

The Areopagus



SPECIAL EDITION

REVISED 2020

The chief end and means of Mars Hill

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Revelation 4:11

Mars Hill exists that God may receive glory and honor and power. This is our chief end. We acknowledge God as creator and sustainer of the earth and mankind.

Specifically, this cooperative supports parents in equipping young people to know God in His creation and His work in history. Through this knowledge, students will be prepared to do the work God has prepared for them and thereby accomplish our purpose for existence.

While the program of education relies heavily on a classical approach, the context of the cooperative draws deeply from the Hebraic model. Three primary points are taken from that model:

- Education is the responsibility of the father.
- The purpose of education is to know and serve God.
- Education is done in the context of a protected culture.

The responsibility of parents

In classic Hebrew education, the father was responsible for the education of children (Deu. 11:19). Much of the early training was done by providing an elementary school and a teaching rabbi for the children.

At the appropriate age, sons were presented to the community as proficient in the Torah and prepared to become part of the quorum. It was the job and glory of the father, with the help of the Rabbi, to present his son.

Exclusivity and preservation of their personal

culture was another key to educating young Jewish minds.

At Mars Hill, the management of a student's education is the responsibility of parents. Parents should have enough knowledge of Mars Hill teachers to vouch for their morality before enrolling their children.

In preparing students for Mars Hill, parents train their children to listen when an adult is speaking, honor the one giving instruction, obey promptly, respect others and exercise self control.

Teachers are responsible to provide instruction in academic material. Each course is designed by the teacher to achieve the stated goals of Mars Hill. The teacher presents this material to students each Monday during the school year.

The parent is responsible to know assignments, monitor work and progress of students, and provide needed assistance throughout the week.

Knowing and serving God

The two ends of education in Jewish culture were the knowledge of God and service.

Mars Hill is committed to only present courses that increase a student's knowledge of God and ability to serve Him.

Math and sciences are seen as understanding God's ordering of nature. It prepares students to harness that order to serve God and fellow man.

Language is at the heart of knowledge. It is through the written word as well as the Incarnate Word that God revealed Himself to us. The more clearly a person can communicate, the more clearly he can know God and His will.

The study of history, both secular and Christian, is performed to see God at work in His

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creation. The study of non-Christian thought is to prepare a Christian response.

Bible classes develop a firm scriptural foundation. Students begin with Old and New Testament surveys. Practical instruction for life occurs in the middle grades and the final class is in practical theology.

Teachers humbly submit to the fact that truth is impossible apart from revelation.

Exclusivity and culture

The exclusivity of the Hebraic model is difficult to understand, replicate or accept by modern Americans. However, apart from this aspect, a truly moral education cannot be achieved.

How students view authority, outward signs of respect, and ideas on relationships between the sexes are examples of cultural issues.

Mars Hill seeks to establish a culture with common values and practices. Students from similar church communities carry most of the values and adapt readily. Freedom from conflict over social and moral issues creates a dynamic of learning unattainable in pluralistic settings.

A view to know and serve God, responsible parents, and an agreed upon community life are essential to the Mars Hill idea. Through these we prepare our children to glorify God.

The Areopagus is published by Mars Hill cooperative.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A day on the Areopagus with the Apostle Paul

By Billy Henderson

The name "Mars Hill" can be misleading. Greek columns, teaching the trivium, and class uniforms cause many to think it's just a unique approach to a "classical" education. It's more.

The name Mars Hill reflects back to 53 A.D. when the apostle Paul showed up in Athens. He went directly to Mars Hill, also known as the Areopagus.

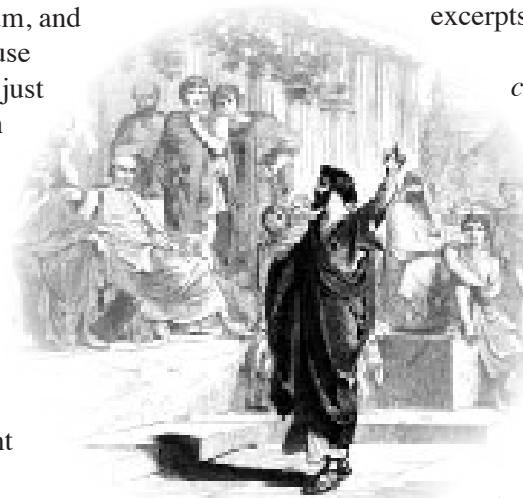
The Areopagus was at the top of a hill. Earlier, this plateau had been the place where leaders came to make judicial decisions. By the first century, it had become a center for Athenian philosophers to discuss the issues of life which governed their society.

On this day, the great apostle showed up to bring meaning to their discussions. He did not show up unprepared. He knew the culture and was willing to find where God had been at work and pick up from there. Paul understood that God had been at work in every society from the beginning of time. His job as an apostle was to communicate in such a way as to open their eyes to "the God who was there."

He began by drawing attention to their altar TO AN UNKNOWN GOD, which had stood on the hill since before any of the philosophers had been born.

The history of that altar is

intriguing. Dick Eastman has researched it's origin in his book, "Eternity in Their Hearts." Here are excerpts from his account:



"In the sixth century BC, an epidemic had begun devastating Athens. The plague was a result of treachery on the part of a previous King, Megacles.

The council had exhausted all of the oracles in search for which god still held this treachery to their account. As a last resort, they sent for Epimenedes, from the island of Crete.

