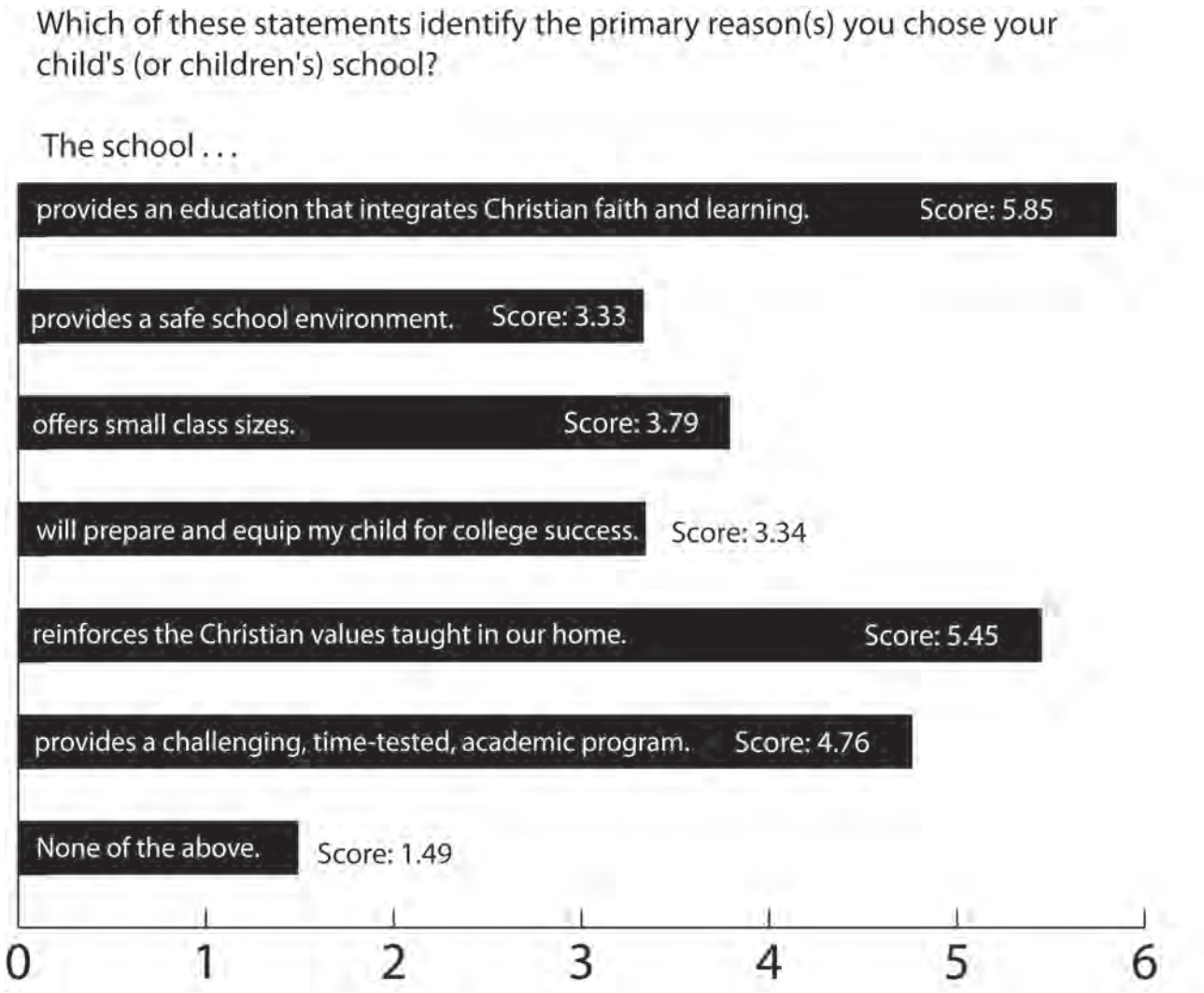
Sometimes the things we know that "ain't so" are things that we know without reflection, and without appropriate examination. The best thing we can do is make a point of looking at ourselves hard and without self-flattery, in the mirror of God's Word.

WHY DO PARENTS CHOOSE A SCHOOL?

by ACCS Staff

For a time in 2014 and 2015, visitors to the ACCS website were able to take a short survey asking them to rate a series of statements to explain their primary reason for choosing their child's school. In exchange for their participation, they received a booklet of essays originally published in *Classis*, titled "A Firm Foundation." A total of 252 people participated in this survey.

