

Literature Studies Guide

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PREFACE

The contents of this syllabus were prepared during the summer and following months of the year 1970 A.D. A workshop, financed by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools, was conducted at Covenant Christian High School, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The purpose of this workshop was to improve the instruction given in the field of literature studies in the Protestant Reformed Christian School classrooms.

The participants in this workshop and those who contributed materials for this preliminary syllabus were: Mr. Frederick A. Hanko, and Mr. Darrel L. Huisken, teachers at the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Mr. James Huizinga, teacher at Adams Street Christian School, Grand Rapids; Mr. Lamm Lubbers, teacher and administrator for the Association for Protestant Reformed Christian Education, South Holland, Illinois. Miss Agatha Lubbers, teacher of American and English literature at Covenant Christian High School, served as director but also participated in the discussion and contributed materials for this syllabus. These participants were key people in the area under investigation and were highly motivated to discuss the purposes, objectives, and methods for teaching literature in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Such discussion was necessary because there was a general consensus of opinion among the participants that the principles for teaching literature were hazy and largely unarticulated. Those that did exist could not or often were not consciously applied in the day-by-day teaching situation.

One of the most valuable benefits to the participants in the workshop was the more than one hundred pages of resource materials that each participant collected from various sources. We thank Professor Merle Meeter from Dordt College, and Dr. Stanley Wiersma from Calvin College for their generosity. We also thank Professor Leland Ryken from Wheaton College for his materials and contributions on the issue.

We express our gratitude to those teachers and ministers who spent time with the members of the workshop in discussing various facets of the problem. We thank Dr. Henrietta Ten Harmsel, and Dr. Stanley Wiersma, professors of English at Calvin College, for coming to a workshop session to discuss aspects of the problem with the members of the workshop. We thank Mr. Jon Huisken, Registrar at Hope College, for presenting his paper, "The Purpose of Culture—Truth". This paper is also included with the essays.

Members of the workshop met for three weeks during the month of August and met eight hours of the day for five days of each of the three weeks. Each member confessed that he was "bone-weary" when he went home each evening.

The materials produced by the members of the workshop are quite self-explanatory and we have attempted to make the format of the syllabus as workable as a pioneer and tentative product can be. We have divided the paper into several sections. Three preliminary papers were presented, principles were developed by the workshop members in joint sessions, and essays were prepared through individual effort by various members and a guest of the workshop.

One of the more interesting activities in which the members of the workshop participated was a demonstration teaching session. The purpose of this session was to test the general objectives developed by the members of the workshop and to obtain reactions to individual teaching techniques. Teachers and other persons were invited to this session.

Most of the members of the workshop and the invited participants agreed that this four-hour session was an extremely valuable activity—perhaps one of the most valuable activities of the workshop. Because of this type of session the members of the workshop were compelled to make carefully planned presentations. The fruit of these presentations are the poetic explications and sample lesson plans included with this syllabus.

It is our prayer and hope that these materials will be helpful to the teacher, who loves the name of God and who gives allegiance to Christ, the King of the Universe. God grant that this pioneer effort may be a first-fruit of the full harvest in the field of this type of work.

—Miss Agatha Lubbers, director

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PRELIMINARY PAPERS

SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON THE USES OF LITERATURE

This is a beautiful thought, I never understood so clearly before. I had never thought of it in quite that way before. Now I understand. This feeling of pleasure and delight I have never had before. How often we who teach literature have wished that we would get a response such as this from our students. We long for such a response because that is the feelings we have when we encounter the words of certain authors. We wish that our students would feel the same delight, gain the new insight, achieve the greater understanding that we receive from literature.

Yet I must confess that I, and I suspect sometimes you also, do not get that kind of response at all. And I must further confess that my failure to get the kind of results I strive for is due at least in part to a confusion in my own mind as to what I, as a Protestant Reformed teacher, should teach from the works of unbelieving writers. Or, to state our problem another way: what can the unbeliever say to the spiritual growth of me and my students. But that is what brings us here this morning and is the occasion for this paper.

In exploring the problem of what the Christian can do with the literary works of the unbeliever, there are a few basic ideas with which I would like to begin.

First it must be understood that there is an objective reality which includes God Himself, all things in the universe which He has created, and all the works that God has done in history.

Second, the Christian is called upon to know and understand this reality as far as his limitations and capacities allow. Third, the Christian is required to respond to this reality. The response must be of acceptance of the good and rejection of the evil, as well as belief and worship. Further, the response must include behavior toward God, toward men, and toward the earth.

Now the business of literature is communication. The objective reality is the material with which the author works. He explores this reality, he responds to it, he interprets it, and he uses the written word to communicate the results to the reader.

Note that the special feature of literature that makes it differ from other writings is that literature bears the imprint of the writer. The author himself appears in all works of literature. It may appear in his selection of materials, his interpretation of reality, in his response to reality, in any or all of these. The job of the author is to explore reality and to communicate the results to us. The author says to us, this is what I see. Do not you see it too? This is what I feel. Don't you feel as I do? This is what we ought to do. Go forth now and do it.

When the author is a Christian, we have no problem in dealing with his works. We see reality as he sees it and we respond as he does. From his work we gain knowledge, insight we have never had before, feelings that are new to us or deeper than we have ever had before. We become better Christians than we have ever been.

Our problem, however, lies with the work of the unbeliever. Can he know reality? Can he interpret it correctly? Can he respond to it as he should? And if he can do none of these things, why should we study his work?

The answer to the first of these questions seems to be the most difficult. It seems clear that just as the scientist can observe a flower and report accurately its structure, and function, so the poet can observe the flower and say accurately, This is what I see, and

this is how I feel about it. Does either the scientist or the poet speak the truth? Or both? Or possibly neither?

Since we are dealing here with the work of man, it seems proper before we try to answer that we say a few things about the nature of man. We are agreed, I think, that with the fall of Adam man lost the image of God. The loss of the image of God means that man lost the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. From that time forward his knowledge was only that of evil, his works were all unrighteousness. Man is opposed to God and in league with Satan. "All the thoughts of man's heart were only evil continually." Without the grace of God which restores the image of God man remains only the creature created to be an image-bearer of God but now bearing the image of Satan.

There is in man and in the works of man no neutrality of thought or actions. He is for God or he is against Him. As one created to be an image-bearer, however, he has the faculties of intellect and reason which make it possible for him to know what is true, but this truth he will not acknowledge. (Cf. Romans 1)

The unbelieving author, then, can observe reality correctly and can report it accurately even while his purpose may be to serve his idol gods. He may even be more shrewd in his analysis than the God-fearing man is. The unbelieving poet may see something in the flower that we would never see of ourselves. By reading the work of the poet, we also may see, and by our special knowledge we may gain a better understanding of God. Although the writer may have done his work in sin, we may use His work to the greater glory of God. Even the Apostle Paul used the learning of the Greeks quoting from one of their own poets in his speech at Athens.

The poet may feel a certain emotion upon viewing a flower, and if he is a good poet, his poem may evoke the same emotion in us when we read it. The poet's response to the flower may be evil because his emotion is not one of worship. Yet that same poem may arouse in the Christian the response of worship of God and so may enhance his spiritual growth.

We must never forget, though, that the author is not just a reporter. Essential to his work is the author's interpretation and his response to the reality he explores. His own spiritual condition will affect and be reflected in his work. He may be trying to build a new reality that does not conform with what is true. He may claim to be "holding a mirror up to life," but his picture will be cropped, distorted, blurred. Even then the Christian can gain from reading such work. We are placed in the world to accept what is true and to reject what is false. If the Christian is both careful and prayerful, he may sharpen his spiritual discernment by his encounter with the world. We are, after all, placed in the world not to shut ourselves in a soundproof booth, but to interact with the world and to make a positive response to it. This interaction produces growth in the Christian; it sharpens the distinction between him and unbeliever; it sharpens the antithesis.

In addition, there is understanding and insight to be gained from the study of the unbelieving writer. Whether believer or unbeliever the author explores the reality of his own time and place and responds to it as he is influenced by his fellow man or as he seeks to influence them. From the historian we can gain some knowledge about a particular time and place, but only from the literary man can we gain insight into the spirit of his time, the motivation of the people, their attitudes and their feelings, and so really understand the people and their time.

Certainly not the least of the uses of literature is the study of technique and style. Communication is one of the most vital of the skills that the Christian is called to develop. How better can the Christian develop his own skill in communication than by the study of those who do it well?

There is one very rigid limitation to the Christian's use of literature. Because literature is the communication of feelings and ideas both of which have oral content, it is absolutely essential that the Christian's encounter with literature be made only with the most careful analysis, interpretation, and discernment of right and wrong. If the Christian cannot or does not do these things whenever he is reading, he has no right to read.

With this in mind, I think there are only two standards by which we should determine the things that we read: The author must have something important to say and he must have the ability to say it well. By important I mean those things that will increase our understanding of God and His works or that will evoke emotions that are proper to the Christian. I think this is possible whether the writer be a believer or an unbeliever provided that the reader responds to it as a Christian. By saying it well I mean that the author must communicate without ambiguity and must inspire as powerfully as possible the desired emotional or intellectual response.

“For all things are yours, and ye are Christ's...”

—Fred Hanko

A PRELIMINARY JUSTIFICATION FOR TEACHING LITERATURE

Rev. Herman Hanko, in his book *Principles of Education of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School*, states at length the principles and justifications for the teaching of the language arts in general. Although much of what he says about the other language arts, *viz.*, reading, grammar, spelling, and foreign languages, has implications and applications for the teaching of literature, he devotes, in my opinion, little space to the study and teaching of literature in our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Be it ever so brief what he says about literature is true.

Using as a basis Rev. Hanko's principles of teaching the language arts in general and literature in particular, it will be the purpose of this paper to expand and build on those principles.

There is little doubt that whenever possible Christian literature should be studied and taught in our classrooms. Christian literature, however, must be defined. Christian literature must contain at its heart the reality of the spiritual death of man and his unconditional redemption by way of grace, *i.e.*, the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. This truth of man's salvation makes Christian literature distinctive.

Much of the so-called Christian literature has at its center man's salvation, but that salvation is not unconditional. Invariably man sees his sins and accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and then suddenly all is well. In addition to presenting bad theology, these so-called Christian literary works generally are not written very well either. One must search with a candle to find a piece of literature that is truly Christian and also good literature.

Christian literature must be used as much as possible in our literature classrooms, but non-Christian literature also has its place. Using God's Holy word as our infallible guide, we may pursue the study of non-Christian literature in the following ways. First of all, we may study the form in non-Christian literary works. For the purposes of clarity let us include in this term "form" everything which is not content.

God created man in His own image; man fell and completely lost that image — the image of true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Although man lost the image of God and received the image of the devil, he yet retained remnants of natural light; the light which leaves him guilty and without excuse before the bar of God's justice and ultimately condemns him. (Cf. Romans 1, Art. #14 Belgic Confession) It is these remnants of natural light that we study when we see form, order, and structure in the works of the ungodly. Of all the areas of literature this study of form, it seems to me, is the most objective and inoffensive to teach and study.

The study of form also has its implications for written composition in our schools. If a worldly piece of literature has good use of form, then, this literature can be used as a model for the Christian to follow. Christians have used and may use, for example, the forms for novels, essays, poems, and short stories, to mention only a few. The idea of learning by doing is very applicable here. But what content the Christian pours, molds, or builds into that form is entirely different from that which the world places in it.

Using appropriate forms, writing good content, developing good ideas thoroughly grounded in Scripture are important parts of the literature program. But in order to write good content we must study good content, to be sure, and, in short, we must know the

truth of the Word of God. What do we do with all the bad content, evil ideas, and sinful themes in the works of the ungodly? We study that, too: Why?

A fundamental law of military science is “know the enemy and know him well”. Protestant Reformed teachers do not have to be reminded that all of life including the literature classroom is a spiritual battlefield. Because we are at war with the devil, all his hosts, and the old man of sin within us, we must know every tactic, every stratagem, every subtle trick, every weapon in the arsenal of the devil. Remember he is that liar from the beginning, he is “as a roaring lion... seeking whom he may devour.” (I Peter 5:8)

Literature deals primarily with the communication of ideas. Ideas come from the heart. Scripture is replete with examples of this very concept. (Cf. Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Proverbs 6:14; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21; Matthew 15:19) Men, all men, Jew or Greek, saved or unsaved, blasphemer and believer, write from their hearts, and what they write is a reflection of what is in their hearts. Christ’s injunction ‘applies very well here, “Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:15, 16a)

Because worldly literature can be oftentimes so enticing, so subtle, and, on occasion, so vile; we literature teachers are compelled to select, sift, and evaluate every work that we introduce into our classrooms. We must be selective not only in what we teach, but we must be selective in when we teach a particular literary work. For example, Hamlet may be a good work to study in the twelfth grade, but no one would try to teach it in the seventh grade. Because we are dealing with spiritual things, the spiritual maturity of the students is one of the most important criterion for judging what and when we are to teach various pieces of worldly literature. Great is the responsibility of the literature teacher.

Selection is one part of the teaching of content in literature, and reaction is another. After a non-Christian work has been introduced, taught, and discussed, a positive expository writing program should follow. Manifold are the subjects and topics that can be written upon after a work has been explored. Think of some examples: Shakespeare’s idea of mercy in *Merchant of Venice*, Mark Twain’s conception of sin in *Huckleberry Finn*, O’Henry’s belief that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” in “Gift of the Magi”, John Milton’s treatment of the devil in *Paradise Lost*, Book I. And we could go on. We see, then, that a Christian does not simply absorb; he reacts: See that reaction in your classroom; great is the joy of the Christian teacher of literature.

Great are the responsibilities and joys of the Christian literature teacher, but greater the responsibility and the joy of a literature teacher who had history and philosophy as his second love. As we study and teach the works of ungodly writers, we are often struck by their deep insight into their own age. They oftentimes pierce deep into the very marrow of the age. They seem to gather all the best corn mash of their era and give us a most potent bourbon. They trod out the rich, ripe grapes of their time; unfortunately oftentimes they are grapes of wrath. Consider Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, for example. Many who read this novel think that it is simply a rambling tale about a white boy and a Negro on a river raft. We know, however, that through Huck Finn Mark Twain gives us deep insight into the main issues of the day, especially the issue of slavery. Consider also Charles Dickens. No one would deny that in almost every book that Dickens wrote he gave deep insight into the England of his time. Graphic descriptions of child labor, corrupt social institutions, and general abuse to man and beast

abound in his writings. And let us not forget Tolstoy's Russia, Hemingway's Spain, Steinbeck's California, and Kipling's India, to mention only a few.

This historical and philosophical distillation, as I prefer to call it, has many very interesting possibilities, especially for those who teach both history and literature. Reading literature should never take the place of reading history; both should be done simultaneously. An interesting experiment would be to teach the literature of a certain period along with the history of that same period. Maybe one of us could try that next year.

The form, the content, the history, all of literature may be studied by the Christian because we know and believe that we have all things in common with the world except the grace of God. That grace of God gives to us the spiritual insight to see clearly what is right and what is wrong. It is our duty then, to defend the right not for our own sakes but for the sake of Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

—Darrel Huisken

SOME THOUGHTS ON A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO TEACHING LITERATURE

Many times in the few short years that I have used literature in my English classes I have been disturbed by the feeling that I was plucking the dainties of Babylon for the children of God. And the sad fact is that, to some degree, I have been guilty of this. We teachers of literature have a most difficult, unique responsibility. We use literature for instruction in the schools because we feel it has a place, yet we have to face the danger of being affected and of affecting our students with its vanity. For this reason it seems to me imperative that each Protestant Reformed teacher of literature have a clear understanding of the role that literature can and must play in the classroom, and that we teachers as a group make it our business to work toward articulating carefully, Christian principles which include a justification for literature, objectives, and methods. It seems to me that only when this is done will we teachers be able to appropriate literature and use it effectively to equip covenant young people for their pilgrimage in this world.

When we examine the blueprint of history and observe two kingdoms incompatibly pushing toward completion, we ought to be keenly aware of the fact that the bulk of what we call literature has been laid at the feet of the master builder, the Prince of Darkness, and has been used, and is still being used in countless homes, churches, and especially schools throughout the world, as part of his design to thwart the purpose of the most high God. Literature contains the “lust of the flesh and the pride of life.” Literature stands as a living monument to man’s attempt to make something of himself. Much of literature is concerned with man’s vain search for absolute qualities such as Truth and Beauty. A good deal of literature represents man’s hopeless attempts to correct irritating social problems. In literature we can see man attempting to communicate with his fellows, seeking to heal the wound of Babel. Again and again, throughout literature, we can see that man is forced to echo the words of Ecclesiastes, “vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”

It sometimes seems like a strange fact indeed that Christian teachers who are honest enough to see literature in this light continue to demand a prominent place for literature in the school curriculum, and to do so often in the face of opposition. No doubt there is something purely personal in our attitude. We have many fond memories of happy experiences gotten from scores of stories and poems. We are eager to have our students enjoy these experiences with us. But our concern for literature runs, in fact, much more deeply. Knowledge of the lives of such men as Moses, Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin testifies to the truth that the works of the ungodly can serve powerfully as a vehicle for the instruction of God’s people. Furthermore, in spite of man’s depravity, literature provides insights into the nature of reality. I believe that we teachers can go on in faith, confident that even worldly literature is God’s gift to his people to help prepare us to take our places in his kingdom.

Granted that literature has a place in our Christian schools, it does not have to be underscored that any teaching of literature has to be rooted in sound Christian principles. Unless our Biblical Reformed life view define our goals and methods of teaching, we become laborers for Satan rather than laborers for Christ. I propose two basic principles that I think are essential if our teaching of literature is to be truly Christian. I throw them out like fledglings to see if they can “hold their own” or if a hostile environment forces

them to return home. I do this fully aware that there are other birds in the forest that are bigger and better than mine.

In the first place, *teachers of literature ought to be highly selective when choosing literary works for consideration in the classroom.* The realm of literature abounds with works that may seem innocent enough yet are liable to inflict damage in the hearts of the young. Vain, humanistic notions get blown around by writers, critics, and teachers that tend to equate the concepts of Literature, Art, Truth, and Beauty. As a result, external standards disappear. Often the sole criterion for judging whether a literary work is fit for classroom use is that the work has come to be accepted as literature, or that the work is a product of a man whom society recognizes as an artist. Beauty and truth may indeed be found in some literature, but in many of the “grand classics” these qualities are sadly lacking. Beauty and truth are not inevitable fruits of man’s artistic strivings.

The concept of selectivity is especially important in the lower grades. When a child grows intellectually and spiritually, and when he has begun to master the skills of critical reading and studying, he can progress to materials, rich in content, that might have been dangerous for him at an earlier age.

The second principle that I propose cannot operate without the principle of selectivity. Allow me to state it negatively at first. If literature is to serve a Christian purpose, the literary work must never determine the goals to be achieved nor the methods used to achieve those goals. Rather, the Christian teacher must come with goals defined by Scripture and the historic Reformed Christian Faith. It is then his task to select from the vast area of literature, works that he can make serve these goals. The situation at the present time in our schools is such that perhaps we are inclined to make the mistake of allowing the literature to determine our goals for teaching it. Since high quality, distinctively Christian materials are practically nonexistent, we are at the mercy of Scott Foresman or Houghton Mifflin. More than likely what the teacher has in his textbook to teach is not at all what the students need. If the teacher decides to cover the material in the book, he continually faces the problem of how to turn certain works into meaningful experiences for his students. Add to the lack of good materials the absence of articulated guiding principles and the teaching of literature could become at best ineffective and at worst dangerous.

