

Perspectives

IN COVENANT EDUCATION

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Statement of Purpose

Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published quarterly, in November, February, May, and August by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute. The purpose of this magazine, in most general terms, is to advance the cause of distinctively Christian education as it is conceived in the Protestant Reformed community. More specifically, the magazine is intended to serve as an encouragement and an inducement toward individual scholarship, and a medium for the development of distinctive principles and methods of teaching. The journal is meant to be a vehicle of communication, not only within the profession, but within the Protestant Reformed community and within the Christian community in general.

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The Other Question to Ask about Technology

Tom Bergman

The editorial in the previous issue of *Perspectives in Covenant Education* addressed the recently popular topic of the inverted classroom. A traditional classroom utilizes classroom time mainly for instruction, while the assignments are done outside the classroom as homework. An inverted classroom reverses this arrangement; instructional videos are to be viewed outside of classroom time, and assignments are to be done during the class period when the teacher is present. I have come to find out that the prevailing term is “flipped classroom” rather than “inverted classroom.” When that piece was written a few months ago, I thought it was a relatively new and pertinent topic to address in the pages of our journal. I had no idea that we were on the cusp of a flipped-classroom craze.

Well, to call it a craze is an exaggeration. However, since then, I have been inundated with links and news about the flipped classroom. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) offers a daily e-mail message containing news briefs of educational news and the links to those articles. Within the past month alone, NCTM spotlighted a number of news items on this topic. There was a recent online article called “Bill Nye ‘The Science Guy’ Talks Flipped Classrooms.”¹ From the Mankato (Minnesota) Free Press was a link for “Lesson at home plus homework at school equals flipped math classroom.”² Then I received several notices about NCTM President Linda M. Gojak’s cautionary “To Flip or Not to Flip: That is NOT the Question.”³ A few days later, I saw “Before We Flip Classrooms, Let’s Rethink What We’re Flipping To” at the Edutopia website.⁴ These were the only links I perused, but there were more.

The key to flipping the classroom is the technology that makes it possible. Linda Gojak notes the technological element in her definition, “Flipping is a re-

1 <http://thejournal.com/Articles/2012>

2 <http://mankatofreepress.com/local>

3 <http://www.nctm.org/about/content.aspx?id=34585>

4 <http://www.edutopia.org/blog>

versed teaching model that delivers instruction usually at home, through interactive teacher-created videos, while moving ‘homework’ to the classroom.” Bill Nye gives a more enthusiastic impression, “We can put video up on the Web, where everybody can see it. It’s changing the world. You don’t have to go to class [to] listen to the lecture. You can watch, or listen, to the lecture before you get there, on your personal device. It’s cool.”

Additionally, we now have the opinion of the U. S. Secretary of Education, Mr. Arne Duncan, that textbooks are going to be obsolete in the near future, replace by electronic versions on tablet computers. Today’s technology is so advanced and so widely accessible that it can affect, impact, even overturn the whole nature of instruction. How do we respond?

Simply put, we will use the tools at hand with discretion.

It is common practice for us to use technology, even high-tech gadgets, in our classrooms, as school budgets may allow. We use all sorts of wired and wireless devices to present material in effective ways that can reach our twenty-first-century students. We project, we stream, we link, we blog, we interact, we...we even “verb” new words to describe the things we are doing with these devices. Many practical applications of amazing hardware and software—all for the benefit of the students’ learning!

Our schools do not have technology funds so vast that we buy these devices on a whim and use them with scarcely a thought. With limited technology funds at our disposal, decisions are prudently made to purchase a few items and to use them wisely and efficiently. Discretion is the key. Use technology with discretion—not technology for technology’s sake, but technology applied with purposeful forethought.

The Christian teacher always adds an extra layer of caution. In addition to the pedagogical pros and cons, we consistently ask, “Will this have a positive or negative spiritual impact on the students?” It is not a conscious thought every time; Christian schoolteachers instinctively consider the “how” and the “why” of the “what” that we do.

In the February 2012 issue of *Christian Educators Journal*, Derek C. Schuurman offers a valuable insight to Christian teachers. In his article, “Technology Has a Message,” Schuurman disputes the notion that “technology is merely a tool.”⁵ The educational devices we use or could use in the classroom are not

5 Schuurman, Derek C. “Technology Has a Message” *Christian Educators Journal*. Feb.

merely inanimate, electronic machines. Technology requires human activity and direction. He cautions us to be careful that we do not blindly or naively allow technological tools to reshape our classroom in unintentional, undesirable ways.

