

CONTRASTING CHRISTIAN APPROACHES TO TEACHING LITERATURE

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Editorial introduction

In January 1970, Calvin College hosted a Colloquium on a Christian Approach to Curriculum. A number of curriculum areas were selected for treatment in the form of a major paper in each area and a number of respondent papers, as well as panel discussions of them all. Both at the Colloquium and since there have been requests to capture the best of that dialogue in more permanent form so as to make it available to a wider audience.

This monograph has arisen out of that dialogue, both written and oral, both at the Colloquium and since. Two writers of papers, representing divergent views within the Reformed academic community, were given opportunity to revise and adapt their papers in the light not only of the Colloquium but of a further exchange of correspondence between them. They were asked to address themselves to the same educational questions and to arrange their essays so that the reader might easily sense the differences in approach.

The Table of Contents will reveal to the interested reader the parallel structure of the two essays as well as the suggested contrasts implied in the captions to the various sections. The text itself will reveal the pains that were taken by the writers to provide contrasting answers to the same educational questions, even to using the same writers to illustrate their major theses in classroom teaching terms. The editor wishes to express his thanks to the two writers, Professor Stanley Wiersma of Calvin College and Professor Merle Meeter of Dordt College, for their patience and cooperation and for suggesting that I provide the editorial setting for their respective essays.

I am sure that the writers of these two essays join me in assuring the readers that the two alternatives which are here set forth in some detail by no means exhaust the Christian approaches to literature nor the general theoretical frameworks with which one may teach Christianly. They would also be the first to express appreciation for each other's viewpoint, however contrasting they have made them for the benefit of the reader.

Teaching, being the art that it is, proceeds not only out of a relatively conscious theory of the role that literature should play in the life of a Christian but also out of the total personality of the teacher. Thus the writers and editor would insist that the actual classroom teaching act never exhibits unequivocally any stated ideology concerning the best way to teach Christianly. The writers have here exercised discipline in exhibiting in their examples not the richness in method and in explication of which they are capable, as their many students will attest, but have selected those that most clearly and consistently represent their priorities in objectives. They would both readily admit to eclecticism in classroom technique, but would wish to demonstrate here that different emphases tend to flow from different primary objectives in teaching literature.

This monograph is being published as part of the Calvin College Monograph Series so that a wider audience, both of those within Reformed educational circles and those in evangelical Christianity generally, may benefit from this clarification of the creative tensions over education which exist among practicing Christian educators. It is offered in the hope that it may stimulate Christian teachers of literature at all levels to rededicate themselves to teaching with more purposeful Christian goals and teaching practices in mind. I believe that careful analyses and comparisons of the two major approaches will enable many teachers to identify more closely with one of them, while benefiting from the insight of the other. May it provoke many a faculty room discussion, many a department meeting resolution, and many a curriculum committee

recommendation concerning teaching more Christianly. May also many a prospective teacher of literature find one or both of these essays guidance for his own future teaching.

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Teaching literature to edify in Christ

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Christian education is formal instruction (in addition to the nurture of the home and the indoctrination and exhortation of the church) in the Biblical-Christian interpretation and conduct of faith-and-life, as illustrated in the many aspects of God's creation and as understood in the light of His infallible and inerrant Scriptures. Its purpose is to confirm the learner's faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ as Savior and Lord (and, of course, to confront any unbelieving learner with his prerequisite need to believe on that Redeemer with a repentant faith if he is to see Truth: the Christ as Center of Coherence and Meaning-Giver to all things - Colossians 1).

That is, Christian education is part of God's program of salvation, not in the narrow sense of fundamental and crucial regeneration by God's grace and Holy Spirit through the Word, or of redeemed man's initial and radical conversion to faith and repentance, but in the consequent and comprehensive sense of whole-life sanctification and edification in the knowledge of truth (inseparable from Christ, *the Truth*) and in obedient worship of the Lord which is the essence of wisdom.

As the Christian student is guided in his perusal and understanding of his Father's world and of the cultural products of God's image-bearer man, he grows in covenant blessing under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, Who leads His own into all truth, toward the fullness of the stature of the mind of Christ, his Example, his Mediator, his Vindicator, his Judge and merciful King. Education that attempts to ignore the relevance of creation, man's fall into sin, God's curse on man and nature, the blood atonement, the empty tomb, the judgment, and the establishment of the new heavens and earth is not Christian education; instead, its specious and unreal framework is, of tragic necessity, humanistic, anthropocentric. Its spirit, even though seemingly and avowedly neutral, is false, apostate, diabolical, and God-denying. Presuppositions will out—in this life or the next. No man can serve two masters, even in education.

The teaching of literature in Christian education, therefore, must be seen in this Biblically determined perspective. Literature is the unified verbal expression, in significant and meaningful form, in discursive or metaphorical mode (usually these last in combination), of some situation or setting or experience, consistent with the author's personal view of life, his deeply faith-committed religious presuppositions. The novel, the play, the poem, the essay—each is an artfully contrived work that coherently and clearly—even if symbolically—presents an aspect of true or imagined reality. Also, every such literary realization of thought and feeling arises out of the mind and heart (out of the total being with all its faculties) of its composer; and out of the heart are the issues of life.

Man's heart cannot be neutral; it is the slave of God or of Satan. And the radical allegiance of the non-Christian author is, therefore, a consecration to some false god, to an idol formulated from within the creation, to such an ideological deity as mysticism, materialism, rationalism, romanticism, nihilism, aestheticism, existentialism, sensationalism. One who, for example, denies the death of Christ, is Alan Paton as in one of his published essays he apostrophizes a dead Christ thus: "Ah, those precious, precious bones whitening on the Judean hillsides." When the genius of a literary composition is one of these God-substitutes, then the Christian teacher of

literature must ultimately come to grapple with these abstractions-become-real, with the peculiar pagan germ of animation that inspirits the work. But he cannot exercise this essential critical function apart from consideration of style.

Biblical-Christian teaching of literature, then, is not content with art for art's sake, or with art for the sake of sensation or experience or beauty or culture or entertainment. Such God-centered teaching evaluates art, finally, in terms of truth, as manifested especially in the Bible and in Jesus Christ; and it is also judiciously heedful of the Scriptural injunction to "examine (discern) the spirits to see whether they be of God." Insofar as a work of literary art is an affirmation of truth as revealed in God's creation order (despite the distortion of that order resulting from man's sin), in the Word Incarnate Jesus Christ, in the record of God-ordained history (in which "all things work together for good to them that love God"), and in His perfect Inscripturated Word, *to that extent* a literary composition will demonstrate beauty. But insofar as God's truth is repudiated or obscured, to that extent the work will be disintegrated and aesthetically dissatisfying. The Christian writer, of course, should not attempt to deny the chaotic ugliness, the vicious reality of sin and its damnable effects; but he always foils sin by his depiction, or clear suggestion, of its redemptive contrast: the justice, holiness, mercy, and grace of the Sovereign Triune God in Jesus Christ.

If anyone can delight in God-gift beauty, however, it is the Christian, whether it be in the cosmos that declares the glory of God or in the cultural products of men (which, sometimes, despite their author's intent, praise Him). Sadly, though, not every Christian author writes Christian works; for not only does he see through a glass darkly (as do even God's holiest saints in this life), but he is surrounded by the deceiving and alluring powers of the world, of the flesh, and of Satan. In *The Narnia Chronicles* of C. S. Lewis and in the poems of George Herbert, however, the dynamic and God-extolling spirit of art for Christ's sake (the only true justification for the arts, incidentally) is pervasively evident. But though the dialogue and descriptions and symbols of Hemingway and Camus, to choose two antithetical examples, show sporadic and superficial glimmerings of beauty, the unity and radiance of their works are noticeably impaired by atomism, alienation, nihilistic bitterness, and *carpe them* sensuality. Their styles cannot wholly escape the devastation of their hopeless vision and naturalistic message.

The beauty of a work is the manifestation of a successful attempt to objectify in words the meaning of some event or adventure in life. But beauty in literature does not exist merely for "rapt, intransitive attention," to use Eliseo Vivas' phrase. It is, rather, the attractive and moving vehicle of truth (or of what is meant to be taken for truth). The teacher and literary critic disqualifies himself for both analysis and evaluation, however, when he neglects to consider the formal and technical felicities of a written work. Christian instructors especially should be able to identify and appreciate, in terms of the work, such elements as plot, setting, symbol, tone, theme, conflict, characterization, dialogue, and stanzaic form. Only after studying the formal structures of a work may one presume to speak with any authority about the core and totality of religious meaning that the author intended to or actually did present.