If modern educational philosophy has said anything worthwhile, it is that effective teaching takes place when teachers begin with clear objectives and proceed systematically to realize them. It seems to me that there are several objectives that Protestant Reformed teachers can have for literature. In the first place, literature can be put to work to bolster our writing programs. It seems to me very unwise to try to teach composition without making use of the best literary works in our language. The situation is somewhat similar to a man who wants to build a house—not just a house, but a house that is first of all functional but also beautiful. What better thing can he do than consult the best carpenters he can find and follow their examples?

Teachers who are concerned with literature and also composition ought to pay a great deal of attention to the formal aspects of literature. I am not talking about the different characteristics of the genre. Some attention ought to be given to these matters, but I am here referring to the basic elements of an author’s style, his choice of words and his sentence structure. I have always been impressed by the little poem by Carl Sandburg:

The fog comes
on little cat feet
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

There is a bundle of composition lessons in that little poem. If your students, like mine, sorely need to acquire a feeling for appropriate diction, you can use this poem. Show your students—or better yet, get them to find out for themselves why “fog” is a better word than “mist.” Mist has no form and doesn’t seem alive so it couldn’t be compared with a cat. Get them to see that “come” is just right and that “cat” could never be “kitten.” If you want to give your students a lesson in emphasis, see how “On little cat feet, the fog comes” agrees with them. Read the whole poem again and you might see several good lessons in unity and coherence.

A second objective that we should have for teaching literature has been spelled out nicely for us by Dr. Henry Zylstra (*Testament of Vision*, p. 5):

If you really want to get at the spirit of an age and the soul of a time you can hardly do better than to consult the literature of that age and that time. In the novels and stories and poems and plays of a period you have a good indication of what, deep down, that period was about.

To see what men have thought and what they have done with God’s - world and how their thoughts and attitudes have progressed through the centuries should certainly be our concern. No doubt this is what John meant when he advised us to “Try the spirits whether they be of God.”

The third objective for teaching literature involves a more positive use of literature than the second. Literature, even the literature of ungodly men, teaches us about things as they are in God’s creation. The writer, as any genuine artist, is concerned with things outside of himself. He may be concerned with such things as man’s inhumanity to man, or with the beauties of creation, or with the brevity of life. At any rate, if the writer succeeds in holding before us things as they are, he has done us a service. Of course the problem is that no one, can be objective. When we criticize literature, it is always the subjective elements, man’s interpretation of God’s reality, that we have to separate and discard. The works of literature that lend themselves to positive teaching are those that are highly objective. They are the ones in which the author is concerned with things outside of himself rather than with his own feelings, thoughts, or desires. As teachers it is our duty to be selective. Our concern is with covenant children. Our concern is that throughout all of their educational experiences they grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord our God.

—James Huizinga

PRINCIPLES DEVELOPED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE WORKSHOP

I. A Description of Literature

Literature is significant written communication of man's response to God and His works.

- A. It is a product of man's heart, reflecting his faith or unbelief.
- B. It most often communicates in metaphorical manner.
- C. It is designed to evoke in the reader a similar insight and response.
- D. It is subject to all the limitations of man (i.e., time, place, and language) as well as to his sinful nature.

II. General Objectives for Teaching Literature

- A. We teach literature to the covenant child to develop in him the knowledge and greater understanding of reality, i.e., God and His works.
- B. We teach literature to the covenant child so that he may know how men have responded to and interpreted reality.
- C. We teach literature to the covenant child because we want him to recognize and understand the antithesis in these responses to and interpretations of reality.
- D. We teach literature to the covenant child because it provides an opportunity for him to understand more clearly and evaluate more carefully another time, era, or period in history.
- E. We teach literature to the covenant child because we want him to react to literary works in such a way that he is compelled by faith to “try the spirits whether they are of God.” (Cf. John 4:1)
- F. We teach literature to the covenant child because we believe the child will thereby recognize and understand the antithesis in himself.
- G. We teach literature to the covenant child in order that he may experience the delight of acquiring a fresh insight into the knowledge of God and His works.

III. Specific Objectives for Teaching Literature

(These are subsidiary objectives and are subordinate to the main objectives developed in the section preceding this one.)

- A. We teach literature to the covenant child so that he may be familiar with its various forms.
 - 1. Poetry
 - 2. Fiction
 - a. Short Story
 - b. Novel
 - c. Novelette
 - 3. Non-fiction
 - a. Formal essay
 - b. Informal essay
 - c. Speeches, declamations, and orations
 - d. Sermons
 - e. Biography
 - f. Autobiography
 - g. Journals
 - h. Diaries

i. Almanacs

- B. We teach literature to the covenant child so that he may learn to be a discriminating reader in terms of form and content. We teach evaluation.
- C. We teach literature to the covenant child so that he may become more grammatically accurate in his own habits of speech.
- D. We teach literature to the covenant child so that his sensibility to vocabulary and word usage may be expanded.
- E. We teach literature to the covenant child so that he may learn to write: expositions, explications, narratives, and descriptions.

IV. Principles for Selection and Censorship of Literature

- A. We select literature which provides insights into reality.
- B. We select literature which demonstrates effectively literary form and literature which develops a discriminating reader.
- C. We select literature which conveys the feeling of living in a different time and place.
- D. We select literature which effectively provides an insight into the student's own life.
- E. We select literature which is appropriate to the intellectual, social, and emotional level of the covenant child.
- F. We believe that the teacher must consider the spiritual maturity of the child in choosing works of literature for classroom use.
- G. We believe that the teacher is primarily responsible for all materials selected in the literature class.
- H. We promote the use of the writings of Christians, especially those writings which artistically show the conflicts of the Christian pilgrimage and the resolution of these problems by grace, the atonement through Christ.
- I. We strive for balance by selecting from literature, all types (genre) of literature, writings from all periods, and writings of both Christians and non-Christians.
- J. We reject some "literature" which is so evil that it is part of the things which "should not be once named among you." (Cf. Ephesians 5)

COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

LITERATURE IN THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Protestant Reformed Christian Schools have been in session for many years but definitive principles have not been developed in those years which justify the presence of literature as a subject in the curriculum. It has certainly been assumed that literature is one of the subjects that should be taught in the Protestant Reformed Christian School because literature of various kinds has been taught; and to say even at this late date that this was a faulty, incorrect, or unwise inclusion is, to say the least, exceedingly naive. The literary arts (i.e., poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and drama) are a legitimate form for man to use so that he may give expression to his ideas and to his thoughts. Therefore, these forms and expressions of men's hearts must be studied and taught. For the Christian to neglect the gift of imagination is to neglect an essential and God-given gift, is to neglect a part of his being man. To neglect the imaginative quality in man is to make him less than a whole man who serves God in all that he does with all the gifts and qualities that he has, i.e., with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Nevertheless the problem continues to plague the curriculum builder and planner. "Why," he asks, "must I accord a place in the time schedule of a school day for artistic expressions, like the novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*; "The Devil and Daniel Webster", a short story by Stephen Vincent Binet; or "Daffodils", the famous poem by the English romanticist, Wm. Wordsworth. This vexing problem we intend to discuss in the course of this essay.

Distinctive Schools

So that we can discuss the real problem we must make several brief, summary-type, observations about Christian Schools. Protestant Reformed Christian Schools are distinctive schools. They are schools in which the main purpose is to give instruction based upon the Scriptures. The Scriptures contain the commands of God and His plan of salvation. The Scriptures give regulations for our lives. The Scriptures, God's message of peace and reconciliation in Christ to His children, are able to make us wise unto salvation. It is through the Scriptures that we come to know Him, who is the way, the TRUTH, and the life, whom to know is life eternal. Christian schools are distinctive in the second place because they give instruction which is consistent with the teaching of the Reformed Confessions. These Three Forms of Unity, which were forged upon the anvil of persecution and hardship, are an accurate interpretation of the doctrines concerning God and all his works. These doctrines are infinitely valuable and no instruction may minimize their importance. In brief the instruction in Protestant Reformed Christian Schools must be given so that the man of God is thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Instruction must in no way impede or detract from the thorough furnishment of the man of God.

Unique Students

Protestant Reformed Christian Schools are also founded to train very unique students. They are unique in many ways, and we can only briefly suggest ways in which they exhibit this uniqueness.

In the first place the children who attend Protestant Reformed Christian Schools are the seed of the covenant; they are the children of the promise. To them have been

given the promises of God as well as to their parents. (cf. Baptism Form) Because they have received these promises, they are a unique and peculiar people. These children are unique because they belong by faith to the redeemed Church of all ages. For them the blood of Christ flowed at Calvary. They belong to the Church, which is the Bride of Christ. They are members of the prized possession for whom Christ died, is risen, and for whom he now sits ascended to heaven at the right hand of God making continual intercession.

In the second place these children are citizens of two worlds. They are most certainly natural-born citizens of this world—the world that now exists—the world which was a perfect creature of God in the beginning—citizens of the world which fell under the curse because of the sin of Adam and Eve—the world that has been restructured and reshaped by God in the cataclysmic Deluge. They are all children of Adam and therefore “blood-brothers” of the whole mass of humanity which has fallen into sin. They are natural citizens of a fallen, sin-cursed world. But they are unique. They are children of the covenant who live in a world which has been cursed because of the sin of the federal head of the human race, Adam, but has been cosmically redeemed in Christ, the second Adam, the only begotten Son of God. Children of the covenant are citizens of another world because of the great work of Christ who came to save all His things. Children of the covenant are unique because they are citizens of a world to come which shall never pass away, for there will be no night there. Because children of the covenant are citizens of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly commonwealth, they are strangers and sojourners in this valley of tears, this sin-cursed world. They cannot love the things of this world because they have their eye fixed upon a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. They are “blood-brothers” but they are not “soul-brothers” of all their “blood-brothers”. They have been purchased because the lifeblood of their eldest brother Christ Jesus was poured out as drink offering for their sins. These unique citizens of two worlds are the unique students in unique schools who must be trained by Scripturally directed teachers.

These students, who are in this world but not of her because they have been transformed by the renewing of their minds and have therefore the mind of Christ, cannot and must not be conformed to this world. The child is principally a new creature. Old things have passed away for him and all things have become new. At the same time he cries out daily with Paul: “The good that I would I do not and the evil that I would not I always do. O wretched man that I am...” (Cf. Romans 7:21-25) This apparent conflict and paradox is an undeniable indication that the covenant child is unique in the third place because he has two men in him. He still has an old man of sin in him which the new man in Christ must fight all his life long. The old man of sin desires to do the works of the flesh, the works of the Devil, and wills to go along with the world. The new man in Christ seeks only to be where Christ is and to do those things which exhibit that he is Christ-like. For this reason we can justifiably say that the Christian, who sins, sins differently than the child of the Devil. They may both commit the same sin, but one sins and loves his sin, while the other sins and hates his sin—confessing them in dust and ashes.

The Christian School curriculum must be set up with complete recognition of this apparent paradox. Literature curriculums must also be established taking this unique situation into serious and conscious account.

Purposeful Curriculum

Covenant instruction in Protestant Reformed Christian Schools takes place by means of a curriculum. Included in that curriculum is the subject generally called literature or literature studies. Because all the subjects in the school are included with the distinct purpose of training unique students, this must be true of literature too. Literature like all other subjects is included in the curriculum so that the covenant child may be prepared to take his unique place in the midst of the world. The school is primarily concerned that the child be prepared intellectually so that he will not be an intellectual misfit. He must be equipped with tools so that he can understand the events of the world and place them within the proper perspective. The child of the covenant must be able to live in this world so that he can work out his salvation with fear and with trembling. He must be able to walk in the good works which God has before prepared for him to walk in with every aspect of his life. He must be a human being who is prepared from every point of view to serve God, his maker, redeemer, sanctifier, and glorifier. The curriculum in the covenant school likewise prepares the child for his battle in life. Life is a battle-field for the Christian, and for the covenant child from the beginning of his life to the very end of his life. The curriculum in the Christian school must be an aid in strengthening and equipping the child with the implements he will need in this battle. He must be accoutered with an armour which will make it possible for him to live antithetically in the midst of the world. He must fight the world, the Devil and his old nature in every aspect of his life.

Literature in the Protestant Reformed Christian School Curriculum

The knottiest problem of all is to apply doctrine and theory to life. I know that when a sound sermon has been preached, the Holy Spirit is the effective agent whereby the Scripturally sound doctrines of the church are applied to the lives and consciences of the hearers. In a certain sense this is also true of the whole business of teaching and curriculum building. The spiritually sensitive and Scripturally-directed teacher and curriculum designer will work in his calling carrying out the mandates of the Word automatically and unconsciously. It is only when he begins to analyze and when he begins to attempt a verbalization and articulation of his activities in a meaningful and comprehensible form that he encounters countless difficulties. This is the kind of pioneer work which has never been done in our systems of Protestant Reformed Christian instruction. We make, therefore, in the remainder of this essay some statements of this kind. (In other essays one will find delineations and discussions of ideas alluded to in this essay, and other essays will discuss various propositional statements concerning objectives and principles of selection.)

I believe that literature is a legitimate tool of man whereby he verbally and metaphorically responds to God and to his works. These responses, which are ultimately heart-directed responses, are the cultural products to be studied and read in the literature classes of our Christian schools. They are also the responses to be studied and read privately by the individual Christians, who are taught in Christian Schools.

God has created all things for his glory. We read in I Corinthians 3:22-23: "...all things are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Within this hierarchy it becomes evident that God has given to the men of his choosing all things. We Christians having been given all things through God's Christ, who has become our Christ, have the

calling to use all things, pressing them all in the service of Christ and His kingdom. Paul says in II Corinthians 10:5: “Casting down imaginations, (reasonings) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”. Because the child of God has imaginative ability, he must use this imaginative ability to serve his Lord Christ. When he reads imaginative or fictional literature, he must be a Christ confessor and not a Christ denier. He must use, therefore, every medium of written expression so that he can say: “...for me to live is Christ.” (Philippians 1:21a)

Man by nature and all wicked men “...hold the truth in unrighteousness...” (Romans 1) and refuse therefore to confess Christ. Because the wicked rebelliously refuse to confess Christ, they become personally damnable and their works must in that sense be called non-Christian works. The moral, ethical character of their works condemns them. They serve the creature with these works and not the God who made them. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” (I Corinthians 3:13.)

How then can the Christian use the works of non-Christians, who rebel against God and who hold the truth in unrighteousness? Even though the heart-direction of the writer may be away from God, may the Christian use and study the works of this non-Christian writer? Must the Christian reject as being untrue everything that the non-Christian writer says? Carl Sandburg says:

The fog comes
on little cat feet
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Is Carl Sandburg saying something the Christian must reject as untrue, and unusable because it issues forth from a heart which shook its fist in the face of the living God, who creates the fog. Certainly there is a level at which the student of literature, the Biblically-oriented, and Bible-believing student of literature, must say that the poem undoubtedly as an ethical intent which is God-rejecting, God-corrupting, or God-denying; i.e., “holding the truth in unrighteousness.” Though we do not deny that Sandburg implicitly denies the Creator God of the fog and says through these lines, “this is all there is to fog,” we nevertheless insist that the Christian can use this metaphorical description of fog to the glory of God. In this way the Christian takes literature which was written by an author with un-Christian and Christ-denying motives to enrich himself and his own understanding of his Father’s world and thus serves his Lord Christ with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. In this way we bring into “captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” In other words, the Christian has more with which to serve God and more with which to live like a Christian.

I already hear the objections of those who say that literature, if used in this way, is being misused. One may never, says my objector, take literature and prostitute it in this way. Literature, if used for private purposes irrespective of the author’s intent, is destroyed and loses thereby its rightful place as one of the arts, and also its legitimate place as a subject in the curriculum.

*To use literature, which in its intent and total affect does not confess Christ, it seems to me, is the most legitimate justification for teaching literature in a school committed to the cause of Jesus Christ in the midst of the world. The Scriptures in several instances use statements of pagan writers. Paul, the inspired apostle to the Gentiles, writes Titus on the island of Crete and quotes from Epimenides, a native poet of Crete. Paul does this so that he can evaluate the Cretans out of the mouth of one of their own poets. "The Cretians are always liars, evil boasts, slow bellies." (Titus 1:12) In the next verse Paul says: "This witness is true." In I Corinthians 15:33, Paul quotes approvingly a statement abstracted from the drama, *Thais*, written by Menander, a Greek dramatist. The statement is: "...evil communications corrupt good manners." When Paul preached in the Areopagus on Mars Hill, he quotes with sentiments of approval from the Greek poet Aratus and the hymn of Zeus by Cleanthes and Epimenides again: "For in him we live and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are his offspring." (Acts 17:28) The passage from which these quotes were taken is:*

"They fashioned a tomb for Thee, O holy and high one, The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies: But Thou art not dead; forever Thou are risen and alive, For in Thee we live and move and have our being."

John Calvin, the Genevan Reformer, and Scriptural exegete says in his commentary in Acts concerning this passage and we can safely assume other situations similar to this one as follows: "...no one need hesitate to transfer to the true God what Virgil holds about fictitious Jupiter..."

Jude 14 and 15 is a quotation from the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature of the second and first centuries B.C. The specific source of this quotation is in The Book of Enoch and contains messianic teaching including a description of the messianic judgment. This Jude uses:

"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

The use of pagan or pseudo-Christian literature certainly has many precedents in the Christian community. There are elements of truth or reality in some of the following statements even though The TRUTH is not taught and even though the total heart-direction of many of the works from which these statements have been taken must be called anti-Christian.

Alexander Pope is author of these statements quoted often by Christian writers and speakers:

"For fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

(from An Essay on Criticism)

"A little learning is a dangerous thing."

(from An Essay on Criticism)

"To err is human, to forgive divine."

(from An Essay on Criticism)

Portia in the famous "mercy speech" of *The Merchant of Venice* by Wm. Shakespeare gives a remarkable but incorrect commentary on the character of mercy and justice and the relationship of mercy and justice.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice, Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

A fundamental error must be avoided when we consider the written products of men. The synthesizing error of Clement of Alexandria must be avoided. He was the church father of the Ancient era who said: "...it may be, indeed, that philosophy was given to the Greeks immediately and primarily, until the Lord should call the Greeks. For philosophy was a 'schoolmaster' to bring the Greek mind to Christ, as the Law brought the Hebrews. Thus philosophy was a preparation, paving the way towards perfection in Christ." (*Stromateis*) The emphasis of Clement on the innate value of the writings of pagan men, who held the truth in unrighteousness, as a "schoolmaster to Christ" is erroneous. The synthesizing tendencies of Clement are exactly opposite to the strongly antithetical attitude of Tertullian of Carthage. It was Tertullian who seems to advocate a complete "hands-off policy" when he says: "What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem." (*The Prescription of Heretics*)

The Christian teacher wishes to use critically and discriminatingly the best products of men without adopting the world and life view of the product. The Christian wishes to enrich his life so that he may live a life of service to God—a life which may be full and distinct from the world. Ultimately it is true that Athens has nothing in common with Jerusalem because only in the New Jerusalem will be the Lamb, the Song of Moses and the Lamb. The Lamb and His Song will not be among the philosophers of the "New Athens."