Schuurman's strongest point is his reference to a question posed by Andy Crouch's book *Culture Making* (2008). Instead of stopping at the question, "What can I do with it?" the teacher ought to proceed to the next question "What does it make impossible or more difficult?"⁶ Although it may be easier to predict what can be done with new technology (just listen to the sales pitches and the marketing ploys), it is even more critical to wonder what might be happening that should not be happening. Will using this device make everything brighter and faster, only to miss a certain segment of my class? Will using this device streamline my planning and preparation, only to stunt something else that I need to do? Will using this new approach mean that I can no longer utilize some older, low-tech ideas that are too valuable to give up? Do the benefits of what I now can do outweigh the drawbacks of what is now much harder for me to implement?

Suppose having students pound dust out of chalkboard erasers was a critical part of education. Then removing chalkboards and switching to whiteboards would bring a major change. Chalkboard eraser cleaning by students would come to an end. Is the gain worth the loss? Look beyond the silly example to ponder the underlying principle. Weigh the costs—the hidden ones, too.

Crouch's question does not apply the brakes to new technology in the classroom. The question put forward by Schuurman and Crouch only helps to clean the windshield for us so that we can see a little better going into each decision. "What does it makes impossible or more difficult?" That is, what might I have to change that I cannot afford to change?

If we are faithful in asking these questions, we will find huge benefits and freedoms in the advantages brought on by new technologies. But with respect to tablet computers and mini tablets, flipped classrooms, paperless classrooms, electronic textbooks, and who knows what else, let us leap ahead and embrace them to the extent that they allow us to do a better job of what we ought to be teaching, without letting technology revamp the whole face of education so that we're prevented from doing what we can't afford to lose.

2012, 4-7.

6 Ibid, 5.

Benefits of Studying Mythology in our Schools

John Huizenga

Most complaints against a study of Greek mythology boil down to the argument that mythology is pointless...if not harmful. However, mythology taught in the light of Scripture by a godly teacher will serve to prepare our children for the battles they will face in the world. Mythology is not just old stories about gods and goddesses, but it is the story that the ungodly world today continues to tell itself. Mythology is alive and well, and it continues to shape thinking and is developed in the continual efforts of man to rid himself of the one true God of heaven and earth. More and more we hear the term “myth” applied even to the word of God as the apostate church dissolves into unbelief. For this reason, mythology is not simply a historical curiosity, but it defines a major battlefield that is active for the Christian today. Our children need all the preparation they can get before entering the battlefield in college or the workplace.

I have a poster in my classroom of a quote from John Calvin in the introduction to his *Institutes*: “Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” I like having the poster up because it reminds me to evaluate from time to time whether or not what I am learning and what the students are learning is contributing to true and solid wisdom. If I am going to teach mythology, I want to be assured that the students will be taught something that can make them grow in their knowledge of themselves and of God. Here are some thoughts and ideas for instruction as we help students grow in wisdom through a study of Greek mythology.

BENEFIT 1) *Enhanced understanding of English and literature (including the Standard Bearer and other good Reformed literature)*

The Greeks had the creative gifts, the powers of observation, and the opportunity to package their observations and experiences into lively characters and

stories. Just as any classic story, the stories have endured because the ideas and themes are universal. The stories contain certain characteristics of mankind and experiences that are universal and happen over and over again. Everyone at one point or another finds himself in a difficult situation in which the options are very difficult or unacceptable, and to find a middle way requires great courage or hard work. Knowing the story of Ulysses as he tried to steer his ship between the monsters of Scylla and Charybdis helps one to see the whole range of difficulties, emotions, and sacrifice involved in these situations. When a writer makes reference to this story, he not only is able to convey the grave danger of the issue, but is able to convey it efficiently and without extra explanations that can't beat the drama of the Greeks. To have some familiarity with Greek mythology is to have a treasure chest of rich conceptual nuggets that have been distilled and refined like a gallon of pure maple syrup. If the writer and his audience share the same background knowledge, the audience can more quickly and accurately absorb the ideas of the writer.

If we are looking for some concrete practical benefits of knowing Greek mythology, then we can look to good English literature and even meaty reading such as the *Standard Bearer* or *Beacon Lights*. The following are some quotes from writing which make references to Greek mythology to illuminate a particular truth:

The reformers had to guide the ship of the Reformation between the dangers on the left in the Roman Catholic Church, and on the right in the influential radical movement—the left wing opposition and the right wing opposition; the Scylla of Rome and the Charybdis of the radicals.¹

The reference to the Roman god Janus calls to mind Herman Hoeksema's charge that the well-meant gospel offer makes God into a sort of Janus, a two-faced god. One of his faces reminds you of Augustine, Calvin, Gomarus; but the other shows the unmistakable features of Pelagius, Arminius, Episcopius.²

Oh! listen not to the siren song of those who tell you of your moral dignity, and your mighty elevation in matters of salvation. Ye are not perfect; that great word, 'ruin,' is written on your heart; and death is stamped upon your spirit.³