Having attempted, briefly, a definition of Christian education, of the nature and function of literature, and of the relationship of beauty to literary content, I shall now make a few observations about some curricular emphases and teaching strategies that seem to follow naturally from an ultimate concern with the life-directing meaning of a literary work as it tends to influence the reader's attitude toward God, toward man, toward love, toward life, toward death, toward the after life. Literature is ideological-emotional dynamite, : it incorporates, transmits, and amplifies character-shaping, culture forming power. It is more than just happy or

sad or a "great" experience; it is very much more than soothing sounds and pretty words. Moreover, it has *personality*: a person wrote it, and a person is a religious being. Nor can he keep his religious presuppositions (his faith-principles) out of his work-unless he is a fragmented Christian writing as a humanist because of publication pressures and a dichotomous view of life. An author lives and writes his life-direction: toward light or darkness, toward life or death, toward Christ or Satan.

Because many are called and few are chosen by God to be Christians and because the world despises the Gospel of the cross (as soon as they recognize it) even in novels, dramas, and poetry, for these reasons at least, the bulk of published, discussed, and finally anthologized literature is secular, man-adulating, covenant-breaking by nature. Nevertheless, it must be confronted, read sympathetically and reflectively, understood, appreciated, and evaluated for its meaningful view of reality, but always in the definitive and illustrative context of its aesthetic form. Further, the Christian teacher should take knowledgeable pleasure in the purposeful contemplation of technical beauties and appositely integrated formal devices as he appropriates them for service to their true Origin and King, Jesus Christ.

This is not to imply, however, that the Christian teacher should be engaged in "Christianizing" naturalistic or otherwise apostate works of literature; rather, he learns from the demonstrated skills of unregenerate authors to craft beautifully worshipful products for his Lord. Hopefully, Christian teacher and Christian student develop such competence and enthusiasm together.

As for selection of works, perhaps more of our time should be spent on Christian or pseudo-Christian authors than with the obviously fatalistic, romantic, atavistic, or absurd. In the Christian category, for example: Augustine, Calvin, Donne, Herbert, Revius, Spurgeon, C. S. Lewis, Walsh, Wiebe, Irwin. And in the pseudo-Christian camp: Swift, Hawthorne, Melville, Tolstoy, Dostoevski, Greene, Paton, Auden, and Catherine Marshall.¹ The author of Christy ends the listing of pseudo-Christians because I agree with a frequently-made proposal that we condescend to teach inferior works occasionally for contrast.

Finally, a few notes on classroom strategy. First, the literal statement of the work must be clearly understood. This may be achieved by discussion, occasional and succinct teacher commentary, student presentations, panels, films, and testing-whenever necessary or desired. In the process of determining what the work is saying, the teacher should already be directing the students to a discovery of noteworthy aspects and of their integration with the thematic substance. Then, though evaluation must also be integral (not just summary didacticism), the fusion of style and content along with the central view-of-life meaning (the unifying message of the work) should be subjected to a self-consciously Biblical-Christian critique through close scrutiny of the text and by intensive question-and-answer disputation. (A little conflict of ideas stimulates learning.) Seminar papers sometimes enable and encourage students to defend their views, and thereby provide needed variety at low points in the course. Following are two examples of literary criticism (in atypically monologic form) as I try to conduct it with my classes.

¹ I am not saying that these persons are not among the saved, but that their imaginative writings are non-Christian.

LESSON ONE: Robert Herrick and the Anatomy of Adultery

DELIGHT IN DISORDER

*A sweet disorder in the dress
 Kindles in clothes a wantonnesse:
 A lawne about the shoulders thrown
 Into a fine distraction:
 An erring Lace, which here and there
 Enthralls the Crimson Stomacher:
 A Cuffe neglectfull, and thereby
 Ribbands to flow confusedly:
 A winning wave (deserving Note)
 In the tempestuous petticoate:
 A careless shooe-string, in whose tye I
 see a wilde civility:
 Doe more bewitch me, then when
 Art Is too precise in every part.*

This poem by Robert Herrick is one of the more than 1400 that constitute his single volume of poetry: *Hesperides* (1648). "Delight in Disorder" is, superficially, only a pretty, flirtatious general compliment in the cavalier tradition. Subtitled *The Works Both Humane & Divine of Robert Herrick Esq.*, the *Hesperides* is 398 pages of gaily frivolous, frankly sensual, secularly spirited poetry-the "Humane" poems (of which "Delight in Disorder" is one). The last 79 pages of the book Herrick entitled "Noble Numbers; or, his Pious Poems."

Most of Herrick's poetry is occupied with fortune, wine and celebrity, and sexual relationships outside of marriage. These last are ceremonious panegyrics addressed to "his mistresses": Julia, Anthea, Silvia, Perenna, Perilla, Sapho, Electra, Myrha, Corrina, to name several. It seems ironic that such a dedicated sensualist as Herrick should also write a number of "Noble" poems on God and Christ. But Robert Herrick (b. 1591), after rejecting the craft of goldsmith and the practice of law for which he had been serially educated, was ordained to the ministry of the Church of England in 1623.

Herrick became a country pastor, vicar of Dean Prior, the "dull Devonshire" of, one of his poems. He missed the libertine life of London, the wine and genteel carousing of the literati under "Saint Ben," the classical Elizabethan dramatist and lyricist who was Herrick's. high priest and hero, whom he worships in versified prayers. That Herrick was as acrobatically amorous with the women of his acquaintance as his love songs might suggest is doubtful. He was a bachelor, and his preoccupation was undeniably coition, but his lust may have culminated imaginatively in his poetry. That the impact of his (illicit) love poetry on his readers is only emotional, aesthetic, and intransitive is an accepted thesis that should be challenged in the light of our increasing awareness that all literature has religious direction'l that every poetic expression ultimately praises God the Creator or, anthro po centrically, man the creature.

We turn now from prefatory exposition to the epigraphical lyric "Delight in Disorder," a sonnet in iambic-tetrameter rhymed couplets. The first verse of each couplet flows fittingly into the second without caesura, and the scansion is regular except for the initial trochees of lines two

and eight: "Kindles" (a word designed to fire up the reader) and "Ribbands" (which stresses the flimsiness and looseness of the idealized garments: the freedom suggest anti-inhibition). We are reminded of the fluency and swing of the lines of Herrick's equally popular poem "Upon Julia's Clothes":

*Whenas in silks my Julia goes
Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes
The liquefaction of her clothes.*

*Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave Vibration each way free;
O how that glittering taketh me!*

"Delight in Disorder" has as theme the easy grace, the accomplishment and charm, the sprezzatura of conducting oneself with facility: it is achieving in appearance the casualness which, as one of my students said, the fashion magazines urge young ladies to emulate at the expense of long hours of primping and pantomime. Herrick obviously prides himself upon being a connoisseur of feminine fashion and form. With evident delectation ("Delight," "enthalls," "winning," "bewitch"), he allows his eyes to rove from shoulder scarf to waistband to cuffs to skirt to shoes: that is, he overlooks his subject from head to toe (overlooks, I say, because he misses the person in his preoccupation with the symbol of sexual invitation).

Art, like life, implies Herrick, must be natural, free from scrupulous regulation, from fastidiousness, primness, prudery. A meticulously unimaginative demeanor in personal relationships or in poetry—such effete and flaccid superciliousness Herrick rightly and wittily satirizes. Moreover, and ironically, he employs a notably precise and orderly verse form to repudiate the order and precision that he contemns as stultifying and prosaic: all the couplets but the last end with a colon, and the whole poem is merely a listing of feminine accouterments which exemplify the "sweet disorder" of the first couplet and are epitomized in the last two lines: "Doe more bewitch me, then when Art/ Is too precise in every part."