Upon arrival to this city of philosophers, Epimenedes passed up the road from Piraeus, where hundreds of idols lined the road. When he arrived before the council, he was asked to search for the one god they had failed to honor.

Finding it hard to believe there could be a god they overlooked, Epimenedes called the Athenians to prepare for a sacrifice the following day.

When they arrived with the proper elements for sacrifice, the Cretan began, 'I am now about to sacrifice based on three assumptions rather different from yours.

First, there is still another god concerned in the matter of this plague - a god whose name is unknown to us and

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who is therefore not represented by any idol in your city.

Second, I am going to assume that this god is great enough - and good enough - to do something about the plague.

Third, any god great enough and good enough to do something about the plague is probably also great enough and good enough to smile upon us in our ignorance - if we acknowledge our ignorance and call upon him.'"

According to Eastman, God gave a sign, the plague was diverted and the altar stood to the day Paul showed up.

Evidently, Paul had heard the story and knew that it had been the work of the one true God. With this as his springboard, he made the logical argument connecting the history of these Athenians through the ages up to the most recent work of that same God.

In his argument, Paul quoted from a poem written by the very Epimenedes who had directed that ancient council toward God, without even knowing His name: "For we also are His offspring."

Finally, Paul declared that Unknown God to be the very God who had caused Christ to be risen from the dead.

This day on the Areopagus is where Mars Hill cooperative finds its model.

The approach is to look to see God's hand in the history of a culture.

While Western culture has often bowed to the idol of other gods, the merciful God of the resurrection has still sustained it.

Along the way, counterparts to Epimenedes (who knew God but not by name), Paul (who clearly knew the true God), and King Megacles (evil men who have brought curses) have affected culture.

We at Mars Hill believe our students are modern-day Pauls. Our vision is to understand knowledge and truth as it applies to society, based in the revelation of God.

We strive to maintain a proper respect for our society. This is not based on current values of society, but on the fact that God has loved and preserved this society to bring it to Himself.

True academics are inspired by God and He has created them to point all men to Himself.

We chose the name Mars Hill because on that day in Athens, God's appointed messenger skillfully, graciously and powerfully presented the truth of Jesus Christ to a society in a context they could comprehend.

Mars Hill intends to do the same in the 21st century.

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.

Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Acts 17:22-31



TEACHING THE TRIVIUM

The crossing of three roads at Mars Hill

By Martin Cothran

The word “trivium” means “crossroads” in Latin. It is derived from the word “tres,” which means “three,” and the word “via,” which means “road.” It is, quite simply, the crossing of three roads.

What three roads cross in the trivium? In the medieval schools, which operated in a culture which was ordered according to a Christian view of man and the world,

the curriculum was broken down into the seven liberal arts. The seven liberal arts included, on the one hand, the trivium, and, on the other, the quadrivium (the crossing of four roads).

The trivium consisted of grammar, logic and rhetoric. A student learned how to read, write, listen and speak. He also learned the art of sound thinking. Once these skills were mastered, the medieval student continued into the quadrivium: arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. Here he was taught the arts of observation, calculation and measurement - quantitative thinking.

We would be correct in considering the quadrivium somewhat incomplete today, since a full listing of liberal arts would include such things as, for example, the natural and social sciences.

But while the quadrivium is, in this sense, somewhat outdated, the trivium is not. Under the classical

system of education (of which medieval schools were the most illustrious example), the trivium was considered the means of teaching children how to think, while the quadrivium provided them subject matter about which to think and on which they could exercise their thinking skills.

Each aspect of the trivium, each “road,” if you will, is a way to transmit an understanding of the order of an important part of reality. A study of grammar uncovers the order of language, and even more of learning itself; a study of logic reveals the order of thinking; and training in rhetoric discloses the rules that govern expression.

Although the Bible does not lay out a specific plan for education, other than to say that it is the responsibility of the parents, there are numerous references to knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Much has been made of these terms in reference to the trivium - sometimes too much. But the truth remains that there is a rough correspondence between these terms and the grammar, logic and rhetoric stages of the trivium. Grammar is the knowledge stage; logic is the understanding stage; and rhetoric requires good judgment to discern the best way to communicate a message.

The order of the trivium is no mistake. As Dorothy Sayers points out in her famous essay, “Rediscovering the Lost Tools of Learning,” each aspect of the trivium corresponds to an

aspect of the intellectual maturity of the child.

There is, she says, the “Poll-parrot” stage, when a child revels in memorization, recitation and “the mere accumulation of things.” There is the “Pert” stage, when a child delights in verbal challenge, contradiction, “the pro-pounding of conundrums,” and - let’s face it - just plain talking back. Finally, there is the “Poetic” stage, a stage at which the child can become self-centered, restless and independent. “It rather specializes,” says Sayers, “in being misunderstood.” It is the creative stage, when the imagination begins to blossom - more than we probably would like.

Yet, while a curriculum based on the trivium conforms itself to the intellectual stage of the child, it is not simply an accommodation. We do not, after all, want to buy in to the modern idea that the function of education is to simply let the child develop in “his own way.” We are not assuming that the function of adults is to simply “get out of the way.”

What the trivium does is use the natural stages of intellectual development to move the child in the direction of what is not so natural: the proper ordering of his mind for the proper purpose. A child can “know a bunch of stuff,” but not know how to think with it. He can know how to think, but not know how to express himself. If a Christian’s responsibility is to bring the message of the gospel to the world, then he has to know it, he has to know how to think about it and he has to know how to express it.

This is the function of the trivium.