1 Professor Hanko *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 78; No. 11; March 1, 2001

2 Herman Hoeksema. *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, vol. 45 no. 2

3 Charles Spurgeon, sermon on John 5:40

We live in an age in which feeling is everything. Feeling is the end-all and be-all of life. And when this siren song of rapturous, emotional joy of union with God comes dinning in our ears at times when our lives seem barren and cold, it seems as if the emotional high of mysticism is eminently desirable. But it is a siren song that leads to destruction.⁴

For just a moment, leave the 'King James' part out of it! It is highly significant that the appellations 'King James Version' or 'Authorized Version' date only from the early 19th century, to distinguish this translation from the modern versions that began to spring up like hydra's heads about that time; up to the early 19th century, all the way from 1611, this version was known simply as "The Holy Bible."⁵

We live in a world that is permeated with Greek mythology. The classic literature which has endured the test of time and continues to be studied contains references to mythology that cannot be fully grasped without some knowledge of mythology. Greek mythology is not simply a religion of many gods. In fact, mythology more often resembles a scientific analysis of the world and man. Everything from psychology to natural phenomena was carefully analyzed by the Greeks, patterns were noticed, and instead of writing textbooks, the fertile imaginations of the Greeks created entertaining stories to capture their observations. Today, man's attempt to grasp the concept of the origins of the world with a Big Bang are rooted in his observations of the universe apart from God just like the Greek's attempt to grasp the phenomena of lightning and thunder with the god Zeus.

The result of creating a grand array of stories that capture observations and analysis of experiences in this world is a colorful palette of time-tested observations with which many readers are familiar. Writers find this colorful palette to be very useful in conveying their ideas and it adds a spark and flavor that makes an otherwise bland subject more palatable. Those who are well read and dig deeply into their collection of expressions often have significant things to say.

BENEFIT 2) *Better understanding of English words, idioms, business names, etc.*

Greek mythology is a part of the world in which we live, and we can no sooner escape mythology than we can escape life in this world. Mythology permeates the world because, as we noticed before, it captures observations and experiences we have in this world. The stories themselves are not true stories or history, but they

4 Herman Hanko, http://www.prca.org/articles/article_11.html

5 Jon Langerak. *Beacon Lights*, May 2011

convey certain truths about life and society in this world. The result is that Greek mythology has endured through the ages, and it has permeated the English language in its idioms and vocabulary as well as the realm of business and society in the names given to companies, products, and more.

The world of business taps into the powerful current of Greek mythology by adopting the mythological names and places for their own names.⁶ The owner of a high-end Greek restaurant in Windsor, Ontario has compiled a rather comprehensive collection of names. He writes, “Mythology is everywhere! Daily you run across instances of words, city names, companies, literary allusions—and many planets and constellations—that take their name or borrow their theme from myths. Because of your many requests, I’ve provided a couple of thousand excellent examples to help you get started in your research. Remember, you’re surrounded by mythology in today’s society, whether you realize it or not!” He then provides pages of companies and groups, words and phrases, planets and constellations, literary and pop culture, and place names which originate from Greek mythology. In the page on place names, he writes “Consider that there are at least 16 cities named Athens in the United States! Or, even more amazing, there exist no less than 26 American cities that contain Troy in their names!”

BENEFIT 3) *Battle the dangers of ignorance*

One might argue that the believer could live in this world in ignorance of all the mythological background and get along just fine. Even the majority of unbelievers live in ignorance of most of the mythological background to their vocabulary, shoe stores, and eating establishments. I get along alright with my ignorance of the sports world, though I sometimes wish I knew more. The same argument—“I did fine in life without it, so you don’t need it”—could be made for other items in the curriculum, so this in itself does not provide a good reason to be ignorant of mythology.

Ignorance does not help the young man or woman who enters the college classroom unprepared for those who prey on the ignorant in hopes of instilling the seeds of doubt. Real spiritual danger is encountered when teachers include parts of the Bible in the anthology of mythology, and tailor a definition of mythology to be broad enough to include stories found in the Bible. The real danger of mythology is not found in reading and studying mythology, but rather an ignorance of mythology and a blurring of the lines by scholars and teachers

6 <http://thanasis.com/modern/index.htm>

who are able to break down a young student who can be made to feel foolish and who will question his own beliefs when his ignorance is exposed. Under the siren song of learned professors, a student may start to think, “I always knew mythology was false, but I never considered looking at mythology as a way of expressing other truths, so maybe there is a sense in which parts of the Bible could be considered a myth and still be the truth of God.” This is happening at Christian colleges.