Now, that is the obvious, literal meaning of the poem. But Herrick is making a more profound comment about life and morality than may appear on the surface. Notice the ethical weight, the religious direction, the suggestive resonances of the diction: "delight," "disorder," "wantonnesse," "distraction," (dis-track'-shee-own, for the rhythm of the line), "erring," "enthalls," "neglectfull," "confusedly," "tempestuous," "carelesse," "wilde," "bewitch." Here is a gal on the make, a coquette who has learned how to flaunt her skirts, an inducement to fornication. And Herrick approves: in fact, he revels in it. Apparently what God says in His Word about fornication and adultery is for Sunday sermons only, not for life. And marriage as an institution of God and as the only relationship permitting sexual intercourse? Here is Herrick's opinion of that state:

*A bachelour I will
Live as I have liv'd still,
And never take a wife
To crucifie my life....*

He also expresses this seriously jocular judgment as follows in "Single Life Most Secure": "Suspicion, Discontent, and Strife/ Come in for Dowrie with a Wife." But Herrick pronounces most emphatically and grossly on this subject in these stanzas from "A Poet Loves a Mistresse, But Not to Marry":

*Ile hug, Ile kiss, Ile play
And Cock-like Hens Ile tread:
And sport it any way;
But in the Bridall Bed:*

*For why? that man is poore,
Who hath but one of many;
But crown'd he is with store,
That single may have any.*

Herrick is fascinated by women's clothing, as in "*Laxare Fibulam*". "To loose the button, is no lesse,/ Then to cast off all bashfulnesse"—but only to tease himself and the reader: his interest is really in what the clothing covers, and, therefore, most of his poems are prurient, as pornographic as the pseudo-sophisticated cavalier tradition would permit. But the awake reader especially if he is a Christian-soon begins to resent the insistent, febrile titillation. Further, Herrick's anatomical obsession flaws his art in such poems as "Upon the Nipples of Julia's Breast" or "Her Legs" with its bathetic analogy:

*Fain would I kiss my Julia's dainty leg,
Which is as white and hair-less as an egge.*

Almost as grotesque is this Brobdingnagian depiction in "Fresh Cheese and Cream":

*Wo'd yee have fresh Cheese and Cream?
Julia's Breast can give you them.
And if more; Each Nipple cries,
To your Cream, here's Strawberries.*

But even more offensive to the perceptive and moral reader is the sustained double entendre of the single-couplet poems, such as "to a Maid": "You say, you love me; that I thus must prove;/ If that you lye, then I will swear you love---; and "Satisfaction for Sufferings": "For all our workes, a recompence is sure:/ 'Tis sweet to think on what was hard T'endure"; or this one to "Glorie": "I make no haste to have my Numbers read./ Seldome comes Glorie till a man be dead"; and "Great Maladies, Long Medicines": "To an old soare a long cure must goe onj Great faults require great satisfaction"; and this last couplet poem, "To Perenna": "Thou say'st I'm dull; if edgeless so I be,/ Ile whet my lips, and sharpen Love on thee."

Some readers may not be aware of the 17th century meanings (many of which are still contemporary) of such literary sexual puns as "lye," "suffering," "work," "comes," "dead," "faults," "dull." These culturally accepted graffiti affected by Herrick are euphemisms attractively presented in rhyme, rhythm, and tongue-in-cheek wordplay, but the language of the

lecher becomes more apparent in the imagery of genitalia, pudenda, and sexual perversity. Consider, for example, the metaphoric implication of the following quatrains:

ANOTHER TO THE MAIDS

*Wash your hands, or else the fire
Will not tend to your desire;
Unwasht hands, ye Maidens, know,
Dead the Fire, though ye blow.*

THE CLOUD

*Seest thou that cloud that rides in State
Part Ruby-like, part Candidate?
It is no other then the Bed
Where Venus sleeps (halfe smothered).*

THE AMBER BEAD

*I saw a Flie within a Beade
Of Amber clearly buried:
The Urne was little, but the room
More rich than Cleopatra's Tombe.*

And observe the phallic figures in this sextet, "To Oenone":

*Thou sayest Loves Dart
Hath prickt thy heart;
And thou do'st languish too:
If one poore prick,
Can make thee sick,
Say, what wo'd many do?*

Finally, then, how is the Christian reader to evaluate the religious direction, the life-view that animates this first three fourths of the poetry of Robert Herrick, Anglican clergyman? Herrick's is the *carpe momentum* philosophy of the hedonist who flippantly voices his derision of the Triune Sovereign God by spurning His commandments; it is the faith of the libertine who makes his whims and urges autonomous, who ignores the Biblical teaching about man's rebellion and sin, the condition of guilt and alienation that requires repentance and trust in the obedience and cleansing blood of Jesus Christ as the only way of reconciliation with God, as the only hope of pardon and peace.

Herrick, however, articulates the religious genius of his wine-and-lust poetry in this credo:

TO ENJOY THE TIME

*While Fate permits us, let's be merry;
 Passe all we must the fatall Ferry:
 And this our life too whirles away,
 With the Rotation of the Day.*

That one makes either Christ or some imposter his Lord (or his idol) is further substantiated by the last word of "A Sonnet to Perilla" (the agent of rebirth here is not the Holy Spirit, but only the physiological gratification of the sexual act):

*Then did I live when I did see
 Perilla smile on none but me.
 But (ah!) by starres malignant crost,
 The life I got I quickly lost:
 But yet a way there doth remaine,
 For me embalm'd to live againe;
 And that's to love me; in which state
 Ile live as one Regenerate.*

Because one cannot serve two masters in life or literature, Herrick's apotheosis of idealized sexual carnality supplants the Holy God. Also Herrick's world is sickly compounded of daydream, delusion, and dehumanization.

Worse, even the cross of Christ is made part of a blasphemous conceit ("holy," "stand," "circum-," "crost" "prophane") in the erection imagery of "To Silvia":

*I am holy, while I stand
 Circum-crost by thy pure hand:
 But when that is gone;
 Again, I, as others, am Prophane.*

Adulation of apostate thought in the name of aesthetics has crippled the efforts of most Christians associated with literature; it may even be that some readers of this essay are still refusing to acknowledge that a poet of Herrick's literary reputation could be so disgustingly obscene in imagery and implication. Allow me, then, to quote one more poem that makes explicit his *idée fixe*:

*I askt my Lucia for a kisse;
 And she with scorne denied me this:
 Say then, how ill sho'd I have sped,
 Had I then askt her Maidenhead?*

Herrick's champions may counter with lines from "His Prayer for Absolution" (one of his "Pious Pieces"):

*For Those my unbaptized Rhimes,
Writ in my wild unhallowed Times;
For every sentence, clause and word
That's not inlaid with Thee, (my Lord)
Forgive me God, and blot each Line
Out of my Book, that is not Thine....*

But the ironic and irrefutable fact is that this penitential poem was published simultaneously with the "love" poems in 1648,² or even a year *earlier*, as the title page of "His Noble Numbers" indicates, in 1647. Whether Robert Herrick is in heaven or hell now is not the issue, of course—that is God's business. But the peculiar religious genius, the characterizing, culture-influencing *spirit* of his poetry is what our Lord commands the Christian reader to examine, discern, evaluate, judge, to see whether it be of God or Satan, and where, and why.

LESSON TWO: **George Herbert and the Poetics of Fidelity**

LOVE (III)

*Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guiltie of dust and sinne.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lackd any thing.*

*A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungratefull? A h my deare,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?*

*Truth Lord, but I have marrd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
My deare, then I will serve.
You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.*

Writing home from Trinity College, Cambridge, young George Herbert W (b. 1593-d. 1633) promised his mother that his rhetorical and poetic talents should "be all and ever

² Herrick personally supervised the publication of his book in 1648; he died in 1674

consecrated to God's glory." The 164 poems of his posthumously published volume, *The Temple*, make good that vow to his mother and to his God.

One of ten children born to Richard Herbert and his wife, Magdalen, George had a happy childhood, in which "there was no month but May." After his father's death, Magdalen Herbert, a devout, accomplished, and intelligent Christian lady, saw to the education of her children. George she sent to Westminster and then to Cambridge, where he excelled in Latin, Greek, and rhetoric. In fact, upon receiving his M.A. he was appointed to a lectureship in rhetoric and was soon after elected Public Orator of Cambridge. During this period he took noticeable pride in his aristocratic background, fashionable clothes, and influential friends at court; he also delighted in the pastimes of "mirth and music," "courtesy and wit."

But at 34 George Herbert was a lost courtier, highly educated, socially prominent, politically successful, lean, greying, consumptive, and exhausted. But he had never completely repudiated his idea of dedication to God, of consecrating his abilities to God's glory; further, he was experiencing an increasingly demanding call to the Anglican ministry. George Herbert was a true and Biblical Calvinist, faithfully affirming the predestinating decrees of the Sovereign God:

Who gives to man, as he sees fit, {
Salvation.
 Damnation

-From "*The Water-course*"

But some of his early poems satirize a perverse tendency of some Puritans toward fatalism; Herbert's own emphasis is pre-eminently redemption: the love of the Triune God as demonstrated and sealed in the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sir John Danvers married Magdalen Herbert and became a well-loved stepfather to George Herbert while the latter was still an over-sedulous and undernourished student. Several years later, unsatisfied by the dialectics of statecraft and the distractions of lute and viol, Herbert married Jane Danvers and lived in happiness with her until his death at 39 (1633). For the last three years of his life, he was Rector of Bernerton, at which rustic charge he held services twice a day, praying in the little country church with his household and parishioners.