Concerning the commentary of "mercy and justice" by Shakespeare through Portia, it must be emphatically noted that the relationship of mercy and justice is not theologically nor scripturally correct. Psalm 85:9-10 states:

"Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth (justice) are met together; righteousness (justice) and peace (mercy) have kissed each other."

The undoubted reason for this fellowship of mercy and justice is the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. God's justice is satisfied in Christ and because God's justice is satisfied he can also be merciful in Christ. When Portia says for Shakespeare "That in the course of justice none of us Should see salvation..." (*Merchant of Venice*) she does not reckon as God reckons and therefore she and Shakespeare speak erroneously. The Christian must, therefore, use literature and other

written products of men but must not be misled thereby nor call white or truth that which is in reality darkness and the lie.

Most people, who read imaginative literature, read because they enjoy imaginative literature. This causes me to conclude that literature is essentially enjoyable. People of all ages enjoy a story. A gripping story enthralls and entertains the reader as no other literature can. Literature has, as well, a therapeutic affect because the vehicle becomes the “magic carpet” which wafts the reader into a land of his imagination. This journey can be for him either a pleasant or an unpleasant experience. These vicarious experiences afforded by the literature can also be exceedingly rewarding. To read the poem, “Richard Cory”, by Edwin Arlington Robinson is for most people with the typical American sensibility a rewarding and “enjoyable” experience. Here is the poem:

Whenever Richard Cory went downtown,
 We people of the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
 Clean-favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
 And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
 “Good morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
 And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
 To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
 And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
 Went home and put a bullet through his head.

-Edwin Arlington Robinson

“Richard Cory” presents a non-Christian interpretation of reality but the Christian reader can enjoy the poem. He can possibly enjoy the poem at various levels, but when the Christian ponders the poem his initial response may be one which I recently heard: “Thank God for Christ Jesus who gives meaning to my life.” Another response would possibly come after more reflection and more careful study of the poem: “I pity Richard Cory because he lived such a sterile, lonely life. In spite of the opinions of the people of the street, who thought that he was everything and who wished that they were in his place, his life was bitter, more bitter than the life of the man on “pavement” who envied him so much. Richard Cory went home and on a calm, summer night put a bullet through his head.” A third response could be: “The people with whom Edwin Arlington Robinson identified himself were sadly mistaken about the happiness which Richard Cory possessed. Furthermore, the poem suggests that Edwin Arlington Robinson proclaims the futility and purposelessness of life.”

I am sure that all of these responses are legitimate responses to the poem by Robinson. Only a person with a uniquely Christian sensibility could have responded with the words: “Thank God for Christ Jesus who gives meaning to my life.” The other responses could have come from those with other than the uniquely Christian sensibility. When I contemplate this late nineteenth or early twentieth century poem written with a bitterness which classifies it with the realistic period of American literature, I am struck

by the contemporary emphasis on alienation, despair, and the meaninglessness of life. The Spirit of Christ, which lives in my heart, causes me to render to God an anthem of praise and thanksgiving for having made me a new creature in Christ. By nature the Christian is no better than the millions of “Richard Corys” and the billions of the “people of the pavement” but grace—the grace of God in Christ ‘makes all the difference in the world. The bitterness and unbelieving pessimism I too because of the old man of sin have sometimes felt, as Asaph felt, but when I by faith see God and all His love revealed in Christ Jesus, my Lord and my God, than I have a song of gratitude in my heart.

The enjoyment afforded the Christian reader and teacher of imaginative literature is an indication that the literary arts can be used to demonstrate to the child of God that his life can be lived in the joyful awareness of a beauty that God has poured forth on his creation through Christ.

Art for arts sake is a reprehensible idea to the child of God who wishes to praise His Maker with his whole heart, mind, soul and strength. The child of God, who wishes to see his great God and Saviour receive all the glory can ascribe to art a place which will contribute praise to the glory and praise of God’s matchless grace. Art for God’s sake is, therefore, absolutely essential in the life of the man of God in the midst of this world.

That there is a God-glorifying aesthetic cannot be denied. That there is a God-defying and God-defaming aesthetic is equally true. The burning question which constantly pursues the serious Christian teacher of literature is: How must the Christian satisfy the aesthetic urge? In a paper entitled “A Christian Approach to Literature” Leland Ryken from Wheaton College writes as follows:

“I believe that the best criterion for what a Christian ought not to be reading is simply the test of enjoyment. The regenerate Christian cannot enjoy literature that delights in the portrayal of immorality, that attempts to arouse impure sexual thoughts, that trades in profanity, or that blasphemes the sacred things of the Christian .religion. The Christian mind, I say, is repelled by all this because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and it can be trusted to stay away from such literature if it is allowed to follow the standard of Christian enjoyment. The real problem arises when we begin to treat the reading of literature as a solemn duty—when we define it in terms of philosophy or authentic portrayal of reality and conclude that it is our obligation as literate people to read any work of literature that seriously depicts reality or presents a sincerely held vision of the world. It is when we forget that the purpose of the staged play is the enjoyment of the audience that we are in danger of regarding the text of the author as being so sacrosanct that we cannot so much as remove the profanity or pornography from it. Christians have usually distrusted pleasure as the test of what constitutes good reading when it is actually the best method by which the truly Christian mind can decide what kinds or literature it should leave unread.”

I like these comments of Ryken. They seem to correlate with that passage of Scripture which goes as follows:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest (venerable), whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

I believe, therefore, that the Christian teacher has the responsibility to develop in his students the enjoyment of imaginative literature and to cultivate this enjoyment he should attempt to use literature—Christian literature which the student can enjoy. In order to produce this capacity for enjoyment the student must have more than a passing

acquaintance with some of the great writers such as Milton, Herbert, Bunyan, Hopkins, Eliot, and C. S. Lewis. Although the Christian reader and teacher may not be able to agree completely with the presentation of reality by these writers the diet of the Christian reader must be stabilized with imaginative writings from men of this caliber.

* * * * *

In this essay I have aimed to demonstrate that Christian Schools are distinctive schools established to instruct unique students through a purposeful curriculum which includes imaginative literature. The literature selected for use in Christian schools must be analyzed, and enjoyed; it must serve as a vehicle for the edification of covenant youth so that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

—A. Lubbers

THE IMAGE OF GOD, THE SOUL OF MAN, MAN'S HEART, AND LITERATURE

To teach literature distinctively and correctly within the Reformed Christian Schools is a challenging and difficult, but extremely necessary task. Such teaching demands conscientious and prayerful application of the Scriptures, the Reformed Confessions, and dogmatically sound theological principles to the literature as it is taught to the covenant child. This essay intends to relate the image of God, a man's soul, and man's heart to his literary products. It should, therefore, identify and elucidate concepts and ideas which will assist the Reformed Christian literature teacher, who wishes to apply theological principles to his work in the literature classroom.

The Image of God...

Dorothy Sayers in her book, *The Mind of the Maker*, discusses the relationship of the image of God in man and man's creativity. In the chapter entitled "The Image of God" Miss Sayers says: "The characteristic common to God and man is apparently... the desire and the ability to make things." This is a clever and extra-confessional use of the "image of God concept." Because this is a commonly held theory among Christian scholars it is important for us to examine and state clearly the truth of the "image of God concept" as this is taught in the Bible, the Reformed Confessions, and in the interpretive writings of Reformed theologians. It is important that we do this so that our explanation of the cultural activities of man is consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions. It is also important that we do this so we can correctly understand the source of man's literary productions.

The doctrine of the image of God is based fundamentally upon the Word of God as this is found in Genesis 1:26 and 27.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Several interpretations have been given to the "image of God concept" as it appears in Genesis 1:26-27, and in other passages of Scripture. "Image" and "likeness" have been distinguished by some Bible interpreters. Some interpreters have said that "image" referred to the body, and "likeness" referred to the soul. Augustine said that these terms had reference to the qualities of the soul. "Image," said Augustine, referred to the intellectual qualities of the soul and "likeness" referred to the moral qualities of the soul. Roman Catholic scholars regard "image" as an indication of the natural gifts bestowed on man, and "likeness" as a designation of the gifts, with which he was supernaturally endowed, that is, his original righteousness. Since the time of John Calvin, who writes about this problem in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (Book I, Chapter XV, Paragraph III) Reformed theologians have taught that the terms "image" and "likeness" refer to the same thing. These terms emphasize man's original high station over all the creatures of God and help to describe the depth of his fall from "true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." (Cf. Ephesians 4:24)

I could take the time now to discuss the Roman Catholic view and the Lutheran view but I will limit the discussion of the image of God to the Reformed view because

this, I believe, is most germane to the issue we must face in this paper. We must relate these concepts to the teaching of literature and the meaning of “literary creativity.”

Louis Berkhof in his *Manual of Christian Doctrine* speaks of the image of God in a *restricted sense* and the image of God in a more *comprehensive sense*. The restricted sense of the image of God consists in the spiritual qualities with which man was created, i.e., true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, but lost at the time of the Fall. The Scripture describes these spiritual qualities, which were lost, in the following passages:

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:24)

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:... (Colossians 3:10)

The Reformed Confessions also identify and describe these spiritual qualities in the following question and answer from the Heidelberg Catechism.

Did God then create man so wicked and perverse? By no means; but God created man good, and after his own image, in true righteousness and holiness, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love him and live with him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise him. (Question and Answer 6)

It ought to be evident, therefore, from the Scriptures and the Confessions that regenerated man has restored in him those spiritual gifts which he lost when he fell in Adam. He becomes, thereby, a new creature in Christ.

The more comprehensive sense of the image of God is found in the fact that man is a spiritual being, rational, moral, and immortal, in the body, not as a material substance, but as the organ of the soul. According to L. Berkhof it is because of this broader definition of the image of God that it can be said that after the fall man lost the image of God in the restricted sense but retained the image of God in the more comprehensive sense. For Scriptural references used by Berkhof see the following: (Genesis 9:6; I Corinthians 11:7; 15:49; James 3:9.)

Rev. H. Hoeksema in *Reformed Dogmatics* and in other writings disagrees with the definition of the image of God as given in the *Systematic Theology* and *Manual of Christian Doctrine* of Prof. L. Berkhof. Rev. Hoeksema cannot allow this interpretation to go unchallenged because he believes it is not a proper interpretation of the Scriptures. This interpretation is extra- or anti-confessional, and therefore it plays into the hand of those who would use this concept to enforce and establish the validity of the theory of common grace.

H. Hoeksema emphasizes in the first place the teaching of the Reformers, especially the Lutherans, who limit the image of God to man’s original integrity, his true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. H. Hoeksema also expresses doubts about the assumption of some followers of Calvin who insist that Calvin includes more in the “image of God concept” than belonged to Adam’s original rectitude. Calvin speaks of the image of God as “being nearly wiped out,” or “almost obliterated.” This would seem to imply that there was something of the image of God left after the fall and that man had not completely assumed the image of the Devil. Hoeksema would insist, however, that the phrase “*prope deleta*” occurs correctly in the following quotation:

Since, then; the image of God consists in the original excellency of the human nature, which shone forth in Adam before the fall, afterwards, however, is so corrupted and nearly *wiped out* that in the ruins there is nothing left than that which is confused,

mutilated, and infected by filth,... (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, Chapter XV, Paragraph IV)

This quotation, says Hoeksema, must not be taken out of its context and when one reads it in its context one finds an insistence upon an image of God in man in miserable ruins. The quotation also indicates that man's body and rational soul do not belong to -the image of God that was replaced by the image of the Devil. In another place the *Institutes* of John Calvin permit little remaining doubt about his attitude toward this anti-Confessional teaching concerning the image of God.

...the image of God is the uncorrupted excellence of human nature, which shone in Adam *before* his defection, but was afterwards so corrupted, and *almost obliterated*, that nothing remains from the ruin but what is confused, mutilated, and defiled,... (*Institutes*, Book I, Chapter XV, Paragraph IV)

We conclude, therefore, that the Scriptures, the Reformed Confessions, and John Calvin do not permit an interpretation which views the image of God in a broader and a narrower sense.

The Soul of Man...

An important aspect of the being of man is his soul. The soul because of its intangibility is difficult to define, to discuss, or to describe correctly. The Scriptures say concerning the creation of man as a living soul the following:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

The Scriptures simply assert the fact became a living soul.

Most of philosophy and much literature discusses the soul of man in terms of its supposed immortality. Man is mortal—the material substances of which man is made decompose and go back to the earth—but the soul of man is immortal. It lives on in some form. It is a soul which pre-existed in some state prior to its being imprisoned in the body of some individual and it continues to exist apart from a body or in some re-incarnated state.

John Calvin in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* says:

By the "soul" I understand an immortal, yet created essence, nobler part of him.

In another sense the soul is defined as that part of man which gives him an understanding of his own immortality. Calvin says in the *Institutes*:

Now, the very knowledge sufficiently proves the of the soul, which rises above the world, since the evanescent breath or inspiration could not arrive at the fountain of life.

A final proof of the soul's immortality is given by Calvin when he ponders the many noble faculties with which the human mind is adorned, "...and which loudly proclaim that something Divine is inscribed on it,... are so many testimonies of its immortal essence." (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, Chapter XV, Paragraph II)

In still another place in the *Institutes* Calvin discusses the soul as an incorporeal substance.

But we have before stated from the Scripture, that it (the soul) is an incorporeal substance; now we shall add, that although it is not properly contained in any place, yet, being put into the body, it inhabits it as its dwelling,... to hold the supremacy in the

government of human life; and that not only in the concerns of the terrestrial life, but likewise to excite to the worship of God. (*Institutes*, Book I, Chapter XV, Paragraph VI)

Having discussed various theories of Plato and Aristotle, Calvin states his preference for a simple explanation of the soul and its faculties. He submits that the human soul has two faculties—the understanding and the will. The understanding discriminates between objects as they appear and will need to be approved or disapproved. The will performs the dual function of choosing and following what the understanding shall have pronounced good and of abhorring and rejecting what the understanding shall have condemned. (Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book I, Chapter XV, Paragraph VII.)

Operating from the dichotomist position (which is the position of Aristotle and John Calvin) Rev. H. Hoeksema defines the soul as “that spiritual entity or subsistence that is the seat of man’s life from an intellectual-volitional viewpoint.” This dichotomist view of the soul is adopted by H. Hoeksema in preference to the trichotomist position. The trichotomist explanation was introduced in the eighteenth century under the influence of the theories of Rousseau, the French revolutionary, and is held by most modern psychologists. Rev. Hoeksema adopts the dichotomist view because he believes the view of the trichotomist, which distinguishes three faculties of the soul, (i.e., intellect, feelings, and will) gives too much autonomy to the feelings or the emotions. Emotions cannot be separated from the intellect and the will, says the dichotomist, because emotions are only sympathetic or antipathetic reactions to objects or situations presented to the intellect through sensations and perception (the functions of the senses). To make feelings autonomous and irrepressible gives man a sense of freedom and ease from guilt that he cannot and may not have. H. Hoeksema follows the lead of Calvin when he maintains that man is responsible before God for his feelings and therefore the feelings must be regulated by the intellect and the will. Man, who is a moral, rational creature, is responsible for his feelings and must have the potential to control the direction of his feelings. He must control the use of his emotions. He is not an animal, who lives instinctually.

From the dichotomist view of the soul Rev. H. Hoeksema identifies the three main functions assigned to the intellectual faculty of the soul. They are sensation, perception, and presentation. Sensation can be defined as that power of the soul whereby it becomes aware of reality or is able to receive impressions from the outside world or of himself. Perception is that function whereby the intellect or mind distinguishes, combines, separates, and arranges in space and time and thus interprets the various sensations presented by the intellect, and that too, in the light and on the background of other perceptions. Presentation is that function of the intellect which makes possible retention, recall, and recognition of former perceptions. Memory and imagination are important aspects of the presentation function of the intellect.

For this essay the imaginative function of the mind must be emphasized. Imagination can be defined as the faculty of the mind or intellect by which we conceive the absent as if it were present or the power which the mind has of forming concepts beyond those derived from external objects or the power of reproducing images stored in the memory under the suggestion of associated images.

Man would not be what he is without his imagination. Every man, some to a greater degree and others to a lesser degree, lives in the world of his imagination. The

world of our imagination is a distinct world just as imagination is distinct from the memory. Imagination which can be distinguished from the memory is also closely allied to memory because imagination is a function of the soul which is only indirectly dependent upon the memory, Memory is always dependent upon the outside world but imagination is distinct because it does not depend upon the outside world or upon reality for its existence and its success.

Man's Heart

More important than the soul and all its faculties and functions is the heart. Out of the heart are the issues of a man's life. It is the life-center of man's activities. It is in the heart that the child of God is affected when he is regenerated. If he has a new heart, he is a new man. (Cf. Matthew 5:8, Joel 2:12-13; II Corinthians 4:6; Galatians 4:6; II Timothy 2:22) When an individual has not been regenerated, he is hard-hearted. He has a heart like a stone. (Cf. Romans 2:5; Hebrews 3:8, 15; Hebrews 4:7) The issues of a heart recreated according to the image of God (i.e., true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness) are good. The issues of the heart of the unregenerate sinner are only evil continually. (Cf. Proverbs 6:12-14) "...he deviseth mischief continually..."

The regenerated sinner is, however, a very unique sort of man in many ways. He does not even sin in the same way that the unregenerated rebel sins. This does not mean of course that he does not commit the same kinds of sins but it does mean that when he sins he sins differently. This is true because the child of God has two men in him. They are the new man in Christ and the old man of sin. Because the child of God has two men, not two persons, he wages a continual battle against himself (i.e., his sinful flesh) the Devil, and all the hosts of Satan, and the wicked world. which never ceases to assault the Christian. (Cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question and Answer 127.) On the one hand the tragedy of the child of God is that he alone is the wretched man who seeks to be delivered. from the bondage of this death, On the other hand, the child of God is the only one who is filled with unspeakable joy—the child of God has been delivered from sin and our last enemy, Death& (Cf. Romans 7:24-25 and I Corinthians 15.)

Some Conclusions

Before hastening on to see how these Scriptural and Confessional verities apply to literature we must pause to observe several important conclusions both negatively and positively in the interpretation and explanation of Rev. H. Hoeksema in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. First some negative considerations.

1. Rev. Hoeksema disagrees with the use of the term "immortal soul" as it appears in the theology of Calvin (Cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book I, Chapter XV, Paragraph II), L. Berkhof, and other Reformed theologians. Hoeksema says that he can find no proof in the Word of God for the idea "immortal soul," but believes the concept is inherited by Reformed dogmatics from Platonic philosophy. He wills, therefore, to have the idea purged from current Reformed dogmatic discussion of the soul. Hoeksema says:

No man is by nature immortal, either as to body or soul. No man outside of Christ has an immortal soul... The truth is that man is mortal; he has a body that can die, and so he has a perishable soul. God can destroy both soul and body in hell. And immortality is the word that can be applied only to the state of the glorified saints in Christ. (*Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 208.)