How well do your school's marketing materials address these parent concerns?



THE GREAT ADVANTAGE OF LATIN AND GREEK

As posted on the Sententiae Antiquae blog

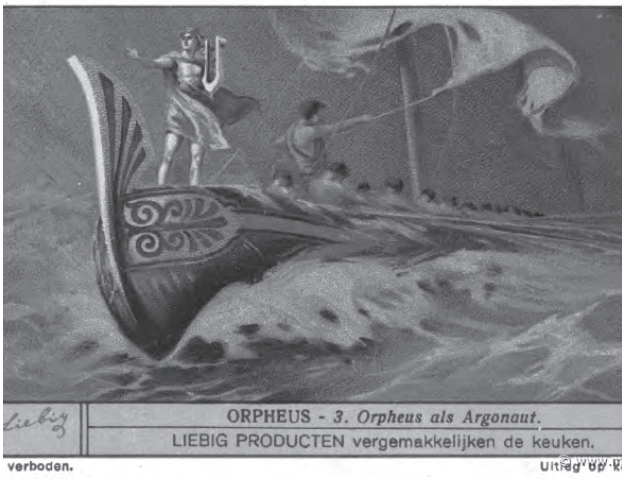
From Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson:*

On Saturday, July 30, Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple-stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education.

JOHNSON. 'Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it.'

'And yet, (said I) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning.'

JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing



the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors.' He then called to the boy, 'What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?' 'Sir, (said the boy,) I would give what I have.' Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare.

Dr. Johnson then turning to me, 'Sir, (said he) a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge.'

Sententiae Antiquae is something of a digital commonplace book, replicating all the delights and horrors of ancient authors like Aulus Gellius, Aelian, Macrobius and Philostratus. Find this post at https://sententiaeantiquae.com/2016/10/16/the-great-advantage-of-latin-and-greek/.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND THE FIERY HEADDRESS

by Laura Young, Providence Classical Christian School

> Human wits are too blunt to get to the heart of all problems immediately; but they are sharpened by the give and take of discussion and debate, and by exploring every possible course, men eventually discover the measures which all approve and which no one would have thought of before discussion.
>
> –Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*

If classical Christian schools are to be more than mere foxholes for those looking to escape cultural shrapnel, we need to remember that as educators, we may love learning, but many of our students do not, and the reason they do not is because we have not done enough to draw them to it. Instead we sometimes, because we expect love of learning to look like love of summer, incrementally lower our expectations in hopes of increasing the happiness factor, not recognizing, or at least not admitting that we are settling for a pseudo-love in the pursuit of education. God forbid that we should do so, remembering instead C.S. Lewis' admonition that we are often too easily pleased, "like . . . ignorant [children] who want[s] to go on making mud pies in a slum because [they] cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea."[1] Even before children are ready for the wisdom of Lewis, they know from a surfeit of Disney that true loveliness is often hid beneath an off-putting exterior, and Walt no doubt knew his Shakespeare who in turn knew that the finest gold is frequently stored within the most leaden of caskets. Learning is work. Very little of true value in life (salvation being something of an exception) is acquired without (our) sacrifice or effort. But the good news is, we can make that work less onerous by captivating first our students' minds, and then their hearts, through purposeful discussion strategies that move the teacher from "sage on stage" to "guide on the side" as students learn to become active, rather than passive agents of their own learning.

Two particularly effective uses of classroom discussion are Socratic seminars and the Harkness table, both of which put learning in the hands of students through a series of ever-deepening questions designed to draw and test inferences, to elicit opinion based on a pre-analyzed text, to listen to and extend what others are seeing and asking, and to train both mind and heart in understanding and evaluating the world of wonder into which we have been placed and which others have sought to understand across the many disciplines that make up academia. Let me provide a quick example of how I might use Socratic seminar to introduce my ninth graders to the *Iliad*. After a couple of days of contextualizing the novel and laying some basic groundwork, I would ask the students to read chapter 1 and to annotate their texts with the following sample

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inquiries in mind:

- How does the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon reflect Mycenean Greek values?
- Who is more in the wrong, Achilles or Agamemnon? Or are they both in the right? If so, why are they in conflict?
- How do the circumstances of war impact competitive vs. cooperative values?
- Is Thetis a good mother?
- What was most surprising, interesting, or thought-provoking about this chapter?
- Which minor character plays the most pivotal role in this chapter?
- Which epic simile is most striking or effective?