In *A Priest to the Temple or The Country Parson* (1652), Herbert spontaneously evinces his love for God and His people. To his congregation he was a saint: considerate, generous, kind to his servants, diligent, a friend to the afflicted, a help to the burdened. His motto was "I am not worthy . . . the least of all Thy mercies." He said that he had found "perfect freedom" in God's service. And the love of God that he rejoiced in, Herbert transmitted through the style as well as the content of his messages. Only his first sermon was marvelous for its erudition and rhetoric, its brilliance of metaphysical conceit. From then on Herbert spoke naturally, in a conversational idiom, employing familiar dialogue, everyday images from byway and farm, simple stories and sayings, sympathy and humor, Biblical reasons for the liturgy, and the clear exposition of the Scriptures as central to life-in short, the loving and understanding approach that Herbert directly set himself to learn was a program consistent with his homely proverb: "People by what they understand, are best led to what they understand not."

Five poems entitled "Affliction" are included in *The Temple*. Though his contentment and trust were well known to all his acquaintances of the Bemerton years, George Herbert described his poetry as "A picture of the many spiritual conflicts that had passed betwixt God and my

soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect peace." Apprised of this spiritual tension in Herbert's poetry, we shall now consider "Love (III)."

The poetry of George Herbert is carefully structured and revised to refinement; it is fluent and musical in its colloquial and dramatic rhythms; it is clear, precise, simple, elegant, dynamic, and singingly beautiful. It is the offering of the sincere Christian poet awarely and gratefully praising the One True God of the Scriptures. "Love (111)" begins as a third-person narration: the sinner-protagonist (or, really, antagonist of "Love") has been drawn into the presence of his Savior to enjoy the communion of the Holy Spirit; but although "Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,/ Guiltie of dust and sinne." That the hesitant guest should be humbled by the awareness of his sin and its consequences for all creation is a necessary step on his way to salvation. But the guilt of the speaker is contrived to double as a subtly advanced pretext for sin-loving recalcitrance and old-natured rebellion. God in Christ, the Host, immediately but tenderly, and with pertinaciously designing grace, challenges the reluctant convert thus: "But quick-ey'd love, observing me grow slack/ From my first entrance in,/ Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,/ If I lacked any thing." Observe here how the *ababcc* rhyme scheme with a trimeter line following each pentameter constitutes an echoing device, the short line answering as a brief choral comment on its more lengthy predecessor -and, incidentally, an especially ironic and insistently pertinent comment in the last verse of this stanza, the "sweetly" interrogative summons of Love Himself asking with gentle admonition: "If I lack'd any thing."

Stanza two begins with the reply of the proudly humble self-deceiver, the would-be backslider asserting his unworthiness to be the guest of Love, When Love reiterates and personalizes his welcome, "You shall be he," the sinner whom God is irresistibly sainting answers with such discreet and decorous rationalization that, if it were possible, God Himself should not detect the hypocrisy and self-will behind the piously pretty words: "I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,/ I cannot look on thee." But God is not deceived, nor will He be mock-humored; and again His rebuke is loving, patient, firm, unanswerable-and this time His words are further substantiated by His touch: "Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,/ Who made the eyes but I?"

A third time the called one, the one invited of God, declines, avouching his guilt and sordidness as sufficient warrants of eternal death. But behind the apparent graciousness of that crucial confession skulks the carnal spirit of unbelief, the Satanic death-wish of apostasy, the sanctimonious verbalizing that would obfuscate and deny the Gospel of eternal life to repentant sinners. Man's false humility is damnable, however; it leads only, if unconfessed and unpardoned, to hell. Still antagonizing his own happiness, and with vainly ingenious dialectic opposing his Master, the weakening sinner argues on: "Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them [His eyes]: let my shame/ Go where it doth deserve."

But no one shall snatch My sheep out of My hand, said Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Therefore, in His mercy, the Crucified and Risen Redeemer terminates the dispute, this life-and-deathly serious love quarrel, with the conclusive reference to the Cross: "And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?" He Whose eyes were blinded by His blood from the thorns, now beams as Light and Love upon His torturer, upon man, both the thorn-causer and the thorn-crowner, man the damned, but also man the delivered.

The message of the Cross, the blood that purged the blame, the Christ, Who brought peace between God and man at Calvary-He stills with a word His child's half-hearted struggle. The pseudo-intellectual, the sick-psychological sparring is over; the domesticated sinner submits to

the healing joy and freedom of home: "My deare, then I will serve." But not so fast! A condition remains to be met: hospitality must be actively, whole-bodily accepted. For he who does not eat My flesh and drink My blood shall have no part in Me, warns the Savior. The guest must take the gift, must share the sacrifice (for only the Host can make the sacrifice). But he must partake of the spiritual food of that perfect offering if he is to rise from death to life: "You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat." And the quick response of the wholly subdued and reconciled guest is the consoling security and cheerful comfort of every hungry sinner: "So I did sit and eat."

Herbert's book of poetry is titled with reference to Psalm 29: "And in His temple doth every man speak of His glory." Many of the poems are ingeniously elaborated metaphors correlating church furniture and architecture with spiritual relationships, as in "Church-lock and Key" which begins: "I know it is my sinne which locks Thine eares" But proclaimed clearly and triumphantly, his lyre lordly as a trumpet, is the Christ-centered theme of Herbert's true and beautiful hymns, even as they agonize healthwardly to their harmonious and ringing resolutions: "Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,/ *My God and King*" ("Antiphon I"); "Nor let them punish me with loss of rime,/ Who plainly say, *My God, My King*" ("Jordan I"); and this tribute to the Resurrected. Lord of "Easter":

*Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art,
The crosse taught all the wood resound his name,
Who bore the same,
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate this most holy day.*

"Sin's Round," "The Collar," "Man," "Easter-wings," "Paradise": these poems are all peerless (with the hymns and holy sonnets of Donne) vehicles of adoration "consecrated to God's glory" as their composer meant them to be. B. L. Joseph makes this formalistically secular but delimitedly valid critique of Herbert's poetics in *Cassell's Encyclopaedia of World Literature*: "He wrote like an excellent classical scholar, inspired, in English, clear, majestic and economical, combining a strength like Milton's, a bite like Dryden's, with the tension of the metaphysical sonnet and the felicities of Elizabethan lyrists."

I conclude this exercise in criticism by quoting from "The Author's Prayer before Sermon," which epitomizes in prose the spirit and tone animating George Herbert's poetry-the secret-declared and substantial meaning of the whole body of his lyrics, the Glory-to-God ascription of an entire life (as pastor, poet, husband, neighbor) in homage to the Almighty Creator and the Eternal King:

Blessed be the God of Heaven and Earth! who only doth wondrous things. Awake therefore, my Lute, and my Viol! awake all my powers to glorifie thee! We praise thee! we blesse thee! we magnifie thee forever! And now, O Lord! in the power of thy Victories, and in the wayes of thy Ordinances, and in the truth of thy Love, Lo, we stand here, beseeching thee to blesse thy word, wher-ever spoken this day throughout the universall Church. O make it a word of power and peace, to convert those who are not yet thine, and to confirme those that are: particularly, blesse it in this thy owne Kingdom, which thou hast made a Land of light, a storehouse of thy treasures and mercies: O let not our foolish and unworthy hearts rob us of the continuance of this thy sweet

love: but pardon our sins, and perfect what thou hast begun. Ride on Lord, because of the word of truth, and meeknesse, and righteousnesse; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Especially, blesse this portion here assembled together, with thy unworthy servant speaking unto them: Lord Jesu! teach thou me, that I may teach them: Sanctifie, and inable all my powers, that in their full strength they may deliver thy message reverently, readily, faithfully, & fruitfully. O make thy word a swift word, passing from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the life and conversation: that as the rain returns not empty, so neither may thy word, but accomplish that for which it is given. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive! O Lord, hearken, and do so for thy blessed Son's sake, in whose sweet and pleasing words we say, "Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen³

³ Quotations are from *The Works of George Herbert*, edited by F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1941).