2. Rev. Hoeksema also disagrees with the idea that there remains in man an image of God apart from regeneration. This he believes is wrong because it suggests that natural man is not totally depraved.
3. Rev. Hoeksema believes the image of God concept developed by Prof. L. Berkhof is contradictory to the idea that man was changed into the image of the devil.
4. Finally Rev. Hoeksema argues with the concept “image of God in the broader sense” as one that suggests or denotes goodness—moral, ethical, spiritual integrity.

H. Hoeksema also posits a positive position which he believes, and I believe, is the correct interpretation of the “image of God concept” as it appears in the Reformed Confessions and the Word of God. In the positive statement Rev: Hoeksema distinguishes the *image of God in a formal and in a material sense*.

1. In the first place the image of God in man in the formal sense suggests that man’s nature is adapted to bear the image of God. This term connotes capability. It means that man is a personal being with a rational, moral nature that is capable of standing in a conscious, personal relation to God, capable of the knowledge of God, capable of perfect righteousness, and capable of perfect holiness. Man always remains a moral, rational, personal being who ought to live in covenant fellowship but who has willfully assumed and who necessarily reveals the image of the devil. This means that man is morally corrupt, that he sins rationally and is therefore personally responsible for his actions.
2. In the second place the image of God in the material sense goes a step further than mere capability and responsibility. Materially man was endowed with the spiritual, ethical virtues of the image of God. Because of the material possessions which he had, man was originally completely directed with all of his affections toward God. Man’s restoration as described in Ephesians 4:23-24, suggests the indescribable beauty of the image of God from this material point of view.

And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

When man by his own willful and sinful act lost the material possessions of original righteousness, he assumed the material possessions of the Devil and became thereby an instrument to serve sin and all its passions. The being, who was intended to be the crown and king of creation, who was designed to be the image bearer of God became by his own willful act the image-bearer of the Devil. Only through the grace of God in Christ is this image of God restored in man. Only those who have been regenerated have in principal those spiritual gifts which man originally possessed—true knowledge, righteousness and holiness.

and LITERATURE...

It ought to be totally obvious that it is neither Confessionally accurate nor Scripturally sound to teach that it is because of man’s creation in the image of God that he is a “creative creature.” In a certain sense it is even a contradiction in terms to speak of a creature who creates, but we will not prolong the discussion by arguing the merits or the legitimacy of the term “creative” as applied to man’s innovative, imaginative, or cultural activities. The Reformed Confessions emphasize, however, that man after the fall

did not retain the image of God. We observe, however, that even though man lost the image of God he did not lose his desire or his ability to produce things. His ability may have been greatly impaired because of the curse but he did not *lose* the ability nor did he lose the desire to make things. Man's desire and his ability to make and to produce things is rooted in his intellectual powers: Man did not lose his intellect and because he has an intellect he can be a productive creature. It is likewise evident that God had not annulled or abrogated the creation or cultural mandate. Man, as the king of the creation of God, was still commanded to "subdue the earth and replenish it." (Cf. Genesis 1:28) God had only made the task of man exceedingly difficult. His task on earth is now one that he must accomplish in the sweat of his brow because of the curse of God that came upon the whole creation--mankind and brute creation. That God had not abrogated or changed the creation mandate is evident from the narrative in Genesis 4:19-24 which is the tale of the cultural activities of the sons of Cain and Lamech: Jabal, the tent builder; Jubal, the musician; and Tubal Cain, the artificer and craftsman.

If we must accept the thesis that man's creativity proceeds from the image of God, then a man cannot be "creative" or innovative unless he is regenerated because we have before proved that man has lost the image of God. If we must accept the thesis that man's creativity proceeds from the image of God, then only the regenerated man can be creative and innovative because only the regenerated man has the mind of Christ (Cf. I Corinthians 2:16) and only he who is regenerated can be more and more conformed to the image of God. (Cf. *Heidelberg Catechism*, Question and Answer 115) It ought to be totally obvious that "creativity" and inventiveness are not dependent upon man's being created or recreated in the image of God. That this is obvious is evident from the fact that image-bearers of the Devil often have as much or more imaginative ability as those who are renewed by the Spirit of Christ and have the image of God restored in them. This imaginative ability they use, however, to their own destruction and write from a heart which hates God and all His precepts. That this is true is evident from the poem of Lamech, who exalts his exploits as follows:

Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice! For I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for bruising me.

(Genesis 4:23, Revised Version, 1885)

Man with imaginative ability, who ought to live in covenant fellowship lives as a covenant breaker. He uses his literary abilities to write imaginative works which say many factually accurate and beautifully phrased ideas which are discoverable in the happenings of life, but they do not glorify the God of heaven and earth. These cultural products, which are true to reality and are admirable works of art proceeding from a fertile imagination, are the materials used in the Christian school classroom.

Man's ability to write imaginatively must be explained in terms of the remnants of natural light, and not in terms of the remaining aspects of the image of God (i.e., the image of God in the broader sense). Man's literary ability must be understood solely in terms of his creation as the highest of God's creatures endowed with all the abilities that accompany the intellectual faculty of the soul, In spite of the fall man remained a moral, rational creature with thought-producing abilities.

When man fell, however, the whole man fell into sin. He was affected in every part of his existence as a man. This means that man's imaginative function was also affected by sin. It is a remarkable and somewhat disturbing fact that the Bible does not

use the term “imagination” in a complimentary sense. Imagination is the word which usually describes the sinful motions of man’s mind or intellect. (Cf. Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Deut. 31:21; I Chronicles 28:9; 29:18; Deut. 29:19; Jeremiah 3:17; 7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17; Prov. 6:18; Lam. 3:60-61; Romans 1:21; Luke 1:51; II Corinthians 10:5.)

Furthermore the doctrinal statements concerning the image of God and man’s soul, and his heart speak volumes concerning the nature of the cultural products of man. If cultural products are an extension of the man, and if they are produced by men as a response to reality, they reflect the life-view and the inner life of the men who retain the image of the Devil and therefore *hold the truth in unrighteousness*. (Cf. Romans 1) If works are produced by men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, then we can say, even though they are a correct presentation of reality, that these works have a direction away from God because they are part of the issues of life which come from an unregenerate heart. They have been produced by someone who does not have the mind of Christ. (Cf. I Corinthians 2:16) He has not been restored to a new relationship in Christ and therefore he cannot know the truth which shall alone make him free.

The doctrinal statements concerning the image of God also imply the “Christianess” of works produced by men who have been renewed in Christ and in whom the work of grace has resulted in restoration of the image of God. Works (cultural products) of men who are saved in Christ will be God-directed even though they may still contain many imperfect interpretations. Imperfect ideas exist in the works of Christians because the Christian in all of his activities has only a small beginning of the new obedience. All the works of the Christian are also polluted with the sins of the old man which wars incessantly against the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. The Christian is not yet in heaven and can in no way establish the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ in this life. He can only point the way to the city which hath been eternally founded on the finished work of Christ. The builder of that eternal city is our faithful covenant-keeping God. The Christian writer looks forward in hope, as he writes his metaphors of praise, to the time when the perfect poem will be sung—THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE LAMB.

This most assuredly does not mean that we cannot in this veil of tears use the works of non-Christians. If ‘we could not use the works of non-Christians, we would have to move out of this world and be a locally separate people. That would be a tragedy and would be contrary to the express wish of our Lord. God calls us to spiritual separation. We are also not to think that the non-Christian cannot discover reality. It is indubitably true that he is not able to come to a saving knowledge of the Truth, nor does he want to, for Jesus says, “I am the way, the Truth, and the light, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” (John 8:32. Cf. John 14:6) Only he that is in Christ can know the truth that will make him free. But the non-Christian because of his natural abilities can discover certain realities that will be exceedingly helpful for the Christian as he travels in this world of sin and death to the celestial city.

Carl Sandburg, the romantic-naturalist, says in the poem “Primer Lesson”.

Look out how you use proud words
When you let proud words go, it is
not easy to call them back.

They wear long boots, hard boots;
they walk off proud; they can't
hear you calling—

Look out how you use proud words.

That this perceptive utterance by a man committed to Scripture-denying principles can help the child of God understand more profoundly the truth taught in many Scripture passages ought to be evident to all. I quote only two of the passages from the Scriptures which teach this profound truth:

A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Proverbs 15:1-2

The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

Psalms 12:3-4

To maintain that the Christian can become more profoundly aware of the truth of the word of God through such a poem as “Primer Lesson” may cause some people of God to lift their eye brows Questioningly. Some may even think in terms of compromising synthesisism. I say, however, that Carl Sandburg, in spite of his apparent spiritual blindness in which he holds the truth in unrighteousness can cause the child of God to flee to the Scriptures and to exclaim with praise: “It is true that I, who by nature am proud, cannot call proud words back, but I am thankful for Christ Jesus, my Lord and my King, who crushes me causing me to repent and call back those hard words.”

God grant that Reformed Christian literature teachers may daily search the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions as they apply their own hearts and hearts of their students to wisdom's ways so that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. In this way the Christian teacher of the literature of this world will continue to confess and live in harmony with the confession of Paul in I Corinthians 3:22-23:

All things are ours, and we are Christ's and Christ is God's.

The Christian literature teacher will use all that God has made and all that God has given to his covenant people in the midst of this present world. With his eye on the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions, the Christian literature teacher will teach his students to be a spiritually separate people and will help his students to learn to distinguish between the true and the false but also between that which he can use and cannot use in his pilgrimage to the eternal city where he will sing perfectly the SONG OF MOSES AND THE LAMB.

Let us put on, therefore, the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness so that with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength we, a covenant-keeping people, may as image bearers of God faithfully serve God in our literature studies.

—Agatha Lubbers

LITERATURE AS A CULTURAL STATEMENT

Literature teachers and history teachers agree that in order to understand clearly and evaluate carefully an age, era, or period in history a study must be made of the art, music, and especially the literature. We Christian teachers of literature and history can find this very same idea in the Scriptures. The books of Kings, Chronicles, and Samuel record the history of God's people in a certain age. When we read the Psalms, however, we get into the "spirit of that age". For example, David's sin with Bathsheba is recorded in II Samuel 11-12, but how David felt about that sin is most beautifully expressed in Psalm 51. We can find other examples to illustrate this idea in I Samuel 22 and Psalm 52, I Samuel 23 and Psalm 54, I Samuel 21 and Psalm 6, I Samuel 24 and Psalm 57, and Psalm 105, a poetic account of Israel's history. No Christian would advocate reading only the poetry in the Bible. Christians read all of God's Word, but there are certain parts that can be used to gain a more lucid understanding of the whole.

In the same sense, only imperfectly and thoroughly polluted with sin, the writers of an age in history give us deep insight into their own age. They have a cunning way of getting into the very heart and marrow of an age. They expose and express the pulse of their time. DeWitt H. Parker in his book *The Principles of Aesthetics* writes about this same idea as follows:

History may tell us what men did, but only the poet or other artist can make us relive the values of their experience.

I conceive the literary purpose to be the use of language to communicate not facts and thoughts but vivid realizations of actions; of emotions, of ideas in order that we may experience life to the full.¹

Emily Dickinson, the recluse poet of New England, expresses the same thought in the following short poem:

A precious moldering pleasure 'tis
To meet an antique book
In just the dress his century wore,
A privilege, I think,
His venerable hand to take,
And warming in our own,
A passage back, or two, to make
To times when he was young:

(Values in Literature, p. 326)²

Illustrations of a writer's insight into his own age and time are abundant in all literature. Because American and English literature are more familiar to us than the literature of the other countries, I will choose my illustrations from these two bodies of literature. Let us start with Geoffrey Chaucer, a writer of medieval England.

Some of the clearest insights into medieval English life come in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The story behind these tales is an interesting one. Although there were wide social gulfs in medieval England, almost everyone shared a single religion. In Canterbury there was a shrine to the martyred bishop Thomas a' Becket. Pilgrims from all walks of life made pilgrimages to this shrine. They met at Tabard Inn in Southwark and traveled the sixty mile journey together because traveling alone in those days made one easy prey for the outlaws that roamed the countryside. To break the monotony and tediousness of the pilgrimage the innkeeper (the Host) suggested that each member tell a

story, and he promised a free meal to the teller of the best tale. We do not have space to record each tale, but let us read some of Chaucer's vivid and frank descriptions of some of the pilgrims.

There was a *Knight*, a most distinguished man,
Who from the day on which he first began
To ride abroad had followed chivalry,
Truth, honor, generousness and courtesy.
He had done nobly well in his sovereign's war
And ridden into battle, no man more,
As well in Christian as in heathen places,
And ever honored for his noble graces...
In fifteen mortal battles he had been
And jousted for our faith at Tramisene
Thrice in the lists, and always killed his man.

(*Canterbury Tales, Prologue*, lines 43-53)³

He had his son with him, a fine young *Squire*
A lover and cadet, a lad of fire
With locks as curly as if they had been pressed
He was some twenty years of age, I guessed.
In stature he was of a moderate length
With wonderful agility and strength.
Held seen some service with the cavalry
In Flanders and Arotis and Picardy
And had done valiantly in little space
Of time, in hope to win his lady's grace.
He was embroidered like a meadow bright
And full of freshest flowers, red and white.

(C.T. *Prologue*, lines 69-80)

There was a *Yeoman* with him at his side,
No other servant; so he chose to ride.
This Yeoman wore a coat and hood of green,
And peacock feathered arrows bright and keen
And neatly sheathed, hung at his belt the while
—For he could dress his gear in yeoman style,
His arrows never drooped their feathers low
And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.

(C.T. *Prologue*, lines 89-96)

There was a *Nun*, a Prioress,
Her way of smiling very simple and coy
Her greatest oath as only "By St. Loy!"
And she was known as Madam Eglantyne.

(C. T. *Prologue*, lines 108-111)

A worthy *woman* from beside *Bath* city
Was with us, somewhat deaf, which was a pity.
In making cloth she showed so great a bent
She bettered those of Ypres and of Ghent.
In all the parish not a dame dared stir
Towards the altar steps in front of her,
And if indeed they did, so wrath was she
As to be quite put out of charity.

(C. T. *Prologue*, lines 317-324)

A holy-minded man of good renown
There was, and poor, the *Parson* to a town,
Yet he was rich in holy thought and work.

(C. T. *Prologue*, lines 347-349)

There was a *Plowman* with him there, his brother.
Many a load of dung one time or other,
He must have carted through the morning dew.
He was an honest worker, good and true,
Living in peace and perfect charity,
And, as the gospel bade him, so did he,
Loving God best with all his heart and mind
And then his neighbor as himself, repined
At no misfortune, slacked for no content,
For steadily about his work he went
To thrash his corn, to dig or to manure
Or to make a ditch; and he would help the poor
For the love of Christ and never take a penny
If he could help it, and, as prompt as any,
He paid his tithes in full when they were due
On what he owned, and on his earnings too.

(C. T. *Prologue*, lines 397-412)

The *Miller* was a chap of sixteen stone,
A great stout fellow big in brawn and bone.
He did well out of them, for he could go
And win the ram at any wrestling show.
Broad, knotty and short-shouldered, he would boast
He could heave any door off hinge and post,
Or take a run and break it with his head.
His beard, like any sow or fox, was red
And broad as well, as though it were a spade;
And, at its very tip, his nose displayed
A wart on which there stood a tuft of hair
Red as the bristles in an old sow's ear.

(C. T. *Prologue*, lines 413-424)

Our *Host* gave us great welcome; everyone
Was given a place and supper was begun.
He served the finest victuals you could think
The wine was strong and we were glad to drink.
A very striking man our Host withal,
And fit to be a marshal in a hall.
His eyes were bright, his girth a little wide;
There is no finer burgess in Cheapside.

(C. T. *Prologue*, lines 509-516)

Chaucer's wide exposure to men and women from all walks of life enabled him to write these very frank but colorful descriptions of these Canterbury pilgrims. Read not only the Prologue from which these descriptions are taken, but read some of the tales by the pilgrims to get an even deeper insight into this period in English history.

Consider another Englishman, Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), whose diary covers his fashionable life in London from New Year's Day, 1660, to May 31, 1669. In these years he witnessed a beheading of one of those who opposed the crown, the coronation of Charles II, the bubonic plague in London of 1664-1665, and the Great London Fire of

1666. Pepys records all these events in his diary with his own peculiar style, wit, and insight.

On the day of the Great London Fire he wrote:

September 2, 1666 (Lord's Day) Some of our maids sitting up late last night to get things ready against our feast today, Jane called us up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the city. So I rose and slipped on my nightgown and went to her window, and thought it to be on the back side of Mark Lane at the farthest; but being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off, and so went to bed again and to sleep.

About seven rose again to dress myself, and there looked out at the window, and saw the fire not so much as it was, and further off. So to my closet to set things to right after yesterday's cleaning.

By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down tonight by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning all Fish Street, by London Bridge. So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the tower, and there got up upon one of the high places, Sir J. Robinson's little son going up with me; and there I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge...

Not only do we find insight into another age through the tales of Chaucer and diaries of Pepys, but we also find a similar insight through English and American poetry and novels.

George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824) visited the battlefield at Waterloo a year after the battle had taken place. About this historic conflagration he wrote "The Eve of Waterloo". The first and the last stanzas are most moving.

There was a sound of revelry by night
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage-bell—
But hush! hark! a deep sound strides like a rising knell!

(lines 1-9)

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms—the day
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunderclouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse—friend, foe—in, one red burial blent!

(lines 55-63)

Through character sketches, descriptive passages, and dialogue the novelist gives not just a glimpse but a good long look at the age in which he lived and wrote. Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Great Expectations* expose the plight of orphaned boys in nineteenth century England. The characters are often fictitious, but some of the scenes are drawn from the experience of Dickens himself. William Makepeace Thackeray, Dickens' contemporary, in his novel *Vanity Fair* exposes and

criticizes the snobbery and the social injustices of his day. George Eliot's powerful novels *Adam Bede*, *Middlemarch*, and *The Mill on the Floss* explore and yet another age and time in the English countryside.

Washington Irving, the earliest American writer to gain international fame, most descriptively paints word pictures that bring to life the feeling of living in the Hudson River valley in the early 1800's. Although Irving was a teller of tales, many of them exceedingly tall, nevertheless, he describes his time and place so well that we feel as if we had actually lived there. Other American novelists open up their ages to us with the same degree of success. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* portrays the trials, failures, and successes of the New England whaling industry. Nathaniel Hawthorne takes us back for a new look at Puritan New England. Mark Twain's *Roughing It* gives us a rather humorous, but often true, picture of the West in the 1860's. His *Life on the Mississippi* reveals a facet of American life that has died and will live on only in the pages of this book. Hamlin Garland's *Main-Traveled Roads* is considered a most accurate account of the plight of the farmer on prairies. His stories ring with the pathos of those who are oppressed by unjust landlords, corrupt laws, and harsh environment. Many more could be named, but time and space do not permit us to explore any more.