The possibilities for generating quality discussion questions are endless, but what makes these good preliminary seminar questions is that while they require familiarity with the factual details of the reading, those facts are merely foundational in answering higher-level, more open-ended questions that require critical thinking arising from logical inference and support. Space does not allow me to explain the details of running a Socratic or a Harkness seminar, but suffice it to say that the teacher's primary purpose is to know the subject of the lesson well enough to move the student beyond basic comprehension of a source (be it written, visual, or even audio), to analysis and evaluation. When the students come together the next day, they use their preparation to investigate the text collaboratively, using a series of question types designed to dig even more deeply into the meaning, relevance, or aesthetics of a text, and in so doing, to exercise thinking skills essential to learning: listening, speaking well, asking for clarification, challenging or supporting a claim, connecting parts to a larger whole, etc. While many categories of questions can be used, five of them are modeled here by way of example using Book 1 of the *Iliad*.

1. Questions of clarification: When you say that Thetis was a good mother because she responded to her son's feelings, why was that good? Did Athena present as a real entity or as a manifestation of Achilles' subconscious?
2. Questions that probe assumptions: When you describe Achilles as petulant, what are you assuming about Greek vs. Christian value systems? Are you operating from an assumption that a good mother sometimes has to say no to her child?
3. Questions based on reasoning and support: What are typically viewed as the attributes of good leadership? How might different circumstances give rise to different criteria? How are the circumstances of the Trojan War and the Greek heroic ethic instrumental in comparing and contrasting Achilles' and Agamemnon's characters? Did Achilles need to withdraw in order to accomplish his purposes? Can you give an example of your reasoning? Why do you think x caused y? How would someone refute this thinking? What is the nature of x and why does it matter? On what authority or proof are you basing your assertion?
4. Questions regarding viewpoints and perspectives: Given that they all lived by the same heroic ethic, how do you think Achilles' fellow Achaeans viewed his withdrawal from battle? Whose reasoning does Homer seem to favor: Achilles' or Agamemnon's? Is there another way to look at this that we have not fairly considered? Why is x better than y? How is x similar to y? Why is x necessary? Is x necessary? Who benefits from this? What are the strengths and weaknesses of x?
5. Questions that probe implications and consequences: (How has Homer established Achilles' arête, or military excellence, and what do you think, given the heroic spectrum, it will take for Achilles to return? Have you ever felt so justified in your anger that you were willing to allow others to suffer as a way of getting them to understand the wrong they had done to you? What clues in this chapter suggest that Homer might understand the human cost of warfare? How does x fit in with what we learned earlier about y?

Seminars can include incentives for full and courteous participation by all students, but what I have found is that when we help students to have something to say and give them a safe forum for saying it, even the most initially reluctant eventually get caught up in the energy of a discussion where their thoughts matter and are heard.

While these kinds of discussions can and should be used in the grammar school, they are perfectly suited to secondary students who, with their evolving frames and increasing abilities, require teaching methodologies that go beyond the acquisition of information and instead serve to develop critical thinking skills designed to help them put down roots in an increasingly complex academic landscape that includes uncertainties, ambiguities and nuance, big-picture thinking, independent thought, reasoned discourse, and deep theology, all while sojourning through an increasingly God-less and shallow culture.

But, how exactly does discussion combine good thinking with love of learning? Move students from *passive* to *secondary passive* attention (see John Milton Gregory's *The Seven Laws of Teaching*), which despite its name is anything but passive. Rather, it is a level of focus capable of overriding more primitive pin-ball flights of fancy in favor of an attention sustained through absorption in the work, "when the objects that we are trying to fix in mind attract us in their own right."[2]

Wouldn't we all like our students to be so fascinated by their learning that they do not see it as work, thus countermanding the effects of the Fall, but to instead be so carried away on the wings of love that they forgot how many periods are left until lunch, or until homework logs go the way of turntables? Of course we would, but then there is the snag in the fine print: learning takes work—sustained, persistent effort—not the stuff normally connected in a student's mind with the *love of learning*. Nevertheless, the effort required to purchase this pearl of great price can be cultivated through pedagogies that while not less costly, can be rendered less onerous. It is easier to work hard for something one loves or at least does not hate. Using discussion in the classroom is one of the ways I strive to build camaraderie between students and learning. I will admit, it has not always been easy for me to set aside a more conduit model of teaching in which I disseminate, they regurgitate. Regurgitate well and I punch a hole in the ticket to their future by means of a letter grade reflective of their competencies. But I want more than that, and so do they, which is why I have learned to invest the time and to allow the breathing space that profitable discussion demands.