Some professors delight in displaying their great knowledge by pointing out facts that may seem to cast doubts on Scripture. Perhaps they quote a passage such as 2 Peter 2:4 and point out that the word translated “hell” is the Greek word “Tartarus” which originates in Greek philosophy and mythology.⁷ The professor might try to argue that the doctrine of hell found in the Bible is really only a re-working of Greek mythology and not to be taken any more seriously than Greek mythology. My personal explanation is simply that Peter was familiar with the stories (God prepared him for his work of writing down this part of the word of God) and found the word “Tartarus,” so eloquently described by the Greeks, to be exactly the word he needed to express the truth of God concerning hell. Earlier Peter uses the Greek term “*mythos*” to define the antithesis between the Greek stories, “fables,” and the truth of God.⁸

7 A thread from an internet discussion on this topic goes as follows: “I must admit that it is mysterious in the extreme (from a traditional Christian point of view) to find pagan Greek mythology taught authoritatively as truth in Scripture. Peter’s use of the word “*Tartarus*” is most perplexing because it is nowhere defined in Scripture. Thus, there is no way for any Christian to know what the Bible means without studying pagan Greek mythology. But worse, Peter’s use of that word appears to be an implicit endorsement of the entire Greek mythological system, because “*Tartarus*” was the lowest place in Hades. Likewise, John personified Thanatos (Death) and Hades (Hell) in the same way as the Greeks when they invented their gods who went by those names: Revelation 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. You have opened a most interesting topic.”

<http://www.biblewheel.com/forum/showthread.php?2081-Greek-Mythology-in-the-Bible>
8 2 Peter 1:16 “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

BENEFIT 4) *A rich opportunity to apply and develop an aspect of the antithesis*

A good course in mythology in our high schools would be incomplete if it focused only on the Greek myths and did not develop the sharp antithetical distinction between the literal history of Genesis 1–11 and the stories of Greek mythology. We need to realize that mythology is not some obscure curiosity of learning to be studied for some extra credit or for fun. Mythology has crept into the studies of higher learning, morphed into a variety of academic terms, and has quietly filled seminaries, colleges, and schools. Mythology has, in fact, become the foundation of western culture, apostate church theology, and the world-views of many who call themselves Christian. The antithetical distinction between Bible history and mythology has disappeared in many churches and Christian colleges.

How has this happened? Professor David J. Engelsma, in his pamphlet “Genesis 1–11: Myth or History,” explains how the term “myth” is avoided in discussing matters of faith because we generally think of myths simply as false stories about gods and most Christian college professors would not want to use this term to describe Genesis 1–11. However, we need to understand that having a simplistic definition of “myth” is dangerous because the term “myth” actually encompasses a larger idea, and scholars have been quite creative with using terms that fall under the umbrella of “myth” without others realizing it. Some of the more obvious terms that we recognize as bad would include words like “legend” or “saga,” but other terms seem to be more benign: primal or primeval history; stylized, literary, or symbolic stories; allegorical; literary genre; semipoetic narrative cast in a historic-artistic framework; or theologized history. Some of the phrases used such as “confession about God,” or “confession of faith” even sound biblical, but what is meant is really “myth.” Whatever term is used, those who use them to describe Genesis 1–11 do not believe that the events recorded ever really happened. The significance of Genesis 1–11 is not that it is real history, but rather “The basic purpose is to instruct men on the ultimate realities that have an immediate bearing on daily life and on how to engage vitally in these realities to live successfully. It contains “truths to live by” rather than “theology to speculate on.”⁹ This is, in fact, the classic definition of mythology.

For hundreds of years the church made a clear distinction between the history recorded in Genesis 1–11 and the ancient myths of the Greeks. The story

9 Bruce Waltke, “The First Seven Days,” 46.

of creation, the flood, and the divisions of the nations was understood clearly as real history, the true word of God. The stories of Greek mythology were never regarded as true history. A myth is defined as simply a traditional story whose importance lies not in its being a fact, but rather its significance for a culture in explaining certain practices, behavior, or natural phenomena. Since the so-called Enlightenment, the church has toyed with and is now widely accepting the notion that the Bible is largely a collection of myths. Thus Genesis 1–11 is how the Jews explain their existence and special place in the world. The stories motivate those who cling to them to live and behave in the way that they do. Everyone has his own way to give structure and meaning to life, and the Jews and Christians cling to these stories to explain their practices and culture. Multitudes are accepting this idea that Genesis 1–11 is mythology, and that it is perfectly acceptable to regard it as mythology and still be a Christian. Such a “Christian” needs to redefine salvation and abandon Reformed theology, if not all of Christianity. Christianity, then, is just one among many acceptable ways to live and think. But in thinking this way, the apostate church has completely lost sight of the antithesis: a real Creator God who saves his church, in contrast to stories that merely provide some structure and help us cope with life—truth revealed by God vs. all the ideas generated by the depraved mind of man.