All things are placed in the hands of Christians for a purpose. That purpose is to honor and glorify God in and through Jesus Christ. Only Christians can really understand history because all history is God's history. Christians must learn to understand history; it is their duty to understand what God has been doing for the bride of Christ, the church, throughout the ages.

We Christian teachers of literature and history must use every means at our disposal to instill in the covenant youth the urgent need to know history. Literature and history read, studied, and explored in the light of God's Word will give covenant youth a deeper insight into God's work not only in their own time but in time past as well. Literature, then, becomes a tool for the greater understanding of history, and, therefore, it has its justified place in the curriculums of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

—Darrel Huisken

¹ Parker, *The Principles of Aesthetics*, p. 45

² This quotation is taken from *The Poems of Emily Dickenson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson. Cambridge, Mass: The Press of Harvard University, 1955.

³ This quotation and all subsequent quotations from *The Canterbury Tales* are translated by Nevill Cogill, Penguin Books, Inc. (1952) as found in *English Literature*.

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ILLUMINATING LITERATURE IN THE CHRISTIAN CLASSROOM

Written communication has a limitation that exists only to a lesser degree in communication that is oral. When one reads what another person has written, it may not always be easy to know what the writer has tried to say. When one does not know what the writer has tried to say, he does not have the option to ask for further elucidation or clarification. Obviously the situation with respect to oral communication is much different.

If the problem mentioned above exists for writing in general, one becomes more acutely aware of it when he moves into the area of literature. Literature, particularly if it is good literature, is often hard to understand. Literature that poses problems of interpretation for mature readers presents even greater difficulties for junior and senior high school students. Many a teacher has failed to get his students to enjoy literature because he has failed repeatedly to get them to understand it. The point that I would make in this paper is that the teacher of literature must be an illuminator. The student in the literature class can never ask Shakespeare or Wordsworth or Frost, "What do you mean to say here?" Students can and always do, in fact they must, ask: "What does *Shakespeare* or *Wordsworth* or *Frost* mean to say here?" The teacher's job, of course, is to answer the questions.

If the teacher is to be an able illuminator, he must first of all possess a thorough mastery of each literary work. The primary source of evidence for what the poem or story means is the work itself. The teacher will have to come to his students, fully prepared to show them how all of a work's formal aspects, from the most broad to the most minute, contribute to the work's meaning. Works of literature convey meaning implicitly as well as explicitly. The substance of what literature means to say is usually couched in metaphor. Whereas non literary prose conveys meaning by direct denotative statement, works of literature suggest meaning indirectly. The fact that literature is loaded with implications accounts for much of its difficulty, but it also accounts for much of the enjoyment that literature affords the reader. By explaining the implications in a work, the teacher brings the meaning of the work to light for his students and his joy of discovery becomes their joy.

If the teaching of literature is to be Christian, illumination will have to be total. Students must not always be allowed to hold their own interpretations of certain literary works, nor must teachers assume that any interpretation that seems to fit a story or poem is the right one. Every piece of literature is a careful response to a definite situation. In order to evaluate the response, one often has to know something about the situation. To be a successful illuminator the Christian teacher will have to rely on a second kind of evidence. Such evidence can be called secondary evidence. One will understand why secondary evidence is important when one understands something about language and its limitations. What a man says arises from a unique set of circumstances—a unique situation. What a man means to say is inspired and structured by the circumstances in which he is speaking. A man chooses his words and organizes his thoughts in order to be understood by people in a given situation. He has no guarantee, however, that his words will carry his precise intended meaning to other people in other situations or to other people at later periods of time. The older a piece of literature the less meaningful it may be. *Beowulf*, an early 8th century, Anglo-Saxon epic, is practically unintelligible to the modern reader, first of all because the variety of English is so strange, but also because

the historical context is so foreign. Divorced from the historical context in which it was written, the story or poem, to some degree, is likely to lack significance for even the most perceptive student.

The teacher's task as illuminator is to reconstruct as completely as possible the historical circumstances known to the author, and to show how these circumstances influenced and shaped his work. To perform this task the Christian literature teacher must possess sufficient knowledge about the authors of literature. Equally as important is the knowledge of the periods in which authors lived and worked. The Christian teacher should understand and be able to evaluate the philosophy, manners, and morals of a literary period and he should see the profound effect of these things on the shaping of a literary work.

Teachers are not the only people who have been concerned with illuminating literature. As long as there has been literature there have been people who have busied themselves with attempting to explain the meaning of literature. Such people, whether they do this professionally or avocationally, are called critics. Methods of arriving at meaning in works of literature are called critical approaches. Distinguishable critical approaches arise because no one can study a literary work without relating it to some framework of facts or ideas. For example, a man interested in history might interpret a work by relating it to the period in which it was written. Someone else might think that the only way to understand a work is to see it in relation to the life of the author. Still another might insist that all considerations of history and biography are irrelevant, and the work itself contains all the necessary clues for its meaning. The teacher of literature has access to a rich tradition of critical writings. Countless essays and books have been written on specific works and on literature in general, some showing a clear preference for one approach, some a preference for another. Some show a preference for a combination of approaches. The Christian teacher of literature should have some knowledge of the important critical approaches that have been employed.

The Historical Approach

The historical critic believes that he cannot properly understand a literary work unless he relates the work to its historical context.

For him the poem is essentially a historical phenomenon, arising out of conditions of thought and experience that may differ in countless ways from modern conditions, and therefore require to be studied if the poem is to yield up its true meaning. He attempts to set the poem once again in its original context of time, reconstructing the circumstances of its composition and public reception, pointing out its connection with the artistic and intellectual assumptions of its age, and thus restoring as fully as he can the aspect it would have worn for the contemporary reader.

(Cf. *Poetry and Poetics*, p. 167)

Needless to say, the Christian literature teacher will find the methods of the historical critic (as well as the data he has collected) most helpful. No one can expect to understand the poems of William Wordsworth apart from the context of 19th century Romanticism. Nor can one expect to understand the Metaphysicals of the 17th century unless he has some knowledge of the social, philosophical, and political circumstances of the 17th century. One does not understand John Donne's desperate preoccupation with "inconstancy" until one understands and appreciates the turbulence of his time, generated by new ideas and radically different ways of looking at man and his relationship to the

universe. Shakespeare is often difficult for the inexperienced reader simply because much of the language is unfamiliar. Many English words have taken on different meanings since Shakespeare's time and some have become obsolete. Part of the task of the historical critic is to reconstruct the meaning of such works in terms that the modern reader can understand. In order for the student to understand some works from earlier periods, he will have to see things in somewhat the way things were seen in those periods. He will have to feel somewhat the way the authors felt, and he will have to understand language the way it was used by these authors.

The Biographical Approach

The biographical approach is similar to the historical approach and is often used in close connection with it. Whereas the historical critic concerns himself with the broader context of historical conditions, situations, and trends, the biographical critic is concerned with the more immediate context of the author's life. The biographical critic tries to explain a work by relating it directly to the author's own personal situation. He is concerned with reconstructing the situation of the author which influenced or caused him to write. The Christian literature teacher will have to be something of a biographical critic. Emily Dickinson's poem, "To Make a Prairie", in which she proposes to make a prairie in her imagination, is a pleasant little thing, but one can only appreciate it fully when one knows that Emily Dickinson spent very little time out of doors. "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley is an interesting and fearful poem for the Christian to read. Henley who thanks "whatever gods may be" for his "unconquerable soul," and who boasts that "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul," looms above the Christian as an example of human pride at its height. When the truth is known about Henley (the fact that he wrote the poem on the eve of a serious operation from which he might not recover) Henley becomes a sad picture of vain conceit and helpless desperation.

The biographical approach is particularly valuable to the Christian teacher because he is always concerned with the matter of heart direction in a literary work. The Christian recognizes that every literary work, whether long or short, whether artistically good or artistically poor, whether famous or little known, must be considered as a product of a man's heart, reflecting the condition of that heart. Illumination is never complete until one has uncovered the religious or philosophical spirit that informs the work. For example, William Cullen Bryant, in the last stanza of "To a Waterfowl," seems to express admirably his belief in God's benign providence:

He who from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

Many an unsuspecting student has been led to believe that Bryant was here giving a Christian response. A look at Bryant's biography will show, however, that Bryant was a Romantic Deist, hardly capable of giving expression to the hope of the Christian.

The Comparative Approach

The comparative approach is the practice of comparing a given work to the body of a man's writings or to the writings of other authors of the same period in order to account more fully for what the work means. An author's works are like his children—

each one pleasantly different, yet all showing evidence of common parentage. One who employs the methods of the comparative critic studies all of a man's works and tries to track down similarities in theme, reoccurrences of special imagery, and peculiarities in style. Someone who suspects that "Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening" is about life and death can find convincing evidence in other of Robert Frost's poems. "After Apple-picking" is just one example where such evidence might be found. This generic relationship that exists in the body of a man's works can also be seen, to some extent, when one compares a given work to the works of other writers of the same period. Every writer is forced to operate within a cultural context or tradition. The comparative critic can often uncover that which is common to the tradition and thus contribute significantly to the illumination of literature.

The New Critical Approach

The New Critical Approach is perhaps the least definable of all the approaches that we have discussed so far. The reasons for this being that the approach began to take form as late as the nineteen-thirties, and that there has never been a great deal of agreement among the New Critics as to their methods and goals. New Criticism began as a reaction to more traditional approaches to the study of literature. New Critics are usually hostile to any kind of historical criticism. They feel that:

university scholarship in the past has concerned itself too narrowly with analysis of the period in which literature is created, the social milieu in which it may be grouped.

(Cf. *Contemporary Literature*, p. 500)

They feel that consequently criticism has tended to become a mere pigeonholing of literature. New Critics react similarly to biographical studies. Biographical studies, according to them, tend to

degenerate into pure biography, which has little or no connection with the enjoyment of literature.

(Cf. *Contemporary Literature*, p. 500)

New Critics also react violently to any kind of criticism that is concerned with finding moral elements in literature. They contend that preoccupation with philosophical or ethical content blinds the critic to the fact that literature is primarily language intended to produce enjoyment. New Critics are much less interested in what an author says than they are in how he says it.

New critics maintain that a work ought to be studied apart from any consideration of its origin. W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, a pair of New Critics, who teamed up to write an essay entitled, *The Intentional Fallacy*, have made an interesting statement:

The poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it.)

(Cf. *The Study of Literature*, p. 200)

The point that they make here, in fact, the point of their entire essay is that investigations of an author's intention (what caused him to write) are unnecessary and usually futile. New Critics would rather fasten all of their attention on the work itself, maintaining that all necessary clues about the meaning of a work are to be found in the syntax of the work itself.

The purpose of this paper is not to champion any of the above-mentioned critical approaches. All of them have their relative advantages and disadvantages. New Critics are at least partially right in their criticism of the historical approach. Historical critics often appear more interested in history than in literature. It might be more fair to say that their interest in literature ceases once they have noted and described the relationship between the work and the period to which it belongs. The teacher who follows too rigorously the procedures of the historical critic runs the risk of doing injustice both to literature and to his students. The study of literature must somehow remain the study of literature. Although literature succeeds admirably in conveying the spirit of an age, it does a great deal more. The best literature transcends its own age and speaks to each succeeding age. To stress too heavily historical criticism is often to violate a work's individual integrity; its ability to speak for itself and to speak well.

The biographical approach, if used as an exclusive method in the classroom, leads to little more than the study of the lives of authors. If students are forced to spend all of their time discovering and memorizing all kinds of facts about authors that come to light in their works, so much that belongs uniquely to literature goes unnoticed. Illumination of this kind is at best partial illumination.

The New Critical approach also has obvious weaknesses. In reacting against traditional methods of criticism, the New Critics no doubt go too far in the other direction. If historical criticism and biographical criticism allow for less than a total understanding and appreciation of literature, the same charge must be brought against the New Critical method. The basic premise, "that literature is primarily language intended to produce enjoyment," must sound suspicious to the Christian. Without denying the Christian the right to enjoy literature, one would have to assume a more inclusive justification for the place of literature in the Christian School curriculum. Perhaps a more serious charge that should be brought against the New Critics concerns their refusal to make any kind of moral judgments about authors or works. A concern for what men have to say to us should lie near the heart of all the activity that goes on in a Christian literature classroom.

It seems to this writer that the teaching of literature in the Christian School ought to involve two basic things: illumination and evaluation. By illumination I mean that the students with the help of their teacher must see clearly what the author is trying to say. If we conclude that literature is a response to God's reality, then illumination means that the student has to see and understand clearly the precise nature of this response. If the work of literature is highly metaphorical, illumination must take place in order for the student to grasp fully the implication. For whatever reason a literary work is obscure the teacher will have to provide illumination. Illumination is of utmost importance because without it evaluation cannot occur.

The teacher of literature in the Christian School has a difficult and awesome task to perform. When the teacher invites Shakespeare or Wordsworth, Mark Twain or Hemingway into his classroom to spend an hour with his students, he acquires an extraordinary responsibility. The experience of literature is a powerful thing—powerful because literature is powerful. There ought to be no misunderstanding of what an author is trying to say. There ought to be no misunderstanding or naive notions as to what God or what Idol each author of literature is seeking to praise. If Christian students and teachers alike are going to be faithful stewards even in the realm of literature, they will

have to be judges. They will be called to make judgments primarily about works of literature, but also about authors of literature and characters in literature. Literature might even force them to make judgments about themselves. In order that literature may be evaluated and judged, it must be illuminated. To be a competent illuminator the literature teacher will be something of a historical critic. Sometimes he will behave -very much like a biographical critic. At other times he will find himself using the methods of the comparative critic. And if the New Critic has made any contribution, maybe it is his insistence on the primacy of the literary work itself. He may be right that the best evidence for what a work means to say can be found in the work itself. From a practical point of view, it makes for good teaching to let the student wrestle first of all with the work itself with the teacher supplying additional illumination later if needed. However, the New Critic fails to realize that men and their works are very much creatures of time. Nothing is really universal except the Knowledge of God. And there is no ultimate good to be found in literature, The Christian literature teacher can only hope that by God's grace his students can use literature to grow and increase in the knowledge of God.

—James E. Huizinga

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WHAT IS LITERATURE?

Literature has had at best an uncertain history in Protestant Reformed schools: It is the only subject in the curriculum of our schools that can be (and, in fact in the past, has been) dropped from the curriculum without outcry from the boards or the parents. Even when literature is taught, it is often allowed only a minor place in the English class and then is treated very gingerly with emphasis on vocabulary, style, and form rather than on the substance of literature.

It is not surprising, then, that attitudes toward literature vary widely in Protestant Reformed homes. Some parents consider the reading of novels, short stories, and plays to be a form of entertainment little better than a total waste of time. Others consider it to be a purveyor of all sorts of evil thoughts and there are those who seem to have a kind of mystic love of literature as being beyond criticism by ordinary people. As a result, literature remains unused or misused by many of our people.

I suspect that some of the difficulties we have with literature are due to misconceptions or disagreements about what literature really is. It is my hope that this essay will remove some of these misconceptions and resolve some disagreements or at least clarify the problems.

The term literature is often used to refer to any kind of written material. In this way we speak of “Canaanite literature” even though virtually all of the existing written material of the Canaanites consists of business records. Or we speak of advertising material as literature even though it lies far from the more specific meaning of the term. Usually, however, we limit the meaning of literature to only a part of the vast body of written material that man has produced through the ages.

There is one important characteristic that literature shares with all other written material: it communicates by means of the written word. And the word is that special device which God has given to man to communicate to others his thoughts, his aspirations, and his feelings. The use of the word carries with it a moral implication and a moral responsibility. It is true with the written word as with the spoken word, “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God,” God has placed man in the creation with the compulsion to respond to that creation and to its Creator. Whenever man writes he is making a response either of praise and worship or of hatred and dishonor.

The term literature is usually used to refer to a particular kind of written communication. There are some who would define it simply in terms of the genre in which it usually appears. Literature than is any novel, short story, play, or poem. It is true that literature usually uses one of these forms, but most people who are concerned with such things usually want to include some, but not all, of such forms as biography and the essay. The definition then becomes less specific and quite unsatisfactory. Worse, this definition mistakes the forms of literature for its substance.

There are others who would define literature as anything that is well-written. In this definition we find another characteristic of literature: it must have clarity of style and unity of thought and impact. But this definition gives us no basis to distinguish between the scientist’s analysis of the function and structure of a flower and the poet’s celebration of the beauty of the flower. Also, this definition fails to give any indication of the real substance of literature.

It may be helpful to examine the difference between the writing of the scientist and that of the poet. It is most important, though, that we observe first that both the scientist and the poet are concerned with God's creation and both respond to it. God has given the command to both that their response be one of praise and worship to Him.

The scientist observes the flower carefully and with great accuracy records his observations. He analyzes the parts and determines their functions. He writes an article communicating what he has discovered to others. If he is a Christian he will point out that God has given another bit of knowledge for which and with which to praise Him. But though he writes with great clarity and even put his observations into rhyme and meter, he would not be producing literature.

The poet observes the flower with equal care. He may even observe many of the things that the scientist did. But when he sits down to write his poem, he will be concerned with communicating his feelings about that flower. He will choose words that by sound and meaning will express his feelings. He will use rhyme and meter that will give unity to the words and thoughts to express this feeling. If he is an effective poet, he will by implication say some things about flowers in general, about the idea of beauty, or about the response of man to these. If he is a Christian, his poem will sound the praise of God and thankfulness to Him Who makes it possible for man to praise Him.

We see in the illustration several important elements of difference between the response to God and the creation in literature and the response in other forms of written communication. Its purpose is not primarily to communicate fact but to communicate response to the fact. Literature is concerned with feeling and emotion and the stimulation of these in the reader. Because literature communicates feeling and because it communicates idea which cannot be precisely defined, it most often speaks by implication, using the specific to describe the general and using figures of speech to define the undefinable. For this reason literature depends so heavily upon the style of the author; feeling can be conveyed effectively only by a unity of sound, rhythm, and thought.

Most important to an understanding of literature is the understanding of the fact that it communicates by implication. This makes the reading of fiction a great deal more than entertainment, so much more dangerous to those who are not aware of or do not recognize the implications of the author, but a great deal more profitable for those who can recognize those implications and who are capable of evaluating those implications for their own growth. There are those who may read Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as an interesting (or possibly, boring) story of ambition and murder and enjoy the action and suspense, but if they miss the fact that Shakespeare is also saying many things about man in general, they would be well-advised not to read the play at all. So it is with all forms of fiction. The writer is continually telling those who read, "This is what man is like." "This is what I see in the world." "This is what is important in life." The fact that this is done by metaphor makes these ideas less obvious but often conveys them with greater impact.

The literary author, then, is faced with fact of the existence of God and he observes His work in all of the creation. He then interprets what he sees for the reader and describes his response to it. It is obvious that the commitment of the author, whether of faith in God or of unbelief, is an inseparable part of his writing. Whether he is aware of it or not, the author's values, his attitudes, his faith or unbelief become an integral part of

what he writes. It is that fact that the Christian reader must never forget when he is exposed to literature.