One final thought on the value of question-based discussion strategies for cultivating an authentic love of learning: by modeling and then passing onto the students the habit of asking and pursuing open-ended questions, we take advantage of the need to move from the known to the unknown in learning something new. Learning is a process that presupposes a gap, a gap that properly appropriated, can become a teacher's best friend. In his book *In Pursuit of Elegance: Why the Best Ideas Have Something Missing*, Matthew May shows that our natural human capacity for curiosity is at the heart of our "need to know." According to May's research, when it comes to using enticement to create curiosity, "less is definitely more." Using examples such as marked improvement in driver attention when traffic lights and signage are removed from busy intersections, and the rollout of the original iPhone with its startling lack of physical keypad and even more austere marketing silence, and a description of the *Mona Lisa* as an example artistic *sfumato*, or smoky lack of distinct lines and edges—May makes the case that our minds can be moved to Gregory's *passive secondary attention* by allowing missing information to serve as a catalyst for intellectual seduction. For this seduction to have its way with us, though, we have to find the middle ground between too much information, in which there is no

space for curiosity, and too little information which can result in frustration and irritation. As May observes, "When we perceive a gap in our knowledge, we feel deprived, a feeling we label as curiosity. And it's our desire to alleviate that feeling that motivates us to obtain the missing information. How deeply deprived we feel is relative to how deeply we perceive the gap" which in turn depends on how much we know and how much we want to know.[3]

How much more interesting might students find learning if it were packaged as a series of curiosities and mysteries that they had the ability to unlock? Learning is about careful observation—about seeing what is there as well as what is not, about closing the gap between what we know and what we can know next. Deep questioning is a way of closing that gap while opening another. Like everything else, it would be a mistake to use nothing but this type of learning in the classroom, and I for one, would really miss the days I get to hold court and teach "like my hair's on fire," but discussion is a fun and effective way to do more than entertain (or confound) students with my fiery enthusiasm. It is a way to show them how to take hold of that fire for themselves. And this, I would argue, is what a love of learning will look like. Look for the fiery headdress.

NOTES

1. C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (San Francisco: Harper,2006), 26.

2. John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (San Bernardino: Renaissance Classics, 2012), 18-19.

3. Matthew E. May, *In Pursuit of Elegance: Why the Best Ideas Have Something Missing* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 84.

TRANSCENDING HUMAN IMAGINATION: THE EMBODIMENT OF HEROISM MANIFEST IN CHRIST

by Bailey Vaughn, Evangel Classical Christian School

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SYNOPSIS

When people think of a superhero, they may think of classic DC and Marvel comic books or they may think of a more modern film such as *The Avengers*. Recently there has been a resurgence in the popularity of the superhero. The same story of an ostensibly ordinary man with almost-supernatural abilities saving helpless victims from some diabolical villain or evil force has been told countless times. What makes this the pattern for a hero to follow? And, perhaps more importantly, why do we harbor the idea that the character of a hero cannot change drastically from person to person? The obvious answer is that there is a thread that runs through stories about heroes whether in ancient epics or modern comic books. Heroes throughout time and across cultures all follow what is typically known as the hero's journey. This journey is ultimately inspired by the journey of Jesus Christ. Heroes throughout literary history serve as precursors, mirror images, or perversions of His heroism. The story of Jesus Himself serves as a metanarrative, an overarching or master story, for heroism. Christ has always been a true hero. Heroism founded in Christ transcends time and culture. All literary heroes will either parody or mirror the pattern set by Christ. Thus, Jesus can be established as a hub for all types of heroism. The commonality of the stories that we read and write, from *Wuthering Heights* to Virgil's *Aeneid* to the *Chronicles of Narnia*, points to the existence of a greater story and a higher hero—one that transcends human imagination.

FIRST STUDENT ESSAY

When the editors of the *Christian Research Journal* evaluated Bailey's paper for publication, they did not know that Bailey was a high school student. Bailey is the first high school student to be published in the *Christian Research Journal* in its almost 37-year history.

This is the first student essay we have published in *Classis*.