Believing the truth of man’s depravity is essential in maintaining an anti-theological perspective with mythology. The definition of mythology given in the introduction avoids the concept of man’s depravity and therefore is not entirely accurate. Mythology is not simply “a traditional story whose importance lies not in its being a fact, but rather its significance for a culture in explaining certain practices, behavior, or natural phenomena.” The stories do not come from innocent wonder and careful reflection on life. Rather it must be understood that it is a traditional story invented by men who *refuse to see the power and godhead of God and attempt to create meaning and structure in life apart from God*. Some of the stories may reflect what is indeed true in this world, just like scientific truths developed by an ungodly scientist. Knowing that mythology is the product of a depraved mind which seeks to drive God from the world, we as believers see the stories of creation, the fall, and the origin of the nations of the world as true and real history revealed to us by God himself.

We know the truth of man’s depravity and the reality of God’s revelation *by faith*. We cannot use reason and logical arguments to prove to an unbeliever that Genesis 1–11 does not belong to the category of mythology. Even so, there is a

certain blindness in those who deny the evidence of God's handiwork in creation and the clear distinction between Greek mythology and the revelation of God in Genesis 1–11. One who is familiar with Greek mythology immediately sees that the style, majesty, and truths in Genesis 1–11 are in no way comparable or on par with that of the Greek myths. The history of Genesis 1–11 is written as history. The church has always read it as true history. The so-called Judeo-Christian culture of America and other Western nations may very well be rooted in a mythological understanding of Genesis 1–11, but the church is rooted in a historical understanding of Genesis 1–11. Without this antithetical distinction, the church loses its identity as the church, and dissolves into the world of unbelief. Professor Engelsma writes, "The churches have abandoned the antithesis: the absolute spiritual separation between the world of the ungodly and the holy people of God, between the mind of the enemies of God and the mind of Christ in his friends."¹⁰

Scripture itself maintains a sharp antithesis between the word of God and the stories that make up mythology. The term "myth" was used already by the Greeks and is transliterated directly to our English word "myth." God uses the word in Scripture to define the antithesis. Professor Engelsma summarizes the Scriptural use of the term as follows:

Scripture speaks of myths. In the Greek of the New Testament, Scripture speaks of myths explicitly: the Greek word is *muthos*, "myth." The King James Version uniformly translates this Greek word as "fables." But Scripture denies that the biblical message is based on, or derived from, myths: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables (Greek: *muthos*), when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (II Pet. 1:16). It warns the saints, particularly ministers, against myths: "Neither give heed to fables (Greek: *muthos*)" (I Tim. 1:4). Nevertheless, Scripture prophesies that in the last days, under the influence of unsound teachers—"mythologians," we may call them—professing Christians will turn from the truth to myths: "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (Greek: *muthos*)" (II Tim. 4:4).

This prophecy is now fulfilled in evangelical and Reformed churches in that men and women hold Genesis 1–11 for myth. They have turned

10 David J. Engelsma, "Genesis 1–11: Myth or History"

from Genesis 1–11 as truth to Genesis 1–11 as myth.¹¹

Edith Hamilton points out that the concept of god in mythology is really made in the image of man. The gods are only the big shadows of man on the sheet as they live and play on the earth. The Greeks create their gods. This concept of god is antithetically opposed to God as he reveals himself in the Bible. The God of Scripture is the “Wholly Other.” he is the creator; we are the creature. Our young men and women need to understand this as they go out into the world, whether in college or the workplace.

BENEFIT 5) *A rich opportunity to define and articulate a biblical world-and-life view*

Edith Hamilton was a leading authority in the study of mythology who insisted that the appearance of Greek mythology in history was a radical jump from the idol gods who represented the “omnipotent Unknown” and the “terrifying incomprehensibilities” to gods that “were made in the image of man.”¹² Until the Greeks, the world of unbelievers attempted to reduce their knowledge of God to creatures of this earth (Romans 1). The Greeks, it seems, were able to blind themselves sufficiently to the testimony of God in creation so that they fully embraced the old lie that Man is the center of the universe. In doing so, they did not try to reduce God to images of creatures, but rather created gods after the image of man.

Some details that illustrate this Greek development of a worldview devoid of God are found in a couple of paragraphs in an essay from SparkNotes on Hamilton’s book:

One of the most important aspects of the Greek worldview was that it was the first to put humans at the center of the universe. Unlike the animal deities of the Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the gods of the Greeks are human in form. Not only do they possess human physical characteristics, but they embody the emotional flaws of humans as well. Unlike the gods of other ancient civilizations, Greek gods are not infinitely omniscient and omnipotent, manifesting typical human foibles such as philandering, feasting and drinking, and obsessive jealousy. To the Greeks, the life of the gods so closely resembled human life that the gods felt real and tangible, rather than incomprehensible and remote.