Teaching literature to humanize Christians

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While the writing of literature is an art, the study of the appreciation of literature or of any of the other arts is part of the humanities. As the name implies, the humanities are concerned with man. Philosophy attempts to define man's nature and destiny, history attempts to discover the pattern of man's past, and the arts attempt to communicate what it feels like to be man.

The Christian, of course, has some definite convictions about man before he ever comes to a study of the humanities, or even if he never comes to such a study. He knows that man is a creature of God, that man is a rebel against God's perfect rule, that God himself became man in the person of Jesus Christ, that Christ's death provides a perfect reconciliation between God and man, and that damnation is the consequence of a man's rejecting God's offer of reconciliation. Thus a Christian knows so much about man that one is tempted to ask whether he should study the humanities at all.

The more one studies the humanities, the more he has to be Christian with: the more he studies the humanities, the richer his definition of the word man; the richer his definition of the word man, the richer his sense of his own identity; the richer the sense of his own identity, the richer his perception of the Christian doctrines concerning man.

The hermit isolated from all human society has a punier sense of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation than the Christian mother who nurses her new baby, has a punier sense of the estrangement between God and man than the father who is worried by his children's disobedience, and has a punier sense of reconciliation than the third-grade teacher who daily negotiates playground scraps. The more one is involved in being man, the more one can understand the Christian doctrines concerning man.

Our definitions of man, however, are all limited by our experience; we are all provincials. Because I am an occidental, I do not share in oriental experience; because I am an American, I am not a European; because I am a midwesterner, I am not an easterner or southerner; because I am Protestant, I am not Catholic or Mormon. Because I live in the twentieth century, I unfortunately cannot live in the seventeenth century; because I study the seventeenth century, I must neglect the equally fascinating ninth century.

One could never completely understand the ways of God with man unless he knew every person from every civilization and culture from the beginning until now. The denotative definitions of man are clearly given in the Bible; Christianity gives a clear denotative definition of man, but the connotative definitions of man are not complete unless one knows all men of all times and places. Only then would the richness of the Christian doctrines of man be fully realized.

To imagine knowing all people of all times and places is, of course, an absurdity. But it is also an absurd predicament that we are cut off by time and space from a complete knowledge of man. Rather than boasting about adding a new language to our linguistic competencies, we ought to have our mind on the many languages we do not yet know. Those unknown languages cut us off from a complete knowledge of man. True, our lack of faith and our coolness toward the

scriptures cuts us off from a complete understanding of the sentence -- "God saves man," but our understanding of that sentence is also limited by our incomplete knowledge of man.

Our absurd boundness in time and space cuts us off from a complete understanding of the word man (What, for instance, are people like on Madagascar?), and, hence, from a complete understanding of who we are. To the extent that we escape the handicaps of time and space in our understanding of man, to that extent we are fitter instruments for appreciating, if not understanding, the ways of God with ourselves.

One must, of course, admit that there is risk involved in studying the humanities. Unless one keeps the scriptural realities of man's depravity and God's grace clearly in mind, the study turns into humanism, the glorification of man as the Deity. But the risk is worth it. Avoiding humanism in one's study of the humanities is a valuable discipline in itself, a prod to the student to keep the scriptural givens concerning God and man always in mind. Besides, the deepened insight into man's nature can bring a deepened insight into the realities of sin and grace, an insight which cannot be duplicated in any other way.

While these advantages are to be realized through the study of any and all the humanities, the study of the arts provides a particular kind of insight into the nature of man not to be had from philosophy or history. Unlike philosophy and history, the arts ask and answer the question -- "What does it feel like to be man?" When an artist of any kind--musician, painter, sculptor, poet, novelist--conveys a state of human emotion to an audience, the experience of recognition within the audience is the aesthetic experience.

The teacher of the appreciation of the arts seeks to evoke the aesthetic experience within his students. He attempts to have the student make a dual discovery in every art work he confronts: the discovery of the state of feeling which emanates from the art work and the state of feeling within himself which corresponds to it. Though this dual discovery is the end of the teaching, the teacher will do well not to stress the words *aesthetic* and *creative*; hearing them inhibits the many who consider themselves unaesthetic and uncreative and fosters snobbishness among the others. Nor will the teacher rely on such bland techniques as asking, "What do you feel when you see this picture?" Intense involvement in the form is necessary if one is to distill a significant insight from a work; glib impressionism is not what art is about. Perhaps some rather technical questions about a painting ought to be asked when a pseudo-aesthetic orgy threatens to set in.

Because the burden of this essay is not the teaching of all the arts but rather the teaching of literature, I suggest that the teacher of a poem ask some rather specific questions about the stanzaic form and rhyme scheme. Or he may wish to have students investigate the life of the author or the historical period in which the work was written. Or he may wish to have students analyze the images in the work and their relationship to each other. Or he may wish to gather student opinion about a moral problem which the work presents, or to criticize the philosophy which it embodies. The methods may be eclectic, but the purpose remains constant: a student must be led to an aesthetic discovery, if possible, of each work studied--that dual discovery of something within the work and something within himself which are the same. The experience may, now and then, be a group discovery in class. More often class will be the preparation for the student's aesthetic discovery later on his own.

Aesthetic discovery has nothing mystical about it unless, of course, one considers all communication in some sense mystical. That my reader can understand what I write is mysterious, though commonplace. The only difference between this essay and a poem is that the poem communicates a state of feeling rather than fact, interpretation, and opinion, as does this essay.

Of course, poems are a little like essays in that both use words. No matter how pure the poem, no matter how simply it embodies the state of feeling of the writer, it must perforce mean something. A poet not only arranges sounds as does the musician; he not only arranges images and textures as does the painter; unlike the musician and painter, the poet is more dependent on and in bondage to meaning. Yet, it is not the meaning of a poem that we are after as teachers or students, although we cannot ignore it. It is rather the intense involvement which breaks into recognition of ourselves in the poem and the poem in ourselves: the aesthetic experience. Students sometimes complain that literature teachers always want them to look for the "hidden meanings" in poems. They are students who have not yet caught on to the principle that the experience of literature moves beyond meaning-not into hidden meaning -- but into the discovery which is the aesthetic experience.

Earlier in this essay I have urged an eclectic method for trapping students into involvement with the works studied. Nothing prevents their being taught more than one standard procedure. Trap them sometimes with a moral problem, sometimes with biography, sometimes with form. The teacher's job is to trap, and then trust the energy within the poem to shock them into discovery. The same is true about the arrangement of the curriculum. Not all literature courses ought to be organized in the same way. Sometimes it is said that humanists teach literature by historical period, moralists by theme (e.g., "Freedom vs. Authority"), and aestheticists by genre. The scheme is far too simple. Moral problems or the lively presentation of an historical period may be the perfect "traps" to make sure that students will achieve some degree of aesthetic discovery. Teaching from an aesthetic point of view does not commit one to organizing his course by genre. Dealing with fifty lyrics, with twelve short stories, and finally with seven plays is a weaker course structure for leading students to aesthetic discovery than either of the other two. There is too little bait in the genre trap, and yet I use it for some courses to avoid uniformity of course strategy.

I have attempted to show that the organization of the literary curriculum, of literary courses, and of individual lessons ought to assist students toward anaesthetic experience of the works studied; I have defined the aesthetic experience as the recognition within one's self of the same state of feeling as in the work of art; I have described how that discovery, made repeatedly in all kinds of literary works, adds to one's definition of the word *man*; and I have attempted to argue that the fuller one's definition of *man*, the more one can understand and appreciate the ways of God with man. It remains for me to answer two objections to my method.

I. One objection to my point of view toward the teaching of literature is that it leaves both Christian student and Christian teacher far too open to the influences of non-Christian literature. The fuller one's concept of man, the fuller his understanding of the ways of God with man. Yes, but suppose one loses his faith in the process? Is it not being naive about man's nature to assume that the result of literary study will indeed be better Christians? And what is distinctive about the day-to-day study of literature as I recommend it? Is my theory not an excuse for a Christian to put his Christianity aside and to study literature as non-Christians do?

In reading the works of Christians and non-Christians alike, the Christian student and Christian teacher must be Christians. They will, for instance, recognize as the work of brothers those works written by fellow Christians. But every Christian is an imperfect Christian, and that a work is written by a Christian and that I as Christian reader discover in myself the same state of feeling which the work communicates is no sign that the state of feeling is a proper one for a Christian to harbor. On the other hand, the Christian reader, "doing good to all men," will of

course recognize that he holds his humanity in common with non-Christians, and thus the state of feeling which the reader recognizes as his own in the work written by a non-Christian may be one appropriate for a Christian to feel. Therefore, the Christian student and teacher immediately rule out approving all works by Christians and condemning all works by non-Christians. Being Christian in one's teaching and studying literature requires greater subtlety.