Sometime around the tenth century, an Anglo-Saxon poet awakens from a deep sleep with a shuddering breath. There are tears running smoothly down his cheeks, but he feels an overwhelming sense of hope despite the tears. He sits up, closes his eyes, and clenches his fists, trying to remember what he has been dreaming.

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There had been a tree—no, a cross—and it had been talking to him. As he continues to remember the dream, a beautiful poem begins to take shape in his mind. He realizes that he will not soon forget this dream. He is right. He will never forget it, and many others will have the chance to experience it as well. The poem he writes is none other than "The Dream of the Rood," an Anglo-Saxon work in which the narrator sees the cross in all its glory and hears the story of Christ's crucifixion from its point of view. The cross describes Jesus as a hero approaching an enemy.[1] The narrator wakes with a hope and desire to one day meet his hero face-to-face.

Fast-forward more than a thousand years: a ten-year-old boy pulls the sheet over his head and turns on a flashlight. The beam of light lands on a comic book filled with stories about superheroes. Almost every night, after his parents head to bed, he turns on this flashlight and reads just one more story. Twenty minutes later, he yawns, rubs his eyes, and closes the book. As he hides the flashlight, rolls over, and closes his eyes, he hopes that tonight his dreams might be filled with images of his heroes. There seems to be a striking difference between these two ideas of heroism. But, if the hero of the poet and the heroes of the little boy can share the title of hero, then there must be some link between Christ and Superman.

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

So who exactly is a hero? And what actions should be viewed as heroic? Katherine Blakeney suggests that a hero can be defined as "someone who sacrifices himself for the good of others."[2] Peter Thorslev believes a hero should be "bigger than life." He should be relatable and yet an idealization.[3] It is possible to link all heroes of all different categories to one ultimate hero—Jesus. In fact, the Bible, specifically the person of Christ, provides a metanarrative for heroism.

The Bible, in short, provides a standard for all of literature. In her article "The Joy of Reading Great Works," Kathleen Nielson says, ". . . only because God spoke words and made the universe can we human beings speak words after Him, fulfilling His image in us as we create with words."[4] Because our creation with words imitates God's creation, it is evident that God's sovereignty extends to the entire literary canon. Author Peter Leithart says, "The Bible tells . . . a story that is mysteriously 'built-into' the structure of our minds and practices so that even writers who resist this story cannot help but leave traces of it—faint and distorted as they may be—on every page."[5] If all stories reflect, in some way, the story God has written in history, it is logical that all heroes will reflect some, if not many, elements of the heroism of Christ.

Alabaster Mayor Marty Handlon, left, presents a proclamation to Evangel Classical Christian School senior Bailey Vaughn during a Feb. 22, 2016, City Council meeting. Courtesy of the Shelby County Reporter (Reporter Photo/Neal Wagner)

C. S. Lewis addresses this in "Myth Became Fact." He says, "The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also fact. The old myth of the dying god, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history."[6] Therefore, an exploration of select literary heroes will demonstrate what Lewis claims: all heroes embody the myth that only Christ made fact.

CHRIST AS HERO

If Christ is to be considered a metanarrative for heroism, He must first be proven a hero Himself. To believers, Jesus is Savior and, as such, an obvious hero-figure. He is not just another hero but the ultimate hero. He simultaneously defines and transcends the concept of human heroism.

Heroes who follow the traditional pattern of the hero's journey often experience favor or conflict with the gods, battles with mythical creatures, and voyages over treacherous waters. Thus, it can be said that, though Christ was Messiah, He does not qualify as a traditional hero. However, Leon J. Podles explains that of all the images used to describe Jesus, the image of hero is the most accurate.[7] All the attributes Christ displays culminate in the title of hero. One of the divine attributes of God is immutability. His nature is unchanging; His character consistent.

This prompts the question, "How can Christ become a hero if He existed at a time when there was no apparent need for one?" God's plan was always that Christ would be sent as savior and hero for mankind. Most ancient epics begin in the heat of battle or with a conflict already in full swing. The need for a hero to appear is obvious in the opening lines. Perhaps man begins stories with an obvious need for a hero because he cannot comprehend the idea of a hero without a need for a hero. When the world was created, it was perfect. But Christ was still Christ; He was still a hero. Man cannot fathom the idea of a savior before someone is in need of saving, but God did.