11 Ibid.

12 Edith Hamilton. *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*. New York: Penguin Books, 1969, 17.

In this way, Hamilton argues, the myths of the Greeks reflect a view of the universe that acknowledges the mystery and beauty of humanity. Even the most magical of Greek myths contain real-world elements: the supernatural Hercules lives in the very real city of Thebes, and the goddess Aphrodite is born in a spot any ancient tourist could visit, off the island of Cythera. In general, Greek myths involve less strange and frightening magic than the myths of other ancient civilizations. In this more rational world, individuals become heroes by virtue of bravery and strength rather than supernatural powers. Hamilton contends that this revolutionary way of thinking about the world elevates humans and the worth of their abilities, making it a far less terrifying place in which to live.

The mythology developed by the Greeks is the seed that has sprouted and grown into the idolatry and mythology of today. Man has continued to distance himself from God and see himself as a god. Man's philosophies, his inventions, and his ethics have become the gods that rule life. These ideals and values have become what is called the "*mythos*" of America and Western culture. Textbooks for high school speech classes include "*mythos*" as one of the strategies for good persuasive arguments. By "*mythos*" is meant an appeal to such things as "American ideals" or the system of beliefs and values of a society. Because Western nations are nominally Christian, the values found in the Bible also make up a good part of its *mythos*. As science and Darwinian thinking drive the values and goals of life, these too are dumped into the *mythos* soup. The Greeks created Zeus to represent the glory and power of man, and now Zeus has evolved into Almighty Science. And as this worldview envelops the church, we see that Greek mythology has become the seed of modernism.

The Greek world-and-life view was distinctly man-centered and devoid of an almighty creator God. This seed seemed to lay dormant for a time in history when the blinding light of Christ coming into this world and the dominance of the church held at bay the spiritual darkness of the Greek view of life, but by the time true science began to develop in the light of God's word, the darkness of Greek thinking began again to envelop the world and science. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment proved to be fertile ground for this seed to sprout and grow into the massive tree it is today.

When we take a closer look at the Greek world-and-life view and compare it to that of Western culture in America, we will notice the similarities. I will take a brief look at six areas and show the antithetical contrast with a biblical worldview.

Life: The Greeks believed that life originated in spontaneous generation from nonliving earth. It was not necessarily gradual, but came through a series of disasters and survival. Modern evolutionists cling to the notion of billions of years, but have also been forced to abandon ideas of a smooth evolutionary development and have adopted an idea of adaptation to a series of disasters and survival. In contrast to this view of life, the Christian understands that life is created by God who is creator of all things and eternally alive. Man was created in the image of God—able to know and live with God as king of creation.

Human Nature: Greeks perceived that human nature is such that man is devolving and will eventually destroy himself. While modern man talks about progress and upward development, the reality that he can't ignore is that this world is becoming increasingly polluted and wars constantly threaten total destruction. At least the Greeks were honest about what they saw. The Christian understanding of human nature is that it is fallen from a once good state in which man was a king who could reign in wisdom forever over a perfect earth. More serious than a sad self-destruction is the truth that fallen man has proudly rebelled against God himself.

A Happy Life: The Greek vision of a happy life was one that satisfied all earthly desires. It was not eternal life in a spiritual realm, but it was an earthly life lived in a perfect land of plenty. They recognized this as an ideal and something very difficult, but not impossible to achieve in this life. This observation is reflected in their story of the Hyperboreans who were a race of people who lived in a land beyond the cold north where the climate was eternal spring. People lived there, and a few had visited, but it was extremely difficult, and most people had to deal with a difficult and hard life. The American vision of the ultimate life is not much different. With enough money, luck, and hard work, there are enough who appear to attain to the ultimate life to keep the hope alive. It is not a hope in eternal life, but rather a good life with a graceful death. The Christian understands the vanity of this life due to the corruption of sin. Even the best earthly life is vain and empty apart from life with God. For the Christian, every circumstance in life, even the uncomfortable and discouraging, serves his life with God. Fellowship with the creator and redeemer is the ultimate goal and reality of true joy.

The Purpose of Life: For the Greeks, the purpose of life was to do your best to find happiness in this life and freedom from toil. America is the land where the widest possible opportunities are offered for life, liberty, and the pursuit of hap-

piness. The Christian gives glory of God, and to that end he seeks to grow in his knowledge of God.