To the extent that the Christian discovers a state of feeling which he recognizes as his own in a literary work-whether that work be written by a Christian or by a non-Christian -to that extent the Christian reader has learned something about man, and, just as important, about himself in particular. To the extent that the works of Christians and non-Christians help a Christian to discover within himself states of feeling which are appropriate for a Christian to feel, to that extent the Christian thanks God for the work that helped him to discover the state of feeling within himself. To the extent that the works of Christians and non-Christians help a Christian to discover within himself states of feeling which are not appropriate for a Christian, to that extent the Christian confesses his corruption with greater precision and again thanks God for the work that helped him to discover the latent evil within himself. A literary work never makes a person wicked; at most it can call into the reader's consciousness wickedness which was latent within him; it is then the Christian reader's responsibility not to let the latent wickedness become overt; it is also his responsibility to confess to God the kind of person he has discovered himself to be; thus he experiences forgiveness-not for reading the book, but for being the kind of person that the book has revealed that he is. Thus the Christian reader becomes a better Christian-less naive and more committed.

Or to make it more specific, take Jean-Paul Sartre. The same forces in society (industrialism, mass culture, conformity), the same wars (World Wars I and II), the same ideologies (Marxism, Christianity, Kierkegaardianism)-in short, the same world that shaped Sartre into an existentialist has also, to a lesser degree, shaped us in similar directions. To some extent, anyone alive today is an existentialist, whether he knows it or not. Now when one lays Sartre's essays next to the scriptures, one can refute Sartre rather easily. But when one sees *No Exit* or reads *The Age of Reason*, one becomes aware through the aesthetic experience that he, the reader, is an existentialist of sorts. One knows at once the delight of the discovery and the shame for what is discovered. What is discovered about one's latent existentialism becomes a matter of confession and forgiveness between man and God. But the reader will also thank God for *No Exit* and *The Age of Reason*, for they made the new self-discovery possible.

In sum, my answer to the objection is this: the Christian reader does not put his Christianity aside to study literature. He studies literature as he carries on all of his other activities: aware that he lives life in a world of sin, but that he has been redeemed by grace. The Christian teacher and student prod each other to read the works of Christians and non-Christians in the context of sin and grace.

II. Fellow teachers and students will also object that literary judgment plays a relatively minor part in the theory presented here. Yet, obviously, an editor must judge what is to be included in an anthology, a teacher what is to be included in a course, a parent what to recommend to his child for leisure reading, an educated person which books to reread after college. To choose some is to reject others. Should not the development of judgment be the chief end of the teaching and the studying of literature?

The development of judgment must be a by-product of our teaching and studying literature, not the chief end, for when the development of judgment becomes the chief end of literary

pursuit, the result is not enriched insight into one's self as man, but snobbery. The snobbery takes the secular form and the religio-moral form.

The secular form of snobbery is cultivated in a thousand ladies' literary clubs, in hundreds of departments of literature, and annually at the meetings of the MLA. Judgment has turned to taste, the literary connoisseur being roughly equivalent to somebody who is careful in his choice of wines. Experts in literary fashion discuss what is chic in critical methodologies this season, review the latest trends in rewriting literary history, debate whose position in literary history is rising (Milton's) and whose falling (Donne's), and lament the future of the novel. It is possible to gain tenure at a fine university on the basis of such talk and writing; one then construes one's task as teaching the next generation of literati to think, talk, and write in the manner of connoisseurs. When forming taste becomes the chief end of literary studies, experiencing literature perforce becomes secondary. Then readers of literature no longer read works to become aesthetically involved in them, but to judge them by the currently fashionable criteria. This process of learning and teaching is all very brilliant and sophisticated, but the ultimate questions are inappropriate to it. Teaching literature becomes an esoteric, snobbish game. It would be as inappropriate to ask the literary connoisseur, "What can one learn about man from Dante's *Inferno*?" as to ask one's tennis partner, "What does this ball and racket have to do with the Synod of Dordt?"

But the religio-moral school of criticism also kills the serious study of literature. This school of literary criticism is always quick to say, "God judges the writer, but we must judge the work lest God judge us for not judging." These critics forget that an art work is an extension of a person in a way that an essay is not. Defining the spirit-direction of a work is an impossibly delicate business. Yet doing just that becomes the chief end of the religio-moral critic. With the threat to motivate him that he will be judged for not having judged every single literary work, he has no time to get involved within the work; besides involvement might make the literary judgment sentimental. Thus, after a learned discourse on the sin of accommodationism in literary criticism, one critic finally comes to naming the perfect Christian novel: *The Scarlet Letter*-in spite of the pantheism and humanism which are also part of Hawthorne's theme. Another critic condemns Eliot's *Wasteland* as "decadent paganism," even though Eliot was in the process of conversion, though not yet whole-heartedly committed to Christ when he wrote it. (Is it to be decadently pagan to be groping one's way toward Christ?) Still another critic condemns *The Narnia Chronicles* of C. S. Lewis because of the pervasive body/soul Platonism to be found in them. Three works judged, three million to go before we get judged for not judging. (Wasn't it said the other way? "Judge not that ye be not judged.")

Not only snobbery toward non-initiates, but snobbery toward literature is the fault of both the religio-moral critic and the secular critic. Both set themselves above the literature throughout the learning and teaching process in order that they may judge. Both manipulate literature. Both may learn a great deal about literature, but both learn little *through* literature. Neither allows room in his critical method for the aesthetic delight of discovering, simultaneously, a state of feeling in the piece of literature and a state of feeling in one's self. Both confine themselves to the joyless task of objective judging. The objectivity is precisely the downfall of both critics, for reading a poem without involvement is to miss the poem. Only within it, only in the aesthetic experience of a piece, does one have an accurate view of it.

Much of both methods can be salvaged for significant criticism, of course. But then involvement with the literature must be of a higher priority than the judging of it. *Then* both types of criticism lose their snobbishness.

The secular critic then no longer plays the game of approving and condemning by the currently fashionable criteria. Instead, he enters into a dialogue with the work. If the critic cannot enter into the work fully, he tries to explain why not; if he can, he tries to explain why. Nor are his explanations of why or why not limited to an analysis of the work alone; his explorations require as much healthy introspection as they do objective analysis. That is precisely the dialogue between the critic and the work. He abandons the stance of condescension toward the literary work. He allows the work to judge him as much as he judges the work.

The religio-moral critic must also learn to direct the judgment toward himself. Having discovered a state of feeling, both within a work and within himself, which state of feeling is incompatible with his Christianity, the religious critic confesses his discovery to God, is forgiven for being the kind of person he is, and is a better Christian. The religio-moral critic then condemns himself, the only kind of condemnation that can be resolved by grace.

As long as the religio-moral critic and the secular critic remain outside of the literature they investigate, so long the two critics are completely incompatible with each other. Not only are both snobbish toward the uninitiated and toward literature, but they are snobbish toward each other. But when the religio-moral critic turns his condemnation upon himself where the condemnation can be resolved, and when the secular critic stops playing the new models of criticism as though they were pinball machines and begins asking questions about his basic responses toward literature-then both critics can have dialogue with each other. For then both the religio-moral and the secular critic can agree that the following is the proper standard for literature: That literary work is best which involves the reader most, regardless of ideology, since discovering foreign ideologies within ourselves is part of the purpose of studying literature; that literary work is worst which involves the reader least.

I recommend, then, that literature be taught in our Christian schools for the purpose of involving students in each work of literature studied, and that the involvement be as intense as that work of literature allows, I recommend this method so that the Christian student may discover states of feeling within himself that he did not know were there. I recommend this method so that the Christian student may thank God for all the states of feeling revealed to him, those compatible with Christianity and those not compatible with Christianity. I recommend this method so that Christian students may confess their pollution to God with greater self-awareness, and that they may be forgiven. I recommend this method so that learning about one's self may not be inhibited by playing the games of literary criticism, both those of the secular and those of the religio-moral sort. I recommend this method that our students may have a richer sense of what man is and of what the ways of God with man are. I recommend this method that the infallible Word of God may confront the spirit of unbelief within the heart of Christian student and teacher, and that the Word may prevail. I recommend this method "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

LESSON ONE: Robert Herrick and the Easy Yoke

I teach the following lesson to Calvin College juniors and seniors in a course entitled "English Literature of the Seventeenth Century" in which the unit on Herrick follows units on John Donne, Herbert, and Ben Jonson.