We must hasten to note, however, that the commitment of the author is not always obvious to the reader. The work may be too short for the reader to tell whether it was written from faith or from unbelief. Perhaps the work may not display clearly the attitudes of the author or may make a statement that cannot be easily classified. 1,7e cannot tell from a single work—sometimes not even from many works--whether the author is or is not a Christian.

Further, we must remember literature is not a means of exposing the soul of the author so that the reader may judge as Christian or unbeliever. It is rather the means for the Christian to sharpen his own observation, to clarify his own interpretation, and to stimulate him to greater sensitivity. Anyone who reads literature is stimulated to think, to interpret, and to experience emotion. That is what the author intended. It is the moral obligation of the Christian to evaluate these responses, rejecting those that are wrong and accepting those that are right.

In a sense the Christian will take literature less seriously than the world often does. The Christian does not look to literature as a way to find Truth. All literature is but the work of man, and all the work of man is corrupted by sin. This is particularly true of literature, which expresses the thoughts of a man's heart. The unbeliever will not speak the truth, certainly not in the literature that he writes. Even the Christian writer will produce works that are polluted by sin, corrupted by his sinful nature. And, besides the corruption of sin, the Christian writer is limited by the fact that he is only a finite being. He can understand only a small part of what is true, and he is limited in expressing that small beginning of knowledge by the limitations of language and of his own time and place. The Christian reader of literature should be aware of this and will be stimulated to turn to the Word of God to find the truth.

In another sense the Christian who understands what literature is will take it more seriously than the world often does. Literature is never merely entertainment for him. Literature is a vehicle for thoughts, interpretations, and emotions. He must never simply absorb these without analysis and evaluation. He may enjoy the unity that the author has achieved, delight in the fresh insight and the discovery of meaning in the implications of the author, but he will never cease in his reading from evaluation of the work and of his own responses to it. Literature is -powerful to convince and to arouse. The Christian who reads literature and as a result becomes more convinced of the truth of God's Word, who gains a greater understanding of God's creation, who glorifies God with more articulate and heartfelt praise, who condemns with greater vigor the evil in the world and in himself will be a Christian who knows what literature is and uses it correctly.

—Fred Hanko

THE ANTITHESIS AND LITERATURE

Among literature teachers in the Christian school community, there has been less than adequate understanding of the purpose of literature in the classroom and the curriculum. There has also been little justification for the inclusion of worldly culture and pagan works in the literature course of a Christian school. In this essay, we will attempt to show that literature, including the works of non-Christian writers, is a necessary element in the education of the covenant child. It is especially so because of the antithesis which exists in the world and because the Christian teacher is commissioned to draw this antithesis by means of his distinct Christian outlook. Christian instruction maintains the two-fold emphasis of the antithesis and insists that the enmity of God and his people against the evil is fostered in the Christian school both by excluding certain works from the curriculum and by critical interpretation of others. In either case, the conflict is most clearly fought by the Christian in his heart. The antithesis is within.

The Antithesis Itself

The term “antithesis” has been used to describe the opposition of good against evil. Literally the term “antithesis” means “to be against that which is set down.” Two opposing colors, notions, or ideas are antithetical when they are in complete opposition to each other. Therefore, darkness contradicts light. Evil resists the good. The devil opposes God. In the sphere of moral-ethical conflict, the term assumes its most common connotation.

The term “antithesis”, however, is a somewhat unfortunate one to use in the discussion of literature and its place in the Christian curriculum. We notice that the word never occurs in Scripture. It is a philosophic term etymologically. Hegel used the word extensively to explain the origin of ideas and the course of history. Furthermore, the word “antithesis” is negative in its connotation and views the conflict from the point of view of the evil. Note that the term means to be against the good. Therefore, the Christian who never takes a stand against the good can not live antithetically, but must live thetically or at least anti-antithetically.

Historical Development of the Antithesis

The origin of the antithesis historically is to be found in the fall of our first parents in Paradise. In the beginning God created all things: the world, the living creation, and the image bearer of God, man. In the midst of the garden, where man dwelt, God placed the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. He commanded Adam not to eat of the tree for in the day that he ate thereof, he would surely die. To disobey God’s command would mean certain death. Adam chose for the evil and thereby made possible the historical realization of the conflict between good and evil.

Although man willingly chose for the evil, God’s eternal good purpose was fulfilled and His glory was served in the way of evil. Certainly, we must say that it pleased God to show his own perfection and righteousness in the way of sin, deliverance, and thankful praise by those delivered. Evil stood in stark contrast to God’s righteousness in order to more clearly reveal his holiness. God chose to seek his glory antithetically.

Christ came to fulfill all righteousness in a world fallen into sin and death. The victory of Christ is soteriological but that victory has implications in all of the creation. Christ saves his people, but he also does more. Christ destroyed the death-hold of sin

upon all of creation and makes possible the realization of a first fruit of the new heavens and a new earth. He is the righteous King and his people serve Him. As King, He restores the possibility of Christ glorifying culture. In the midst of a fallen creation, He established the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, we can work for and in a measure achieve; Christ-serving homes, Christ-serving schools, Christ-serving literature. We must not say in despair that all will be made perfect in heaven and then sit down to await His return. Rather, let us be working with the shout of victory, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:57)

The Enmity of the Wicked and the Righteous

The antithesis is first of all a comological phenomena conceived in the plan of God and worked out through the work of Christ in His death on the cross. This is the basis of all further understanding of the conflict of good and evil. However, since the fall and the subsequent establishment of God's covenant with man, God has established a second level of antithetical conflict. It is the hatred and conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) The antithesis has, therefore, social implications. The church and the world are antithetically opposed.

God placed the enmity between the man saved by faith in Christ, and man delivered up to willful service of the devil. The ensuing battle is waged between the church and the world, between the elect and the reprobate. The psalmist cries "For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are open against me... and they fought against me without a cause." (Psalm 109:2 and 3) The cry testifies to the apparent purposeless of the persecution from the unrighteous; yet we know that the enmity of the wicked is rooted in their hatred of God. Like Cain who slew his brother who was righteous, so do all the wicked until they have crucified the very Son of God. The enmity of God as it is revealed in the conflict among men is frightfully real.

The Cultural Antithesis

There is a third sense in which we conceive of the antithesis. Man produces a cultural product. In some way everyone of us is engaged in culture. Culture has been defined as the work man does to the creation for the purpose of serving his own ends or to bring glory to his creator. A narrower definition of culture defines culture as only those activities or products which bring praise to the creator. Obviously, very little can be called culture by this narrower definition. Most of the accomplishments of man are for the purpose of building the earthly city and bring glory to man. Most things are therefore not culture at all, but according to the second definition anti-culture.

It would seem that the same distinction could be maintained within the framework of the broader definition if one were to insist that all work is culture and that there are two antithetically opposed directions in which cultural activities can be directed. In literature also, the direction of the work is frequently very apparent. The value of the work before God is whether it praises Him and confesses His power in creation or whether it serves an idol of man's invention. Before God, every work of man must pass in judgment whether it be good or whether it be evil. Man shall stand in awe at the brightness of the fire that will burn the works of man's literary activities. Is it possible that there will be a few books which will escape His terrible judgment?

The cultural antithesis was apparent already in the predeluvian world. The sons of man produced literature and musical instruments. Lamech wrote a poem to his wives.

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me;
Wives of Lamech mark what I say:
I killed a man for wounding me,
A young man for a blow,
Cain may be avenged seven times,
But Lamech seventy-seven.”

Gen. 4:23-24

Lamech, the unrighteous seventh generation from Adam, generated three sons who also made musical instruments, produced tools of brass, and built cities. Was this god-praising culture? No, they defied Him and served themselves.

But listen to the praise of the Psalmist.

“O Lord our Lord,
how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth:
Who has set Thy glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings
hast thou ordained strength,
Because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest
still the enemy and the avenger.”

Psalm 8:1 and 2

David praises God for His excellence and ascribes the glory of the creation to God. He proclaims that God will still the avenger. This is an anthem of praise.

The Antithesis in Teaching Literature

The fourth level at which we can think of the antithesis is the reading and teaching of literature. We then stand as cultural users or consumers rather than as those who do culture. In the Christian classroom there is comparatively less writing of literature than there is reading and explication for the purpose of analysis and enjoyment. The question can then be asked, How can a teacher use literature to teach antithetically? Should he concern himself with the writings of Christians only? If living the antithesis means putting aside the works of unrighteousness, does it not also mean to put away the works of the unrighteous writers. “And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?”... Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not any unclean thing; and I will receive you. And be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (II Cor. 6:15-18.) Scripture seems quite clear on this point. The answers to these questions lie at the heart of the task of this essay. Nor ought we too easily give an answer to a question which plagued the Christian church for nearly 2,000 years.

Augustine who was converted in his later life, after a full exposure to all the learnings of the pagans, was fearful of the literature and writings of the pagan writers. However, for the sake of the understanding of the Word of God, he insisted that the classics be included in the curriculum of the schools of his day. “If we are to interpret scripture properly, we must be educated in those secular sciences which scripture touches upon.” Literature for Augustine was a means to an end and could not be justified by itself. It must be a tool to understand the Bible by which we know God.

Melancthon likewise insisted that the German reformation schools should study the literature of the world. For this reason, he became known as the humanist of the Reformation. Melancthon had seen the evil of monasticism, scholasticism, and stringent authority of the Catholic church. He was deeply fearful of an uneducated ministry and felt that the surest safeguard, to sound Biblical preaching would be a clergy educated in the languages of the Bible. Melancthon rebelled against the authority of the church and properly stressed the authority of the scriptures. He rejected the false Catholic antithesis of nature and grace in which the church educated religiously and the state secularly. To Melancthon the very fate of theology hung upon the measure in which the students were educated in the classics. He fought tooth and nail for the place of the liberal arts because theology without an intense zeal for language (especially Greek and Hebrew) would be like "flying without feathers."

Kuyper's "Common Grace" Demands Literature

It was Abraham Kuyper who first broke through the barrier of culture, and who considered the study of pagan cultural products necessary for their own worth. Kuyper saw the church as preoccupied with the doctrine of salvation at the expense of the doctrine of creation. God created man to worship his Creator, to create humanity through reproduction, to form society and its culture, and to exercise lordship over the creation by mastering and understanding it. When man fell he was not freed from these demands but rendered incapable of perfectly fulfilling them.

Although Dr. Kuyper realized the terrible effects of sin upon creation, he did not feel that the entrance of sin negated God's original purpose for man in His creation. Man is still commanded to exercise dominion over creation, to use art as divinely ordained exercise-of imagination, and to use science as a tool to understand and exercise dominion over the creation.

The nature-grace antithesis of Catholicism which attempted to cut man into two parts, Kuyper rejected. He equally rejected the antithesis of Anabaptism which built a wall between the world of the redeemed and the world of society. Kuyper's world was leavened by the Calvinist who would, for the sake of God the Creator, redeem the secular world because it was essentially sacred.

Common Grace, then, is the magical quality which so "retards sin and so strengthens man's power that he is able to carry out to some degree of success the original creation purpose of God." The deterrent effect of God's common grace became the password to involvement in society and its culture.

Literature would necessarily be included in the curriculum of Abraham Kuyper. The literature of the Christian writer certainly is produced to His glory and may be read by the Church. But because the world is redeemed by Christ and because of the restraining power of God's common grace, so must the secular works be read and understood. The Christian not only may, but must be busy to redeem literature along with every other culture product and press it into the service of Christ. To the degree that a Shakespeare or Dickens reveals the truth, he must be read by the Christian. The place of pagan and unchristian authors was based on Christ's universal kingship and God's common grace which retards sin in all men and strengthens man's power so that he can to some degree fulfill God's original creative purposes. Christian school literature teachers, on the basis of Kuyper's premise, justify their use of secular writings for the truth, beauty, and form which can be discovered. We reject this premise since it falsely

identifies the apparent goodness of literature written by the unbeliever with God's grace. Rather than being a response made possible by God's gracious attitude, the literature of unregenerate man is produced for the purpose of the Prince of Darkness. It is not a common graciousness, but an antithetical difference which is demonstrated in literature.

The Dilemma

Having rejected the Kuyperian basis for cultural involvement, is there still a possibility that the Christian school should use the literature of fallen man? Certainly, for it is precisely in the conflict and denial of the lie in literature, as well as in every other cultural form, that the Christian school has its *raison d'état*. The school never hopes to cloister the youth from every form of evil, but strives to equip for the battle of faith. Literature teaching will necessarily involve intensive critical analysis and involve the rejection of error as valiantly as the highest ecclesiastical assembly.

The teacher believes that he can not, nor can his student, wage the fight by "ostrich-like" seclusion. Exposure to the literature of this world is necessary for the benefits of the language training, but more especially because it provides a battleground for his spiritual struggle which is essentially within himself. "For we struggle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers. . . " (Ephesians 6:12) In the heart of man, the struggle against the wiles of the devil is fought. Here at the very core of our existence, we must fight and no amount of seclusion nor flight from this world will change this fact. By God's power, and by faithful girding on the armor of God, the student shall be able to stand!

Moreover, the conscious denial of the lie and of sin in its development make the work of the teacher of literature extremely hazardous: Not only is the task of combatting the lies difficult, but the covenant child is Christ's own precious possession: Woe to him who perverts the mind of God's little ones. It would be better that such a one had never been born. Because of this awesome task, literature in the Christian classroom, is carefully selected and analyzed. Biblical perspectives provide the glasses by which the child discerns the truth and denies the lie.

And then the child of God is built up and shall be able to fight against all the wiles of the devil and stand even unto the end!

—Lamm Lubbers

THE PURPOSE OF CULTURE—TRUTH

Man, according to Calvin's Genevan Catechism, has but one purpose in life, viz., "to know God and enjoy him forever." Scripture certainly corroborates this statement, but we must qualify ourselves somewhat. "To know God," says the apostle John, "is life eternal." When we talk about knowing God, therefore, we must always be careful to distinguish just exactly what we are talking about. Everybody knows God. Everyone that God exists and that he is sovereign. Romans 1 testifies to this fact. But, everyone does not know God in the sense in which John speaks. This knowledge entails everlasting life. This is a spiritual knowledge based upon a spiritual communion of faith with the Father-Creator. To know Him in this sense is to be one with Him, it is to be His disciple, it is to worship Him in every sphere of life. This type of knowledge is limited; it is limited to those that are his own, to those whom he has called and elected from before the foundations of this world.

As soon as we talk about God, however, we are talking about the infinite, incomprehensible One, the One "whose ways are past finding out." Man, of himself, cannot know Him, not even intellectually or intuitionally. If we are going to talk about God, therefore, we must always reckon with the fact that he has revealed Himself to us in two main ways, viz., through His Word and through His creation. God tells us Who he is and what He has done. Any attempt of man to posit his own conception of God is nothing less than idolatry.

As we stated above, God reveals Himself through His word and His creation. Man, then, when he is placed in the creation, comes face to face with this revelation of God. And, seeing God, he cannot help but respond. It lies in the very nature of the case. Romans 1 states very clearly that the very idea of God is impressed into the minds of every man. Man works with creation, he digs in it, he dissects it, he analyzes it with his telescopes and microscopes. He builds, he constructs, he writes, he paints, in a word, he produces culture. The important thing which we must see in this respect is that we have to learn how to properly handle this culture. We must be able to evaluate it, analyze it, and, by all means, criticize it. We must ask ourselves what does that culture say and why does it say what it does. Never must we fall into the idea that somehow this culture is neutral, that the Christian miraculously transforms it. Never must we accept it at facevalue. We have to make judgments, value judgments, spiritual-ethical judgments, judgments as to whether it is good or bad.

That this is the case lies in the very nature of culture itself. Culture cannot be neutral but it is necessarily colored by the particular viewpoint of its progenitor. A consideration of the idea of what culture is, however, is necessary to determine just why this is so.

The term culture is derived from the Latin word *colere* which literally means to till or to cultivate. It was first used to denote exactly that, viz., the cultivation and tilling of the soil. The first culture was agriculture. Throughout the process of history, however, many other "cultures" have been developed and the term has now come to include all of the activity of man as he belabors the earth in his attempt to advance himself and the universe. It shows man as attempting to fulfill the command of God in Genesis 1:28, as fulfilling the command to subdue the earth.

It must be noted further that man is not laboring with a chaotic heap out of which he is trying to create form and order. In doing culture, man is busy with God's creation.

Man is working with a cosmos, an ordered universe. Man is not a creator but merely a discoverer. As man works, then, he comes into contact with the revelation of God.

Adam, of course, in his perfect state saw this very clearly. Created in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness as the friend-servant of God, Adam perfectly obeyed God's commandment. He subdued all things to himself with the sole purpose of using all these things in the service and praise of his Creator.

Adam fell, however, and with the fall sin comes into the world and, with sin, comes the antithesis. The creation was changed, man was changed. Sin had an effect upon his ability to produce culture. The creation was cursed, man was darkened. God's speech in the natural world, so clearly evident to Adam, was lost to him; being spiritually blind, he cannot see God. But we must remember that man, though fallen, still remains man. He does not become beast or devil. He is still a rational-moral creature. Sin, rather, changed man's spiritual-ethical nature. His light became darkness, obedience became disobedience, truth became the lie. He is no longer an office-bearer of God but a servant of sin. Sin posits the antithesis, the antithesis between sin and grace. After the fall, we have two types of man, viz., the elect and the reprobate, the believer and the unbeliever--two types of men, then, but both, however, still engaged in producing culture but now with an entirely different purpose. By grace, and by grace alone, the regenerate can again obey the command to "subdue the earth." He has been called from his darkness into light, he works, he dissects, but not for self but rather in praise and worship of his Creator. The unregenerate, however, is left in his sin. He, too, works, but he is working for himself, he attempts to subserve all things for his own glory and benefit. He is working to erect his Babels and Babylons and New Deals and Great Societies.

Such is the distinction in all spheres of life, none excepted. Two types of men, similar in all respects except the redeeming grace of God. The one is spiritual, the other carnal. The one has meaning in life, the other is hopelessly caught up in a vicious circle trying to make things relevant. The one deals in the realm of truth, the other in the realm of the lie. The one exalts, the other perverts.

As one approaches culture, then, and as one strives to do culture, he does so from a definite perspective and with a definite purpose.

The perspective which I propose is summed up pretty well in the words of St. Augustine: *credo ut intelligam*, I believe in order that I may understand. Faith, faith in the Word of God, precedes all of the activities of reason. Reason never searches unattended and in isolation.

We must view culture and the revelation of God in creation as Calvin suggests, through the spectacles of the Word of God. Only in the light of the Word and only from its perspective can we obtain any meaning at all from the creation of God. Faith seeking understanding, faith seeking meaning, faith seeking to relate all things to its Creator, faith finding ultimate meaning in Jesus Christ, faith seeking The Way, The Truth, and The Life, this is the perspective from which I choose to view and to do culture.

As far as the purpose of studying cultural products and actually doing culture is concerned, the point certainly can be made, then, that it is only the Christian, the elect child of God, who can arrive at truth. The history of ideas is certainly replete, you might even say crowded, with the products of men who have attempted to arrive at truth. There is to my mind, however, only one Truth. Jesus said it: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Man apart from God, reason unaided by faith, intellect segregated from the spiritual

heart will never produce truth. Only when man works with the aid of faith, only when he strives to produce ‘culture and to understand this creation in relationship to Jesus Christ, who alone gives meaning to any thing and any work, will truth result.