Piety: Piety, for the Greeks, was necessary to appease the gods and promote safety for mankind. In American thought, showing respect and devotion to American traditions and values, and also expressing loyalty to those things which rule life in America, is the way to find blessing as well as peace and safety for mankind. Science will bring blessings if we give the offerings of money and sacrifice to the support of man's wisdom. If we take good care of this earth, and respect the values of others, we will find that the earth will take good care of us. The Christian does not try to earn or merit anything with devotion to God. Rather, piety is the response of thankful obedience to God.

God: The Greeks saw man in all his beauty and intelligence as god. They made gods in their own image. Man today worships what his body and mind desires, and in doing so he also makes his gods in his own image. Christians understand God to be an eternal being who created all things for his glory, and made man in his own image to live in perfect fellowship with him forever. He sovereignly accomplishes his purpose to reveal the depth of his love and wisdom in the way of turning even the rebellion of Satan to accomplish his purposes.

Language, in many ways, embodies the way of thinking and the culture of those who speak it—the Greek language is no exception. I find it striking that God was pleased to reveal himself in the New Testament in the Greek language. Volumes could be written to describe the peculiar characteristics of the Greek language in distinction from other languages, but suffice it to say that God prepared the Greek mind and the language that developed from this particular people with their unique characteristics, with the purpose of revealing himself. Over and over again throughout history, almost as a sort of divine irony, God will turn the triumphs of Satan into a victory for the church. Moses was trained in Egypt, the symbol of bondage to sin. Israel was brought to Canaan, the focus of God's curse. Christ was born in the middle of the Roman Empire, which was an attempt at an anti-Christian kingdom. God takes the culture of anti-Christ and sovereignly uses it to spell out the gospel of salvation. We are not called to redeem creation, but rather, our calling is to proclaim this gospel to our children and to the ends of the earth.

Sea Legs

Jay Kalsbeek

When a landlubber boards a ship it takes a while for him to be able to walk smoothly and confidently across that swaying, pitching deck. The mariner who spends his life aboard ship has mastered the art of anticipating the swells and rolls of the water and the deck under his feet. He moves confidently around with no thought for balance as he is accustomed to life on the seas. As we have ended our first year and are beginning our second year of high school [at Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School in Loveland, Colorado] we are beginning to move past that stage of landlubber into the realm of the mariner.

In the summer of 2011 our ship was built. The admiral of the fleet and his staff worked hard at getting things ready for the launch. They found a captain to sail the ship and formed a plan for the development of the crew. The necessary research was done on the cost of keeping the boat afloat and on the supplies needed to feed the crew. Approval was sought of Parliament for the establishment and building of the ship and Parliament readily saw the need and gave overwhelming approval.

Last year our ship set sail. It began with seven crew members and one captain. The year began with both crew and captain unfamiliar with each other. The captain had to discover the strengths and weaknesses of each crew member. Would they be able to manage the new environment? Would they prove worthy of their calling as crew? Could they succeed at the tasks that were set out for them?

They, in turn, had to learn the personality of the captain. What were his expectations? Was he a capable teacher and leader? Would he help them weather the storms and billows that round them would swell? It was going to take time to learn how to walk on the rolling, heaving deck. It was going to take patience and perseverance to learn what was expected.

The classes that the students took were tenth grade courses. They took Biology during first period (using a Bob Jones University publication) and weathered

their way through cells, genetics, bacteria, fungi, invertebrates, fish, and human anatomy/physiology. Second period was Church History and the billows of knowledge threatened to sink them. They learned about the early church, apostles, church fathers, and on up to the Synod of Dordt and the controversy of 1953 (who is Klaas Schilder?). Third period was Geometry and the waves of logic that rose up were battled valiantly. Postulates, theorems, vertical angles, alternate interior angles, inscribed angles, and much more were discussed and eventually learned. Fourth period was Spanish and the crew took on the daunting task of learning a new language. Speaking the language in class when answering or asking questions, reviewing vocabulary (a must), the crew struggled to meet the demands of mastering the intricacies of Spanish (much work still needs to be done).

A long lunch was planned so the captain could spend time in extra-curricular reading. *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas was read and discussed. The crew enjoyed this interlude and the book left a lasting impression on them. Fifth period was U. S. History and the settlement of this continent. From the tower of Babel through the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and the Progressive Movement the ship was sailed and these events examined.

Sixth period was English Composition and the crew was introduced to essay writing. The basic introduction, main body, and conclusion were introduced and sermon development was held up as a prime example. Different types of writing, like persuasive (why you should order a burger at a Mexican restaurant) academic (term paper, library research) and literary analysis were examined and practiced. Seventh period was a blend of study hall, Computer Application, and Choir. Computer application dealt with the different capabilities of Microsoft 2010 as seen in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint (the stunning visuals combined with our Choir program), Excel (difficult projects made easy), and Publisher.

