

## **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 hominess: 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 medesmo rise: Italian for, “I lauged at myself”