The question may legitimately be asked, however, as to what we will do with the works of the unregenerate. Can we not gain anything from these works. I would answer that we certainly can but I would hasten to add that we will never gain truth. We must insist that his work can at best reveal what is real. He can merely uncover reality. He can discover, as he has, the laws of physics and mathematics; he can tell us the composition of the earth and the human body. He, too, paints and composes. The difference, however, lies in his ultimate purpose in life. He never really gets beyond the temporal meaning of his discoveries. This is naturally so. His life is not that of a pilgrim and stranger, but that of an empire-builder and an eternal earth-dweller. His purpose is not to exalt the Creator but rather to create his own God and his own salvation. We can gain knowledge from him; discoveries certainly have been made by unregenerate men but, notice carefully, Truth escapes them. They do not want it and they simply can not have it.

The conclusions we can draw, then, are somewhat obvious. Both regenerate and unregenerate share this creation, both work with the cosmos, both discover real things about it, both produce insights which are real and true. The difference is grace. Truth (I prefer to distinguish it from that which is real and true by a capital T) is the sole possession of the regenerated Christian. He alone can offer all things to God in servitude to Him. He alone can obey, by grace, the cultural mandate to subdue and replenish. His alone is the privilege to possess a true and meaningful conception of what this creation is all about. “The truth,” says Paul, “shall make you free.” Jesus Christ, the TRUTH, has indeed given to his own the spiritual eyes to discern and to interpret creational revelation aright.

—Jon Huiskens

**EXPLICATIONS OF POEMS
AND
SAMPLE LESSON PLANS**

THE POETICS OF THE CLERIC OF BEMERTON: GEORGE HERBERT

SIN (I)

Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round:
Parents first season us: then schoolmasters
Deliver us to lawes; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,
Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of glory ringing in our ears:
Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.
Yet all these fences and their whole array
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.

Specific Objectives

1. Understand the sensibility of Herbert by studying carefully the poem “Sin (I)”.
2. Amplify the sensibility provided by “The Collar”, p. 213, in the text which each student should have: *Adventures in English Literature*, Harcourt, Brace, and World.

Strategy of the Lesson

1. Trap the student into a discussion of sin. What is sin? What kinds of sin are there? What is a bosom-sin? How is it a distinct kind of sin? What makes it a distinct kind of sin?
2. Explicate the poem on the “bosom-sin” entitled “Sin (I)”. Because this is the first exposure the teacher explicates and attempts to keep students involved in the explication. The teacher must give some biographical information, however, to explain this particular poem and subsequent poems of Herbert.
3. Give an assignment which will enable students to explicate other poems by Herbert . Students will be aided in this assignment by this first exposure.
4. Because students are familiar with John Donne and the poetry of John Donne students will be expected to compare this and subsequent poetry of Herbert with Donne’s poetry. Compare the sensibility of Herbert and Donne. How is the sensibility of these two poets different and how similar? Which poems (Donne’s or Herbert’s) do you prefer? Why?

Explication of “SIN (I)”

The well-proportioned sonnet, “Sin (I)”, by George Herbert, the lovable and guileless cleric of Bemerton, demonstrates the ability of the poet to “Surprise the reader into intelligent attention.” The element of surprise is most evident in the last two lines of the poem.

“Yet all these fences and their whole array
one cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.”

The sonnet, one of the fifteen which can be found in *The Church*, the central section of the lyrics of Herbert in *The Temple*, illustrates as well as any of his poems the economy of expression, the subtle transitions, and the emotional control which characterizes the devotional and self-therapeutic poetry produced by this man of God. This Shakespearean sonnet, written in a predominantly iambic meter, reminds one of the Donne poems because of its directness and abruptness. The address of the poem, “Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round:” resembles very much the strident lines of Donne: “Death, be not proud...” or “For Godsake hold your tongue...” but lacks the astringent tone of the Donne poems. However, Herbert is extremely dissatisfied with his own procrastination disobedience. He has refused to take up the Holy Orders for which he has been prepared and to which he has been dedicated. His dissatisfaction with himself is acutely evident in the opening line of the poem, if it is read with the proper emphasis, (“Lord, with *what care...*”) for in this exclamation of surprise and holy indignation Herbert prepares himself and the reader for the catalogue of defenses that should have successfully prevented him from procrastinating and from disobedience in the matter of assuming Holy Orders.

This colloquy with God expresses the exasperation and sorrow of Herbert. The poem is replete with the defenses and impediments that were erected by the Lord to prevent Herbert from taking an unruly and dissident course of action. All these impediments are incontrovertible evidence of the sin, which Herbert describes and further that this procrastination is because of his unwillingness, stubbornness, and indecisiveness.

When the poem is glossed in terms of supporting details of Herbert’s life it should indicate that he had as a small child been dedicated to the priesthood by his devout mother (i.e., like Hannah, the mother of Samuel had done, and like the parents of Gottschalk had done) who undoubtedly had often reminded him of this dedication and of his eventual ordination. The word “season” alludes to this kind of preparation for the priesthood, but he is loath to become a priest. His childhood and adolescent training had also included the goads of the schoolmaster who had subjected him to an understanding of “laws” and “the rules of reason.” “Holy messengers” seems to suggest that Herbert had been visited by churchmen who exhorted and urged him to assume the Holy Orders for which he had been prepared. Herbert’s faithful attendance of worship services is indicated by “Pulpits and Sundays” which also were reminders of the vows which had been made before the Lord. “Sorrow dogging sin” implies that for Herbert sin had its immediate results—remorse, contrition, and confession; and that this too should have been an added incentive to drive him to the assumption of Holy Orders. “Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes” is such a well-balanced and powerful line. It hints that the sicknesses, distresses and pains which were visited upon Herbert were no doubt selected, sorted out, especially for him in his particular need and to goad him into positive and proper behavior. The cogent line, “Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,” anticipates the closing lines of the poem. Here one senses the tension that must exist in the metaphysical poem: The struggle which exists in the life of Herbert becomes evident in the very structure of the poem and assumes the proportions of a strategic battle. The battle is between the “nets and stratagems” set up by the Lord and the “cunning bosom-sin” which craftily blows the entire panoply of defenses away. All manner of other impediments are catalogued. These include Scriptural mandates suggested by “Bibles laid

open,” “ties of gratitude,” and thankfulness to the Lord and to parents and teachers, the infatuating sound of glory ringing in his ears, the shame from his fellows because of his hesitation, the whip of conscience from within, angels (and I prefer not to think of this as a pun referring to some early English coin) grace, hopes, and fears all urging him to do that which “One cunning bosom-sin” strives to prevent.

All these means prepared. by God were intended to assist Herbert in assuming Holy Orders, but the panoply of defenses was not sufficiently strong to accomplish the task. At this point the language of the rhymed couplet which concludes the poem becomes so immensely significant. The rhymed couplet which must resolve the essential paradox comes as a still small voice out of the seeming victory which the Lord has accomplished because he has “with so much care begirt us round.” We are amazed and surprised, as is Herbert, that the strength of all these defenses of the Lord is not sufficient to subjugate nor are these defenses powerful enough to overthrow the “cunning bosom-sin.”

This is not a sin of the lower passions. It is a sin which is highly refined. In Herbert it is his love for the ease and refinement represented by fine clothes and comfortable surroundings which he enjoys so much and which he can have if he continues as Orator for the University. Izaak Walton, his biographer, remarks that “his clothes seemed to prove that he put too great a value on his parts and parentage.” Herbert himself said with unmistakable clarity in another poem, “Ay birth and spirit rather took/ The way that takes the town.” In many of his poems he uses this precious clothes image such as:

“Exalted Manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,”

(Prayer (I))

“Oh that I were an orange-tree,
That busy plant!
Than I should ever laden be,
And never want
Some fruit for Him that dressed me.”

(Employment (II))

“Not in rich furniture, or fine array,
Nor in a wedge of gold,
Thou, who for me wast sold,
To me dost now thy self convey;
For so thou shouldst without me still have been,
Leaving within me sin:”

(The H. Communion)

O what a right were Man, if his attires
Did alter with his mind;
And like a dolphin’s skin, his clothes combined
With his desires:

(Giddiness)

In soul he mounts and flies,
In flesh he dies.
He wears a stuff whose thread is coarse and round,
But trimmed with curious lace,
And should take place
After the trimming, not the stuff and ground.

(Min 's Medley)

Hast thou not heard, that my Lord JESUS died?...

And when they asked, what he would wear;
He smiled and said as he did go,
He had new clothes a making here below.

(The Bag)

Holiness on the head,
Light and perfections on the breast,
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
To lead them unto life and rest:
Thus are true Aarons drest.

Profaneness in my head,
Defects and darkness in my breast,
A noise of passions ringing me for dead
Unto a place where is no rest:
Poor priest thus am I drest.

Only another head
I have, another heart and breast,
Another music, making live not dead,
Without whom I could have no rest:
In him I am well drest.

(Aaron)

For we do now behold thee gay and glad,
As at Doomsday;
When souls shall wear their new array,
And all thy bones with beauty shall be clad.

(Death)

Farewell sweet phrases, lovely metaphors.
But will ye leave me thus? when ye before
Of stews and brothels only knew the doors,
Then did I wash you with my tears, and more,
Brought you to Church well drest and clad:
My God must have my best, ev's all I had.

(The Forerunners)

An important quality of metaphysical poetry is the sense of strain and tension that must exist in the poem. There may be poise and resolution but it is only a momentary sort of poise. From this momentary poise the poet can pursue the ramifications and contradictions of truth which produce metaphysical poetry. There must be a ceaseless tension in the poem produced by the intellectual control which the poet exercises by means of the metaphysical conceit. This conceit must fuse the warring elements of the poem into a unity which will intensify the vitality of each element of the poem and in this way enable them to coexist.

This quality of metaphysical poetry exists in the poem by George Herbert. The images of the poem such as "fine nets and stratagems," "Holy messengers," "shame," and "conscience" are all defenses which stand in constant tension within the context of the poem against the "bosom-sin" which is such a cunning sin that it gently, subtly, and quietly blows all the influences of these defenses away. That word "blows" is such a good word because it suggests a contradiction to the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Scriptural terminology suggests that the work of the Holy Spirit tallies place like a wind that blows. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;...” (John 3:8) The wind is mysterious in its actions when applied to the work of the Spirit but now it becomes a symbol of craftiness and subtlety in the poem “Sin (I)”. This craftiness now takes another turn in the form of the “cunning bosom-sin.” The fence image is also such a good image in this connection because it is there perhaps to keep one’s property of the flimsy sort from blowing away. “Yet all these fences and their whole array / One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.”

This metaphysical technique and quality within the poem of Herbert justifies his association by literary critics with the School of Donne, if one remembers that in much of Herbert’s poetry the fundamental tension is resolved and the paradox does not exist with unending finality. The unending finality of the paradox is such a permanent characteristic of the poetry of Donne. There never seems to be a real satisfying solution of the paradox. Even in “Sin (I)” tension coexists with the resolution of the paradox because the reader is led to understand that Herbert knows and believes that a man can only be right with his God and can only live and die happily if he has become completely quiet and can rest solely in the Lord. If one sin remains this quietness and gentle solemnity is disturbed. In his paraphrasing of Psalm 23, Herbert says:

The God of love my Shepherd is,
And He that doth me feed,
While He is mine, and I am His,
What can I want or need?

In the poem “THE CROSS” the resignation of Herbert is also evident.

Ah my dear Father, ease my smart!
These contrarities crush me: these cross actions
Do wind a rope about, and cut my heart:
And yet since these thy contradictions
Are properly a cross felt by thy Sonne,
With but four words, my words, Thy will be done.

But the bosom-sin lives; it is never completely annihilated because this is the very nature of a bosom-sin. The struggle against that sin is a lifelong struggle. This delicious and crafty bosom-sin, which lives in constant tension with the good in the Child of God, as he is redeemed, justified, and sanctified in Christ, raises its head again and again. The *Heidelberg Catechism* alludes to this problem when it says: “...since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us,...” (Lord’s Day 52, Question and Answer 127.)

Metaphysical poetry was previously called “strong lines,” The masculine directness with the clear precise images so characteristic of metaphysical poetry is found in the poem by George Herbert. The poetry of Herbert stands in such contrast to the floridity of the poetry of the men of Spenser’s day. There is no euphuistic ornateness and ornamentation but the most direct and plain style is employed by Herbert within the metaphysical mode. There is none of the “Men call you fair, and you do credit it / For that yourself you daily such do see,...” (*Amoretti*, Sonnet 79, Spenser) The struggle, therefore, in understanding the poetic of Herbert is not with the language of the poem

primarily but is with the complexity of the conceit and the seeming insolvability of the paradox.

This poem like Donne's poetry is one of those with wellcontrived openings. It is one of the fifteen addressed directly to the Lord and is therefore a colloquy in the form of a prayer of confession and contrition. In this sense the tension is released but as an intellectual exercise and as personal experience the paradox is an ever recurring phenomenon. The words of Paul seem to apply here when he says by inspiration from God: "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death? For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul answers in one of the beautiful doxologies of praise, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:19-25) Paul solves the paradox and we are certain that Herbert does so essentially although the poem does not explicitly state this essential solution which one finds in other of Herbert's poetic endeavors.

The poem "Sin (I)" also indicates the personal involvement of the author. Even though Herbert might have written and refined the poem after having assumed Holy Orders, he writes it as if he is still in the midst of the struggle. This is quite contrary to the omniscient approach of the neo-classical writer (the school of Ben Jonson) who usually is commenting upon life with what seems to be somewhat less personal involvement.

The poise and the balance of a metaphysical poem, which is a quality of the poetry of this cleric of Bemerton, can be understood when one ponders those juxtaposed lines:

"Lord with what care hast thou begirt us round:
Yet all these fences and their whole array
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away."

—Agatha Lubbers

WHERE IS BEAUTY?

FUELED

Fueled
by a million
man made
wings of fire—
the rocket tore a tunnel
through the sky—
and everybody cheered.
Fueled
only by a thought from God—
the seedling
urged its way
through the thicknesses of black—
and as it pierced
the heavy ceiling of the soil—
and launched itself
up into outer space—
no
one
even
clapped.

Marcie Hans

* * * * *

- I. Objectives:
 - A. The students should see that man is quick to applaud man's accomplishments, but often fails to see beauty in the works of God.
 - B. The students should see that they too make this mistake.
 - C. The students should see and appreciate technique in "Fueled" .
 - D. The students should learn to see beauty in creation.
- II. Methods:
 - A. Read "Fueled" interpretatively.
 - B. Ask the class what the poet is trying to say in the poem.
 - C. Reread the poem and invite the students to observe devices used by the poet.
 - D. Discussion questions:
 1. Can you mention specific examples of situations similar to the one in our poem?
 2. Is it wrong for Christians to admire the accomplishments of man?
 3. Are objects or events in God's creation more worthy of our admiration than inventions or accomplishments of man?
 4. How can Christians sharpen their sensitivity to the beauties of creation?
- III. Assignment:

Study the two attached poems. In a well-planned paragraph, tell which description of the moon's effects you like best and why.

IV. Materials:

A. "Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard" by Carl Sandburg

B. "Silver" by Walter De La Mare

(*Values in Literature*, Houghton Mifflin.)

Explication of "Fueled"

"Fueled" is a remarkable little poem by Marcie Hans. The poem is at once movingly profound yet refreshingly simple. It is unmistakably modern in form and message. The poem is twenty-seven lines of unrhymed verse. The poet succeeds very well in commenting on a very real and current situation. The theme of the poem simply stated is that man is quick to praise the achievements of man while completely ignoring the works of God.

The success of the poem depends largely on the verse form. The lines have a natural cadence finely suited to the nature of the subject. The lines flow unmeasured and unchecked, creating first of all the progress and successful "launching" of a tiny seedling. It is impossible to read the poem without first of all feeling the excitement of a rocket launching and then feeling the tedious struggle of the tiny seedling as it pushes to launch "itself up into outer space". The two movements in the poem are unmistakable because it is their contrast that gives the poem its vitality.

The poet is quick to remind us that the entire rocket launching is "man-made". There is much implied in the first word "Fueled". Fueled literally means that man prepares and supplies the fuel that a rocket needs, but the word fueled has a wide range of connotations besides. Not only does man fuel the rocket literally, but, as the poet reminds us, he conceives in his mind the whole enterprise. It is man that prepares the equipment and man that guides the launch to a successful completion. In striking contrast to this—the seedling is "Fueled on by a thought from God."

When read, the poem comes to life as if charged with all of the drama and tension of a real life situation. In "Fueled by a million man-made wings of fire," there is a rising in the cadence. The hushed sounds in "Fueled" and the alliterative soft *m* sounds and soft *i* sounds in "million man-made wings" fairly burst into the harsh long *i* in "fire". The effect for the reader is the feel of the heady excitement generated by a generating rocket as it prepares to explode into the sky. Having reached a temporary plateau with the word "fire", the poem continues to surge upwards. Again there is a rising cadence in "the rocket tore a tunnel through the sky." Starting with the soft *o* in the first syllable of rocket, each succeeding syllable heightens until the line reaches a climax in the triumphant long *i* sound in "sky". The poetry again is a remarkable imitation of the thrust that a rocket would have.

What Marcie Hans succeeds in conveying is a sense of the spectacular, awesome, seemingly unlimited power of the man-made space rocket. Her success is due largely to skillful management of sounds and syllables, but there is more that can be said. The word "million" in "a million man-made wings of fire" is an exciting superlative that is still able to stir our imaginations. "Wings of fire" is effective both as a literal and metaphorical description of the exploding rocket engines. One of the most effective lines in the entire

poem is “the rocket tore a tunnel through the sky”. “Rocket” is a harsh sounding word that suggests power. “Tore” is a vivid verb that suggests a violent uncontrollable kind of rending. “Tunnel” adds the possibility of an illusion to the blasting or exploding that might be done in a mountain to open the way for some kind of vehicle. The response to the marvelous spectacle is spontaneous—“everybody cheered.”

The second movement in “Fueled” stands in sharp contrast to the first. In the second part the rocket becomes a metaphor for the tiny seedling. Like the rocket, the seedling is “fueled”. The seedling also “generates” until it is able to leave its “launch pad” and “launch itself up into outer space”. Whereas the similarities between the rocket and seedling are stated, their differences are implied. It is these implied differences that finally make all the difference for the poem.

Whereas the rocket is fueled “by a million man-made wings of fire,” the seedling is fueled “only by a thought from God”. Whereas the rocket “tore a tunnel through the sky”, the tiny seedling “urged its way”. All of the stamina and perseverance implied in the word “urged” is needed for the little plant to make its way through the “thicknesses of black”. Again the reader can feel the struggling in the poetry. There is the same kind of rising cadence as in the first part: But this time it is tediously slow. This slowness is felt keenly as the reader follows the seedling “through the thicknesses of black”. The gentle jerkiness of the line, especially in the word “thicknesses”, nicely imitates the invisible jerking of the sprouting seedling as it works its way toward the light.

