

Christianity and Literature: Outline

The Big Idea: What distinguishes Christian Literature? Answer: it clearly points to Christ

Introduction:

- Asked to discuss “Christian Literature” though unsure of value of this discussion
- Understands that Literature is a means for sharing the Gospel
- Rules for good writing are same for Christian and non-Christian
- Thus, does not see a value in a genre of “Christian” literature, just good literature or bad literature, both kinds reflecting the author’s perspective
 - Is one a “Christian writer” or a “writer that happens to be Christian?”

One: What makes literature “Christian?”

- Sacred in theme/starting point for devotion
 - Value is subjective (rag may be sacred for some)
 - Written by Christians for Christians, not for literary merit per say
- Christian approach to literature
 - Creative vs. derivative
 - Spontaneity vs. Convention
 - Freedom vs. Rules
 - Great authors are innovators, “breaking fetters,” not followers
- Jesus as Poet or Philosopher
 - Jesus’ limitations
 - Poetic in some senses
 - More like Socrates than Shakespeare in analogy
- Man as head of woman, God the Father as head of the Son, Jesus as head of Church
 - The subordinate is to reflect the head
 - Just as son watches Father, so Jesus observed the Father to better communicate his being
- New Testament Literary Expression
 - Originality is the prerogative of God
 - Creativity discouraged and being conformed into the image of Christ
 - “being as little as possible ourselves, in acquiring a fragrance that is not our own but borrowed, in becoming clean mirrors filled with the image of a face that is not ours
 - Lewis’ rejection of Total depravity
 - Derivative & reflective is good
 - “pride does not only go before a fall—a fall of the creature’s attention from what is better, God, to what is worse, itself.
- Applied to Literature
 - Purpose is not to create, but to reflect Christ
 - Embody or reveal what is true of eternal beauty and wisdom
 - Originality is not true originality as it comes from God
 - Non-Christian writes for vain purposes, Christian for Christ

- Christian does not ask, “Is it mine?” but will ask “Is it good?”
- Conclusion
 - “The Christian knows from the outset that the salvation of a single soul is more important than the production or preservation of all the epics and tragedies in the world”
 - The strength of Christian literature comes not from the literature but from the God of Christian literature

Words to Define:

- Hagiological: of the Saints
- Proprement dite: French for “properly itself”
- Argumenta ad hominem: argument by opinions
- A fortiori: “From the Stronger”
- Catena: chain
- Redolere Christum: “to smell of Christ”
- μίμησις is derived from μιμητής, meaning: imitator
- au moins je suis autre: French—“At least I am different”
- di se medesimo rise: Italian for, “I laughed at myself”