Even modern heroic ideals are derived from the biblical precedent of God calling on one person to save many. Biblical precedent demonstrates a pattern of God calling one person either to encourage or deliver His people in order to demonstrate His power. Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt; David defeats Goliath; Esther saves the Jews from Haman's plan to destroy them. In this way, God makes it clear that He is the one providing victory. God's pattern of leading one person to save many illustrates the words of Jesus when He says, "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).[8] Heroes are typically powerful, but they also typically have one major shortcoming. God's power being perfected in human weakness can be evidenced even in the life of the most powerful hero. For example, Samson accomplishes his greatest feat after he is stripped of his strength (Judges 16:26–30). Although there are many examples of God calling on an individual to save His people, Christ serves as the greatest model of this heroic standard.

Jesus fits the traditional standard of heroism in which heroes follow a set journey in order to complete the task given them and become truly heroic. It is nearly impossible to separate any story from the only original story God wrote through creation. Peter Leithart explains that he really does "see Christ everywhere and in everything, as the One in whom all things, including Western literature, consist" (28). If all heroism ultimately culminates in the person of Jesus Christ, it is logical that He would be able not only to fit but also have influence over all heroic standards.

Christ undergoes a journey in line with the classic hero's journey. He displays a divine pedigree as well as a supernatural conception because He is the Son of God born of a virgin; He displays supernatural power when He performs miracles; He was tested by the Devil himself in the wilderness; and, finally, He fought a final, climactic battle on the cross. His victory took the form of resurrection. In the context of the fantastical stories of ancient epics, heroes can accomplish amazing things. But Jesus stands above the crowd because His hero's journey is more than words on a page. It is history. It is fact. It is reality.

A TRANSCENDENT HEROISM

Next, it must be accepted that the heroism established by Christ transcends time and culture. This is not

possible until it is taken into consideration that no human creativity is completely original. In his work *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl*, N. D. Wilson says that when we view all of human activity as a reflection of a biblical metanarrative, we all become characters in God's infinite story. Wilson explains that God is the only original artist and that His canvas is forever expanding. He says that God uses even the smallest characters to piece together masterful story arcs as metanarratives for all facets of human art.[9] If all of human art is, in essence, a reproduction of God's story, it follows that heroic standards could never stray too far from the heroism of Christ.

Fallen man has constantly pursued capturing the perfect hero in literature. Leithart says that human art is limited insofar as we are capable only of mimicking preexisting art (30). The Bible serves as a key to other books and stories and so "all heroes may be compared to the true Hero, Jesus Christ" (24). This explains why all of man's attempts to construct a hero better than any before him have been in vain. Jesus is the perfect hero. That storyline has already been used.

LITERARY EXAMPLES OF HEROISM DERIVED FROM CHRIST

Since Christ does provide the standard for all types of heroism, even Byronic heroes imitate some aspects of His heroism. On the surface, a Byronic hero is a rebellious, passionate, overconfident character, usually with an air of mystery regarding his past. He also displays a strong "love for life" and desire for justice.[10] Thus, on examination, we find that these heroes ultimately pervert Christ's perfect ideal. Peter Thorslev says that part of the Byronic tradition involves a sense of self-analysis that uncovers the evil within human nature. It is the sin and corruption of Byronic heroes that give them credibility as tragic heroes. A Byronic hero purposefully distances himself from those he is supposed to save and, if he begins focusing on the wrong things, may become obsessed with them.

One example of a well-known Byronic hero is Heathcliff from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff embodies the character of a Byronic hero because he is distinctly separate from society. He purposefully isolates himself.

This isolation is not a healthy isolation, and so we can see that Heathcliff is a perversion of the heroic ideal by comparing him to Jesus. For example, Jesus often goes off by Himself to pray, and He is alone in the desert when tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1–13), but He does not allow these times of separation from society to render Him completely individualistic. While there were certainly aspects of His struggles that Christ had to deal with privately, He does not, as Byronic heroes do, lock himself away from the help those around Him can offer.

Heathcliff, in Byronic fashion, chooses to struggle more internally than any other character in the book. Toward the end of his life, he seems to be more restless than ever and, when asked to rest and to eat, he says, "I'll do both as soon as I possibly can. But you might as well bid a man struggling in the water rest within arms' length of the shore. I must reach it first, and then I'll rest."[11] He is able to offer little explanation for his strange behavior; indeed, he seems to be searching for answers more than anyone else.

This anxiety at the end of life parodies the grief and weight of responsibility experienced by Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. Christ does not wish to die, as Heathcliff implies, but is willing to in order to accomplish the will of the Father (Luke 22:42–44). The pattern observed in Heathcliff provides a more realistic outcome of fallen man attempting to be a hero than the traditional hero's journey of the ancients.