Like the rocket, the seedling also gets above the ground, but since it barely “pierced” the heavy ground, it goes practically unnoticed—a far cry from the rocket that electrifies everyone as it surges through the sky. Most significant of all is the fact that the tiny seedling manages to launch itself triumphantly at last—“up into outer space”. But even this final success is not easy. The poet could have simply said “and launched itself into outer space”, but she does not. The little word “up” is important. When read “and launched itself up into outer space”, the line makes the reader feel that the tiny plant is still straining upward, much like a person would strain to reach the top rung of a ladder.

What Marcie Hans clearly implies in the poem is that, although the rocket is the favorite, the tiny seedling is truly the hero. It is the seedling that succeeds no less than the rocket, and, the seedling succeeds in the face of almost unbelievable odds. The notes that she sounds at the end of the poem are clearly despondent. The response to the victorious little seedling is in stark contrast to the response given the rocket—

no
one
even
clapped.

Marcie Hans’ little poem is clearly addressed to a modern situation. It is appropriate for a nation of people who gorge themselves with the novel, the spectacular, the fantastic, who at the same time blindly ignore the sublimely simple yet inexplicable doings of God.

—James Huizinga

TEACHING LITERATURE BY THEMATIC UNITS

There is nothing unique in the suggestion to organize literature teaching in thematic units. The thematic approach is advocated by many anthologies being used today and has been recommended by the national Union of Christian Schools in their latest literature study programs. Nevertheless, literature courses are frequently organized by generic types, by chronological periods, or along national-historical sequences. I would like to advocate that the organization of literature course by themes (that which the writer has to say) is the best way to study literature in the Christian classroom.

Underlying the thematic approach is the assumption that what the author has to say is the primary concern of the literature program. Although the author's life and beliefs, the age or time in which he writes, and mode or genre employed, have much to say about the message, these are subsidiary elements to the theme which the author propounds. I recognize the strengths of the other methods of organization, but would recommend them as more appropriate for use in the rhetoric, history or geography departments in the school. Literature is and should remain the study of writing of important and significant ideas.

I would further propose that the teachers in the Protestant Reformed Schools undertake the development of significant units school of literature organized by themes to structure the literature curriculums in our schools. The subject of these units would be areas of human activity which are an important concern in literature and about which scripture has established clear principles by which the literature can be evaluated. Literature, then, would provide the human insights and feelings, and the student, under the direction of the Christian teacher, would be taught to evaluate his reading in the light of scripture.

As an example, let us consider a unit based on human relationships. (Other units could be written on man in creation, or man against himself.) Literature which emphasizes the relationships of man and his neighbor, develop the problems of living in society. Social institutions would serve as logical sub-divisions-in school, in marriage, and at war: At this workshop, I propose that we develop a pilot unit and select literature to illustrate the theme of *Parents and Their Children* or *The Child in His Home*.

The first task, both in writing the unit and teaching the unit in the classroom, would be to state the biblical principle of authority and Christian home. Literature would then be introduced to show how man has viewed the parent-child relation and how he has attempted to explain the problems which sin causes in family relationships. Every attempt should be made to explicate the writings of the author's theme. Style, written forms, biographic information are all considered when these add to the students' understanding. Nevertheless, the message of the literature itself is the primary concern of the class.

In this way, literature remains literature. The Christian student is encouraged to read, evaluate, criticize, enjoy, learn, reject, and develop in his understanding of his proper place in the home. His firm commitment to the truths of scripture free him to serve God in the literature classroom. The study as a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven. The life which is realized perfectly in heaven has been established here and now.

Lesson Plan – 1
Junior High English
Lesson Subject: Introduction to Literature
Man at Home

I. Daily Objective:

- A. The student should see the general concern of this course with the literature concerning man in his social relationships.
- B. The student will see that social contacts begin in the home and that most attitudes and biases are formed there.
- C. That close relationship between the parent and child, which is real to most children, is one of love and exists because God loves his children in Jesus Christ.
- D. The students should come to realize more completely that authority is the basic relationship of the second table of the law and that authority is a manifestation of love rather than an opposition to love.

II. Strategy:

- A. Survey the course: Literature and Human Relationships
- B. Introduce the concept of the primacy of the home in social relationships.
- C. Mention some of the works which will be included in this unit.
 1. “The Toys”
 2. “The Adversary”
 3. “The Secret Heart”
 4. “Mother in Manville”
 5. “The Red Pony”
 6. “Rocking Horse Winner”
- D. Read the poem “The Toys”.
- E. Explicate the poem for meaning and appreciation.

III. Assignment:

Read “A Mother in Mannville”. *Pilot Series*, Book III, p. 395 ff.

—Lamm Lubbers

THE TOYS

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd,
His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep, I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Hissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put within his reach,
A box of counters and red-vein'd stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I prayed
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And thou remembrest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou has moulded from the clay
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

—Coventry Patmore

THE ADVERSARY

A mother's hardest to forgive.
Life is the fruit she longs to hand you,
Ripe on a plate. And while you live,
Relentlessly she understands you.

—Phyllis McGinley

THE SECRET HEART

Across the years he could recall
His father one way best of all.

In the stillest hour of night
The boy awakened to a light.
Half in dreams, he saw his sire
With his great hands full of fire.
The man had struck a match to see
If his son slept peacefully.
He held his palms each side the spark
His love had kindled in the dark.
His two hands were curved apart
In the semblence of a heart.
He wore, it seemed to his small son,
A bare heart on his hidden one,
A heart that gave out such a glow
No son awake could bear to know.
It showed a look upon a face
Too tender for the day to trace.
One instant, it lit all about,
And then the secret heart went out.
But it shone long enough for one
To know that hands held up the sun.

—Robert P. Tristram Coffin

MAN AND THE POLLUTION OF GOD'S CREATION

RURAL DUMPHEAP

This rusty mound of cans,
This scatter of tires and pans,
This litter of mattresses and twisted springs,
This rotting refuse, these abandoned things
Malodourously flung—this impudent pile
That dares to choke the current, to defile
The innocent season—all are man's.

Man's inhumanity to sod.
Makes countless snow drops mourn,
And every gentle seed that's born
Gives battle for a dishonored god.

Within the heap and darkly, heaves
The growing mutiny of leaves,
While down the valley bird to bird
Relays the rallying word,
And courage calls on every breeze
To armies of anemones,
And triumph scales the parapet,
A host of violet.

O man, where is thy victory?
Despite this blight of tins,
The fern persists and cleaves and wins,
And, gladly, spring begins.

—Melville Cane

From *Exploring Literature*, p. 484

I. Objectives:

- A. To lead the pupils to see how man has defiled God's creation.
- B. To lead the students to see how the God-ordained laws of creation oppose man's defilement.
- C. To show the students that the victory is not in the sin-cursed earth but in the new creation.
- D. To show the students how the poet has used words, rhythm, and metaphor to communicate his idea.

II. Lesson Plan:

- A. Briefly discuss the problem of refuse? Should the county put its new dump across the street? Will the earth be filled with garbage in a few years? Why do we have this problem?
- B. Read the poem interpretively.

- C. Discuss the poet's expression of the problem and his answer.
- D. Reread the poem, or if the class has caught the feeling, have a pupil read it.
- E. Discussion questions:
 1. Why does man defile the earth?
 2. Does the earth oppose man's devastation?
 3. What is man supposed to do with the earth?
 4. Could man live in harmony with the earth?
 5. How will the problem finally be solved?
- F. If there is sufficient time, read the poem "Daffodils" interpretively and point out the setting.

III. Assignment:

Read daffodils several times—aloud, if possible, and write a brief paragraph telling what you think the poet felt about nature. Would Wordsworth agree with what Cane has said in his poem?

* * * * *

Explication of "Rural Dumpheap":

Today everyone is aware of the pollution problem caused by the wastes that man produces. Scientists tell us that if some solution is not found soon for the problem of waste the earth will soon be covered with the trash that man produces. In the early nineteenth hundreds, when few people saw a problem of waste disposal, Mr. Cane observed what man was doing to the earth, and he wrote the poem "Rural Dumpheap" to express his opinion of it.

Winter is ending on this day when the poet stands in the middle of a dump. The last of the snow is melting under the gradually warming temperatures. As he looks about the vile trash, the poet sees a battle being waged.

On one side of the battle is man and the refuse that he produces. Notice how the poet expresses his revulsion toward the refuse in the dump. He uses specific words, cans, tires, pans, mattresses, to give us a clear picture of the dump. He uses vividly descriptive words: malodorous, rotting refuse, twisted. He uses words with harsh, grating sounds: rusty, scatter, rotting refuse, litter. Compare the sounds of those words with the sound of "innocent season" in the last line. Even the irregular rhythm of the first stanza contributes to the feeling of disorder and unpleasantness. All this is the work of man, spreading ugliness and stench over the beautiful earth.

The second stanza begins with sadness. Man does not show humanity even toward the earth. Nature mourns the cruelty. The melting snow is a symbol to the author of sorrow of nature over the evil man has done to it. The words of the poem are less harsh; they are slow words, and sad. But in the last part of the stanza, the poet reveals the other contestants in the battle. The gentle seed, weak and tiny, begins to battle for nature.

The battle of nature against the pollution of man is described in the third stanza. It begins beneath the rubbish; mysteriously, little plants begin to grow, rebelling against the rubbish and gradually forcing their way through it eventually to conceal it. The birds with

their melodious springtime songs call nature to the battle and encourage the fighters. The warm spring breezes encourage the spring flowers to grow and bring beauty to the ugliness. The armies of anemones and the hosts of violets conquer the dumpheap.

The figure of the battle is consistent throughout this part, beginning with the mutiny and concluding with the triumph of the flowers. The rhythm is regular now, and almost martial. The whole section is a march of triumph for nature.

Yet throughout the second stanza there is a strong contrast between the smallness and weakness of the fighters for nature with the size and strength of the pollutants' names in the first part. The tiny seedlings hardly seem fit to battle the cans and mattresses.

Violets and anemones are some of the most fragile of plants. Yet they gain the victory!

The last stanza is the victory song. Man may try to destroy the earth with his cast-off tin cans, but the tender fern, rising from the ground with leaflet curved like a scimitar, will cut through the rubbish and rises above it. Spring comes and buries the dumpheap beneath the foliage and the lovely flowers. Nature has won and man is defeated.

In this poem Mr. Cane sees the problem that man causes in his pollution of the earth. The answer that the author offers is that nature will win over this pollution. Nature is his god—notice the “dishonored god” in the last line of the second stanza. Evil for him lies in society, but nature is good. The solution for evil lies in the earth itself. This idea is not original with Mr. Cane; it was very common throughout the nineteenth century. We usually label it Romanticism.

The point of view of the author of this poem is not the Christian point of view. It is true that man, corrupted by sin, pollutes God's world. But the God that he dishonors in doing so is not nature but the living Creator of heaven and earth. Man's sin and the curse that God placed upon the whole creation as a result of this sin makes it impossible for man to live in harmony with the creation. (See Romans 8:22, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now...”) Furthermore, the victory is not a victory of nature over the works of man as the author presents it. The real victory is only in the new creation which will replace this sin-cursed earth. In that new creation man will live in perfect harmony with God's creation and there will be no sin and no pollution.

The optimism of Mr. Cane has already proved to be false. We are told now that man will soon pollute the earth beyond man's ability to correct it, unless man himself will step in and repair the damage he has done.

The Christian is called to use the creation in the service of God—not to misuse it. But the Christian knows too that there is no cure for the earth until the time of the new creation.

—Fred Hanko

JOHN MILTON: THE TRUMPETER

SONNET XVIII: ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEMONTE

Avenge, O Lord, they slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold,
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old
When all our Fathers worship't Stocks and Stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy Sheep and in their ancient Fold
Slain by the bloody *Piemontese* that rolled
Mother with Infant down the Rocks. Their moans
The Vales redoubl'd to the Hills, and they
To Heav'n. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all th' *Italian* fields where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant: that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who having learnt thy way
Early may fly the *Babylonian* woe.

- I. Specific objectives for teaching John Milton's Sonnet XVIII "On the Late Massacre in Piemont":**
- A. To teach the historical facts (background) of the massacre of the Waldensians.
 - B. To teach the biographical facts of Milton's life which directly relate to the writing of this sonnet.
 - C. To teach what it felt like to be a man in 1655 and one man, John Milton, responded to one of the issues of this time.
 - D. To teach John Milton's use of the English of his time and examine and appreciate how effectively he used it.
 - E. To teach the Italian sonnet form and examine how effectively John Milton used it.
 - F. To teach John Milton's attitude toward persecution and by faith in the light of God's Word determine whether it is correct.
- II. Method for teaching John Milton's Sonnet XVIII:**
- A. Present the historical facts that serve as a background to the sonnet.
 - 1. A brief statement on the Waldensian movement.
 - 2. A brief biography of the life of John Milton
 - B. Read John Milton's Sonnet XVIII.
 - C. Reread Sonnet XVIII and discuss Milton's message.
 - D. Discuss Milton's use of the English language of his time, especially the following words and phrases: "Avenge", "Slaughter'd", "Saints", "Alpine mountains cold", "Truth", "Fathers", "Stocks and Stones", "Sheep", "Fold", "martyr'd", "triple Tyrant", "Babylonian woe", and there are more.

- E. Examine and explain how Milton uses the Italian sonnet.
 - 1. Cf. *English Literature*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965, p• 255.
 - 2. Cf. *An Approach to Literature*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952, pp. 327-332.
- F. In a discussion explore the idea of the persecution of the church.
 - 1. What is Milton's conclusion to the problem of persecution?
 - 2. What is cur conclusion?
 - 3. Do we agree with Milton?

III. Assignment:

- A. Read and study the two sonnets:
 - 1. Sonnet XIX: "On His Blindness"
 - 2. Sonnet VII: "On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three"
- B. In one paragraph tell how Milton reacts to two problems in his life, and in another paragraph tell how he resolved them.

Explication of Sonnet XVIII: “On the Late Massacre in Piemont”:

John Milton was born in London in 1608. Milton was a Puritan and a deeply religious man. He studied the Bible and based his beliefs directly upon it.

From 1625 to 1632 Milton attended Christ’s College, Cambridge, and here he wrote two of his most famous poems: “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” and “Sonnet VII”. Because he believed “tyranny had invaded the church”, he decided not to become a minister. He chose to become a poet.

In 1632 he left Christ’s College and lived at his father’s home in Horton. After six years, in 1638, he left Horton and took a fifteen-month tour of Europe. He visited Italy and loved its land, people, and poetry. On this tour he probably met or came into contact with the Italian segment of the Waldensian movement.

While on tour he heard the rumblings of civil war in his homeland, England. The bishops of the Church of England and Milton’s Puritan brothers were already in conflict. Milton cut short his tour and returned to England to support the Puritans. The Civil War was fought, Charles I was beheaded, and the Commonwealth government was established. During this period, Milton wrote “Of Reformation” (1641), which stated that the bishops should be deprived of power; and “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates”, which stated that the English people had the right to accept and reject their rulers. The leaders of the Commonwealth was his work and appointed Milton to be their Latin Secretary for foreign affairs. This was in 1649. It was just six years later that the Waldensian massacre—the massacre at Piemont—took place.

The Waldenses or Waldensians, as they were sometimes called, are a religious sect. Both their name and their origin were derived from Peter Waldo, a twelfth century merchant in Lyons, France. Peter Waldo and his followers adopted a life of apostolic poverty in 1173 and organized the Poor Men of Lyons to distribute the Scriptures in the language of the uneducated. The movement grew and established groups in Italy, France and central Europe. They were hounded as heretics and forced into strongholds in the Durance Valley in southeastern France and the Piedmont region of the Alps. The organization was simple and most of the responsibility was placed in the hands of superintendents and trained pastors called “uncles”.

Although they were somewhat ascetic and pietistic, their synod of Chanforan in 1532 allied themselves with the Swiss Reformed Church. They also employed John Calvin’s cousin, Olivetan, to prepare a new French version of the Bible. The church had befriended them, but the world wanted to kill them. In the Durance Valley the French troops massacred the Waldensians in 1545. The survivors joined the French Reformed Church. In Piedmont the story was no different. The Duke of Savoy sent his troops to massacre the Waldenses in 1630, 1655, and in 1686 to 1696. It was this slaughter of 1655 that prompted John Milton to write his sonnet “On the Late Massacre in Piemont.” Milton was at this time Latin Secretary for foreign affairs under Cromwell’s Puritan government. The letter of protest to the Duke of Savoy for the Waldensian massacre opens with Milton’s sonnet.

Milton used the older of two major sonnet forms. He chose the Italian or legitimate sonnet form rather than the English or Shakespearean sonnet form. The Italian sonnet has fourteen lines. The first eight lines are called the *octet*. The last six are called the *sestet*. The *octet* usually presents the theme of the sonnet, a problem, a situation, or a reflection. The *sestet* usually presents the resolution, the answer, or the conclusion to the

problem, question, or situation presented in the *octet*. There may or may not be a definite break between the *octet* and *sestet*. When some of the thoughts and words from the *octet* spill over into the *sestet*, it is called an *enjambement* (from the French *enjamber* meaning to stride, encroach). Milton's Sonnet XVIII, "On the Late Massacre in Piemont", for example, contains one of these *enjambements*.

The first eight lines of Milton's sonnet contain the problem and situation of the Waldensian massacre. If this sonnet is considered a prayer, he is telling God what happened. He is also petitioning God to do something about the massacre, for he states, "Avenge, O Lord,..." This word "avenge" is important in Milton's Puritan Calvinistic anti-Catholic context. Because Scripture teaches him he knows that "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people." (Deuteronomy 32:43) Milton knew that God only can avenge, and that is why he addresses this sonnet to Him who is the God of vengeance.

Milton's language throughout the *octet* echoes the Scriptures. Consider these few examples: When Milton uses the term "slaughtered Saints", he seems to echo Psalm 44:22 which states, "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." When "slaughter" is used in reference to men, it always denotes senseless, wanton, cold-blooded killing on a mass scale.

Milton in the line, "When all our fathers worship't Stocks and Stones", seems to echo the prophet Jeremiah when he writes: "Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us." (Jeremiah 2:27)

"Forget not: in thy book record their groans" clearly echoes that passage in Malachi 3:16: "When they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."

The line, "Who were thy Sheep and in their ancient Fold", echoes Christ's speech: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." (John 10:16) The language and theme of the poem echo loudly and clearly the Scriptures which were so dear and familiar to John Milton.

In the *sestet* Milton does not as clearly use the language of Scripture, but he implies a principle that runs throughout the Bible. The principle is this, the blood of God's martyred saints becomes the seed from which springs a new church. Here Milton is attacking the persecution of Protestants by Roman Catholics because he refers to "The triple Tyrant" (the Pope's three-tiered crown) and "the Babylonian woe" (the men of the Reformation referred to Rome as Babylon). Nevertheless, God's people will be avenged: Milton's problem is resolved, and he said it well for William Wordsworth said of Milton's sonnets:

In his hands
The Thing became a trumpet;
whence he blew
Soul-animating strains--alas, too few:

* * * * *

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