Now the first year is finished. The landlubbers are mariners who stride across the deck with confidence and swagger. They have learned the names of all the sails and know how to tie the many different knots. They can read the weather and navigate the waters. They understand the tides and the currents. They have gained their sea legs.

We are enjoying this new school year and the addition of a new first mate and two new crew members. They take their cues from those of us who have studied the sea this year. They have the advantage of an experienced crew and captain. There will be storms and billows. There will be thunderings and lightnings. There

will be treacherous rocks ahead that will need to be avoided. But we have our sea legs. We can weather the storms. We need not fear the lightning. We can avoid the rocks.

Thanks be to God for our ship, our captain, and our crew. With Psalm 93:3, 4 we confess “The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.”

Book Reviews

Children and Youth Literature

Brenda Dykstra

Newbery Honor Book (1966)

The Watsons Go To Birmingham—1963, by Christopher Paul Curtis. 210 pages; Laurel Leaf; 1995. Recommended ages: 10–13 years.

Sometimes they deserved the name Weird Watsons. Ten-year-old narrator Kenny Watson introduces readers to his parents, little sister Joetta, and tough, delinquent-wannabe Byron.

But the story—a scary nightmare for them—begins as they leave their home state of Michigan and its cold winters to go to visit and experience the iron hand of Grandma Sands in Birmingham, Alabama, a trip that they hope will tame Byron’s antics. So, car loaded up, off they head to Alabama for the summer.

Humorous incidents abound, but when the Watsons arrive in Alabama, they find themselves caught up in issues more serious than Byron’s adolescent misbehaviors. Racists bomb Grandma Sands’ church, and Kenny’s little sister

Joetta is feared dead. Kenny, who witnessed what happened, sinks into depression and believes that only magic can heal him. He consistently dreams about the “wool pooh” (whirlpool) that sucks him in. But when his parents don’t know how to help him, he looks elsewhere for comfort. Will the nightmares ever end for Kenny? Can someone rescue him? Is Joetta going to be okay? Will they ever end up back in Michigan? Will Byron ever grow up or will this summer destroy him, too?

Response: This book is at times hilarious, but by the end packs a devastatingly powerful message. The story is written in Kenny’s Southern dialect. It’s a joyful read, and though it seems lightweight, the ending is strong and poignant. The author is vividly describing events of the civil rights movement of the 1960’s Racial strife is vividly depicted.

I’d recommend this book as it certainly fits the Newbery criteria. The story line and characters are absolutely roll-on-the-floor funny sometimes. Readers will enjoy Byron, who is quite the character as he gets his lips frozen to a car mirror while he’s practicing kissing. And candid Kenny is a character who is easily to relate to and understand. The talented author ignites many emotions as the story unfolds, fluidly presenting both story and message. However, for a Christian reader, the language is somewhat crude—to put it mildly. This demands discretion and caution, especially for the young child reader. As a parent or teacher, I’d definitely talk to a child reader about what he or she got out of this novel as it demands discretion, especially on the events of the civil rights movement. What seems like a light read really is not. But enjoy!

Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson. New York: Scholastic, orig. 1955. Recommended level: preschool–1st grade, older grades for its message.

“One night, after thinking it over for some time, Harold decided to go for a walk in the moonlight.” Meet young child Harold, who only holds an oversized purple crayon and begins to draw himself and his own adventures with excitement and child-like beauty. Round-headed, innocent Harold conducts his adventures with the utmost prudence, carefully planning yet letting his imagination run free. His caution includes drawing landmarks to ensure he won’t get lost, even designing a boat when he finds himself in deep water, and creating a purple pie picnic to quell hunger. Will he end up away in a castle, whisked away by his imagination, or conclude his adventures back in his bedroom? Does he ever get

another color crayon out? What other adventures can Harold dream up?

Response: This book is traditional bestseller. I've always overlooked this book because it just looks a bit old fashioned and not in a complimentary way. I finally decided to give it a read and purchase after a good friend mentioned that this was her favorite book as a child.

Even if the book is initially non-thrilling, this is a classic that likely will grow on you. Its soothing style is a great way to bring a child to magical adventures, yet keep him calm before naptime or bed. A child who enjoys drawing will instantly gravitate towards this book. In addition to that, any child reading this book learns that he only needs to use his mind to create any world he wants. This book could probably be valuable for even third- or fourth-grade, experienced readers to get them started in writing or other creative modes. Best yet, this novel holds no questionable issues. So go ahead; read, enjoy, and even buy this timeless classic for yourself.

Free Christian School

Edgerton, Minnesota



Left to Right: Jeremy Baker, Mr. Chester Hunter (Principal), Jacob Fennema,

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