An idealized perception of a traditional hero can be found in Aeneas, the Trojan hero who was destined to be the founder of the Roman people. He follows a hero's journey consistent with the classic model. Aeneas is said

to have been the son of the goddess Venus, and thus to have had a divine lineage.

Aeneas also goes through tests much like other heroes of antiquity. For example, when the Trojans set sail, a storm drives them to the Island of the Harpies—creatures that Virgil says are crueler than any others.[12] A prominent event in the cycle of Aeneas's hero's journey is his descent into the underworld. Aeneas enters the underworld, armed with the advice of the Sybil, to see his father once more.[13] This is an important step in his journey because it mirrors Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Aeneas emerges from the underworld with the ability to found Rome; Christ with the intent of establishing the rule of the kingdom of heaven.

While there are clear parallels between Jesus and traditional heroes, some heroes are purposeful symbols for Christ. One such character who shows strong symbolism as a hero is Aslan in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Aslan clearly makes a Christlike sacrifice in the story. In fact, the book is Lewis's way of retelling the story of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.[14] Lewis himself wrote, "The whole Narnian story is about Christ. That is to say, I asked myself 'Supposing that there really was a world like Narnia and supposing it had (like our world) gone wrong and supposing Christ wanted to go into that world and save it (as He did ours), what might have happened?' The stories are my answers" (quoted in Baehr). Lewis provides obvious Christian symbolism throughout his series, but it is particularly highlighted in the character of Aslan.

A CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Christ is, therefore, a hero; His heroism transcends time and culture; and literary heroes provide both parodies and mirror images of Christ's heroism. However, some may claim that the road to heroism—a road paved by Christ—eventually can lead to defeat. This is correct. All heroes invented by men can and will be defeated. Fallen man simply cannot comprehend a hero without flaws, and an imperfect hero is one who will eventually lose a battle. Even the most courageous heroes, as Podles assures us, will fall prey to the enemy of death.

The Greeks admired heroes who achieved *kleos*[15] during this life because no man can truly live forever and, by achieving glory, one might preserve his name for the ages. Jesus, on the other hand, cannot be defeated. He overcame death once and for all. As Christians, we have a hero who will live forever not only in renown but also in actuality.

Christ is a hero. His heroism is mirrored in stories throughout time and across cultures and there is no branch of heroism uninfluenced by His ultimate heroism. As Christians, we recognize that Christ is "the author and perfecter of faith" but rarely do we take time to think of Him as the author and perfecter of our art (Heb. 12:2). Envision the Greek god Atlas balancing the whole world on his shoulders. This imagery establishes Atlas as a Christ figure. In a distinct race, or even a world, of literary heroes, Christ bears the weight of all heroic endeavors upon Himself. All heroes in this globe hold onto and support each other striving all the while to become more like Christ. Even Byronic and tragic heroes, who attempt to sever the bonds of heroism, provide a platform to elevate other heroes who more closely resemble the character of Christ. God's sovereignty extends to all of literature. As Ephesians 1:11 says, in Christ is "the summing up of all things," and in Acts, it is explained that even pagan poets display that it is only in Christ that "we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28). Heroes throughout time have preached the gospel on the pages of great literature. It may start as a whisper, but when we begin to listen purposefully, it turns into a resounding declaration that Jesus is, indeed, Lord of lords and Hero of heroes.

NOTES

1. "The Dream of the Rood," trans. Richard Hamer (University of Oxford: University of Oxford, 1970).

2. Katherine Blakeney, "Perceptions of Heroes and Villains in European Literature," *Student Pulse*, 2010.

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9. N. D. Wilson, *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009).

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12. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Viking, 2006).

13. *The Aeneid*, VI. 126–77.

14. Ted Baehr, "The Deeper Truth behind the Chronicles of Narnia," Christian Broadcasting Network, *Movieguide Magazine*, 2015; available at http://www1.cbn.com/books/deepertruth-behind-chronicles-narnia.

15. "*Kleo*s can be translated 'glory' or 'fame.' In its most basic sense, kleos means 'what other people say about you,' what is spoken aloud about you." Elizabeth Vandiver, "Glory, Honor, and the Wrath of Achilles," in *The Iliad* of Homer (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 1999).

CHILDREN PLAYING ON IRON POLE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Trinity Play Park, 1900

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