The general objective of the unit on Herrick is to get students to take Herrick seriously as poet. The temptation is to see Herrick either as silly or as wicked. He is the easiest of all the writers studied so far in the course to understand; he is the most difficult to appreciate. The poems are slight and fragile; one cannot hold them without their flaking like spun sugar; one cannot concentrate on them long enough to appreciate how the form reinforces the content.

The objective for this first lesson of the unit is to demonstrate that there is a profound paradox in Herrick's work between form and content, and to resolve that paradox. The content urges the most carefree epicureanism; the form is closed, restrained, symmetrical, painstakingly crafted. The paradox of giddy content and severe form is precisely what gives the poems their energy.

The form of Herrick's poems is very much like that of Ben Jonson, from whom Herrick learned his technique. The difference is this: In every line he wrote, Ben Jonson's motivation is patriotic and moral. The patriotism and morality are to be seen most clearly in his poems of social comment like "Penshurst," but even his lyrics on the deaths of his children are self-conscious lessons to boorish Englishmen how a classicist in the tradition of Horace, Martial, and Catullus behaves in grief. Even his few imitations of Latin bawdy poems are lessons to boorish Englishmen in the civilized, disciplined methods of being bawdy. For in Jonson's view, the chief task of the poets in any society is to teach that society how to be ordered. The precise form in Jonson's poems is a reflection of his program of order for seventeenth-century English society. Herrick adopts Jonson's form without adopting Jonson's social program.

The fact that the students know Jonson's forms allows them to work from the known to the unknown. The assignment for this first lesson in the unit on Herrick is for students to analyze two poems by Herrick as they would analyze those poems if they had been written by Ben Jonson.

DELIGHT IN DISORDER

*A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonnesse:
A lawne about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring Lace, which here and there
Enthralls the Crimson Stomacher:
A cuffe neglectfull, and thereby
Ribbands to flow confusedly:
A winning wave (deserving Note)
In the tempestuous petticoat:
A careless shooe-string, in whose tye
I see a wilde civility:
Doe more bewitch me, then when Art
Is too precise in every part.*

UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES

*Whenas in silks my Julia goes
Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes
The liquefaction of her clothes.*

*Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave Vibration each way free;
O how that glittering taketh me!*

The class strategy is as follows: I. Formal analysis by students of both poems to show that the form is like Jonson's. II. Presentation of the paradox between form and content in Herrick's poems by comparing them in turn to Donne's, to Herbert's, and to Jonson's. III. A presentation of the Herrick biography, because only through it can the student resolve the paradox between the form and content. IV. Discussion of the paradox and the resolution of it. V. The question of religious direction. VI. Assignment.

I. Analysis of the Form of Herrick's Poems

You were given the assignment to analyze two of Herrick's poems as though they had been written by Ben Jonson. What did you come up with? (The following list of illustrations is not meant to be exhaustive. The symbols used are those of the International Phonetic Alphabet, which we do not use in class; in class we can simply utter the sound to identify it.)

A. Alliteration, assonance, and consonance

1. To give a sense of the line

- a. The alliteration and consonance of /d/ in the first line: "A sweet disorder in the dress.

- . . -

- b. The consonance of /n/ and /s/ in the second line: "Kindles in clothes a wantonnesse. . .

. -

- c. The alliteration of /k/ in the second line: "Kindles in clothes. . .

2. To give a sense of the couplet as a unit

- a. The alliteration of /d/ in the first line seems to be answered by the alliteration of /k/ in the second line:

disorder	dress
kindles	clothes

- b. Not only is the rhymed /e/ parallel in dress and *wantonnessee*, but the /a/ of order is in the same metrical position in the first line (the second accent) as the closely related /o/ of clothes in the second line. This assonance is satisfying because it links the two lines together into a unit.

3. To give a sense of the poem as unit

Notice the contrast of the two stanzas of "Julia." The rhyme words of stanza one: goes, flowes, and clothes; the rhyme words of stanza two: see, *free*, *mee*. The dominant consonant of stanza one is /l/, repeated at least two times per line; the dominant consonant of stanza two is /t/, also repeated at least twice per line, since /-tsicn/ is the seventeenth-century pronunciation of -tion and *each* has a pronounced /t/ until today: /it f/. The /l/ and /o/ of stanza one are mellow: the /t/ and /i/ (ee) of stanza two are crisp and high respectively. Herrick's manipulation of sound

helps him to define each stanza of "Julia" as a unit, and the contrast between the two stanzas helps to define the poem as a unit. This is more than onomatopoeia, sound echoing the sense for its own sake. This is also sound defining the form, both of the parts of the poem and of the whole.

B. Metrical exceptions

1. The metrical inversion of the first foot of line 2 of "Delight" calls attention to a fire image which might otherwise be overlooked: "*Kindles in* clothes a wantonnesse." In fact, one wonders whether the fire image of the second line is not perhaps related to the *bewitch* of the second to the last line, especially since all of the intervening lines are a somewhat parenthetical list supporting the argument of the first two lines and of the last two, and especially since witches are associated traditionally with fire (cauldrons on fires, brew cooking in the cauldrons, *etc.*).

2. Line 7 of "Delight" is a strong run-on to line 8, *thereby* straining to *get to Ribbands*; line 8 hangs as casually onto line 7 as the ribbons to the cuff. The inversion on *ribbands* breaks the metrical pattern just as the flowing ribbons break current fashion.

3. The shift from the mellowness of the first stanza of "Julia" to the desire of the second is signalled by the poem's only metrical inversion: "Next, when I cast

C. Summary

Herrick exploits sound for its own sake, for the creation of verse music. But Herrick also uses sound to define form: to contrast sections, to mark transitions, to high-light key words, to link the second line of a couplet to the first line, and to give shape to the poem as a whole. Herrick's craftsmanship is like Jonson's.

II. Presentation of the Paradox

A. Herrick's poems are no more bawdy, of course, than John Donne's bawdy poems. But John Donne's rugged rhythms and jagged metrics suit perfectly his libertine poems. In fact, after Donne's conversion his relationship to God is still complicated and paradoxical, and the jaggedness is still appropriate to his *Divine Poems*.

But Herrick, though his verse is erotic, writes such a highly-crafted kind of verse that even the metrical exceptions to a norm are expressive; one can hardly find the metrical norm in a poem by Donne. Donne lets the rugged music of his poetry take care of itself; Herrick refines and polishes his music, as the surviving second and third drafts of his poems show.

B. Herbert's poems are every bit as carefully crafted and as rich in verse music as anything written by Herrick. But the perfect metrical organization seem more appropriate for expressing Herbert's serenity than it does for expressing Herrick's typical playfulness tending toward bawdiness.

C. Jonson's poems are also beautifully crafted; the order of Jonson's verse is a reflection of the order he desires for all society. But Herrick has no such program of social order to justify his almost over-crafted, almost contrived, almost precious form.

D. A poet's voice is usually compatible with what he has to say: Donne's rugged metrics with his rugged unbelief and, later, with his rugged religion; Herbert's serene simplicity of tone

with his serene simplicity of faith; Jonson's ordered organization with his view of an ordered society. Only Herrick's poetry seems to be awry. He gives us content as bawdy as the bawdy poems of Donne, but the bawdiness is conveyed in a style as simple as Herbert's and as ordered as Jonson's. That conflict between form and content is the paradox of Herrick's verse.

III. Biography

Getting at the biography of writers is not the end of literary study, but often when literary study reaches an impasse, literary study is helped by biographical data.

A. Herrick's Rejection of the Goldsmith's Craft

Born in 1591 into a goldsmith's family, Robert was left fatherless a year later. Having finished his pre-university education at 16, he was apprenticed to his uncle, William Herrick, to become a goldsmith. Had Herrick not taken his pre-university training, he could have been apprenticed as early as 9; 16 was well within the legal limits, but Herrick was older than the usual apprentice. The preciousness of the metal and the pride of goldsmiths made the stipulations of the apprenticeship especially stringent. The average apprenticeship lasted only seven years, but goldsmiths demanded ten. A goldsmith was not considered competent unless he could produce filigree at once as dainty as lace and as sturdy as solid metal. Sir William Herrick had even higher standards than most goldsmiths; he had been made a knight because of the skill with which he had drilled a hole through a very large diamond belonging to King James I.

Besides striving to meet the standards of his craft in general and the standards of his uncle in particular, Herrick had to abide by the rules of any apprentice. Becoming an apprentice, he pledged that he would not marry during his apprenticeship, would not play cards, and would not commit fornication. He was expected to work twelve hours a day in summer, as long as there was light in winter, Sundays and Christmas were the only holidays, he was expressly forbidden to wear silks or jewels like the university students, and he promised not to go dancing. From 9 to 19 the stipulations would be bearable, but from 16 to 26 the stipulations were impossible.

After six years of the apprenticeship were over, it was evident to everyone that Robert would not be a goldsmith that his uncle would be proud of. By common consent Robert terminated the apprenticeship and went to St. John's College at Cambridge.

B. Herrick's Rejection of Law

The other students entering St. John's were all 16; Herrick was 22. They were all of a partying age; he of a marrying age, but marriage was just as much out of the question for a university student as for an apprentice.

Herrick formed only one strong friendship at Cambridge with a person his own age, John Weekes. Weekes was planning a career in the Anglican Church, and left after a year to study divinity at Oxford; at the same time Herrick transferred to Trinity Hall from Trinity College (no relationship) in order to study law. In 1620 Herrick got his M.A. in law, but he did not become a lawyer.

Herrick rejected law in favor of frequenting the London taverns as a hanger-on of the "Tribe of Ben." Here his literary education began. Every session with Ben Jonson and the tribe was what we could call today a Workshop for Writers or a Creative Writing Seminar. Not only did Herrick write; he got criticism, occasional praise, encouragement to write better.

C. Herrick and the Priesthood

But Herrick needed a job; he could not support himself through life as a hanger-on. And so he decided at last on a profession: the priesthood. On April 24, 1623, Robert Herrick and his Cambridge friend, John Weekes, were ordained deacons in the Anglican Church. John Weekes had studied divinity, Robert Herrick had not, but Bishop Thomas Dove was tricked, bribed, or perhaps simply content to overlook the lack on Herrick's part. The two vowed to the bishop that they were "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost ... to serve God. . ."

There was a customary waiting period of a year between ordination as deacon and ordination as priest, though in emergencies the Church allowed as little as three months to pass between the two ceremonies. George Herbert waited four years after being ordained as deacon before being ordained as priest; he needed to make his will perfect. No such qualms on the part of Herrick and Weekes. The day after they had been ordained deacons, they presented themselves again before Bishop Dove, and the cooperative bishop ordained them both priests in the Anglican Church. "We have good hope," the bishop read from the Prayer Book, "that you have well weighed and pondered these things with your selves, long before this time, and that you have clearly determined, by God's grace, to give yourselves wholly to this vocation. . . ."

So now Weekes and Herrick were priests, and Weekes secured a parish, but Herrick had none. His life changed little for the moment. Not that he was interested in the parish ministry just then. He was waiting for the opportunity to be named chaplain to some nobleman: the food would be good, the company excellent, the duties slight, and nobleman and chaplain would agree to be tolerant of one another's morality.

Such an opportunity presented itself in the spring of 1627, four years after ordination. The First Duke of Buckingham, military opportunist and court butterfly, took on Herrick as a chaplain. Buckingham had helped to start a war with Spain in 1625 and, though that war ended in a draw, Buckingham had been chief commander. Now, in June, 1627, Buckingham was planning a war with France to release the beleaguered Huguenots on the Isle of Rhe, off the French coast. The vainglorious Buckingham was to go as both admiral and general, commanding both the operations on sea and land. It was on this expedition that Herrick went with Buckingham as personal chaplain, and Herrick persuaded Buckingham to take John Weekes as chaplain to the troops, Weekes needing to secure leave of absence from his Parish in order to join the expedition.

The war with the French was a disaster. The English troops were badly managed, the landing at the island was bungled, bread ran out soon (there was wheat enough, but nobody had brought grinders to turn it into flour), sickness increased, there was talk of mutiny, the little popular support back in England was dwindling, and so, by October, 1627, the defeated Englishmen set sail for home. Those who survived the battles were now beset by a sea storm in which the smaller ships were wrecked. Only one-third of those who set out from England now returned.

Buckingham's vaingloriousness, opportunism, and bad management were now a national scandal. Families had lost fathers, sons, and brothers, and popular opinion was hostile against the Duke. Friends of Buckingham were killed in London and a year after his return to England Buckingham himself was killed by one of his own discontented officers.

So again Herrick's future was uncertain. Any self-respecting nobleman would not take on Buckingham's left-over chaplain; any friend of Buckingham was not safe in London; the seamy side of Herrick's ordination was an embarrassment to the Anglican Church, now that the

Buckingham enterprise and everything related to it had become a scandal. King Charles, the Church, and Herrick himself wanted nothing more than to cover up the gossip. There was no undoing Herrick's ordination without losing face, so in September, 1630, Herrick was installed rector in Dean Prior, a village in far-away, rural Devonshire. It was the same month in which George Herbert lay prostrate before the altar in Bernerton, agonizing over his own unworthiness for the priesthood.

Even a hundred years after Herrick's arrival in Dean Prior, there were still no carriages in Devonshire; the roads were too narrow and hilly for carriages. Devonshire had no great landowners; small country gentlemen passed for nobility. The country girls were a far cry from the Julia who swishes through Herrick's poetry in silks. The country folk generally bored the thoroughly urban Herrick; his chief society included, though not at the same time, an orphan lamb which he raised, a cat, a reliable hen, a noisy goose, a pet pig which he taught to drink from a tankard, a spaniel named Tracy, a pet sparrow named Phil, and a housekeeper named Prudence Baldwin. "Prue" and her boorishness amused Herrick, but there was no romantic relationship or sexual indiscretion-not in a parish like Dean Prior!

*More disco n tents I never had
Since I was borne than here;
Where I have been, and still am sad,
In this dull Devonshire.*

At last Herrick could abide it no longer. He set out for London without the permission of his bishop. The residents of Dean Prior came to church and there was no priest to lead the service; Herrick was reported to the bishop; the year of his defection was 1640, just one decade after his installation. The church tracked him to the Westminster section of London, where he was living close to a Miss Thomasin Parsons, mother of an illegitimate child, though there is no evidence that the illegitimate child was Herrick's. The only place Robert could earn his living honorably was as clergyman in Dean Prior; the sophisticated Thomasin considered Dean Prior to be the absolute end of earth. So Herrick abandoned his courtship in London and returned to his mission at Dean Prior, alone.

This time his stay was terminated by the Puritan victory in the English Civil War. In 1647 every other dedicated Anglican minister was sad and chagrined to be turned out of his parish and to make way for his Puritan substitute, but Herrick felt no sadness and chagrin. He tripped off merrily to London and began to make arrangements for publishing his book of collected poems, *Hesperides*. The publisher was aghast that a clergyman should write only bawdy poems, and persuaded Herrick that he would publish the volume only if there were a recantation added to it as well as a number of pious pieces. So Herrick set about rhyming John Gregory's *Notes and Observations Upon Some Passages of Scripture*, added two dozen original pious pieces written the last minute, produced a recantation "For Those my unbaptized Rhimes, / Writ in my wild unhallowed Times . . ." gave the title *His Noble Numbers* to the pious section of his book, and thus in 1648 had his book accepted for publication.

In June, 1660, a month after the coronation of King Charles II, Herrick, now 70, returned to Dean Prior as Anglican vicar. It was as though he had, never left. Prue Baldwin was still alive and returned to the vicarage as housekeeper. The only thing that had changed was that Herrick was too old to write more poetry. After fourteen additional years of impeccable service as vicar of Dean Prior, he died.

At the end of *Hesperides*, before *His Noble Numbers*, Herrick had placed this couplet: "To his Book's end this last line he'd have placed:/ *Jocund his muse was; but his Life was chaste.*"

IV. Discussion of the Paradox

Does the biography do anything to explain the paradox of Herrick's poetry: the libertine content and the disciplined form? (Any comments on the subject are allowed, but certainly these points should be mentioned.)

A. The craft of goldsmith was a highly demanding craft. Even though Herrick was never a master goldsmith, he no doubt learned from his apprenticeship something about the discipline necessary to produce significant form.

B. The erotic poems are wishes; they do not reflect Herrick's experiences. Circumstances forced Herrick to be celibate. As apprentice, he was allowed no contact with women; as student, convention decreed that he could not marry; as a lawyer without a practice and as a follower of the "tribe of Ben," he had no money to support a wife; as a chaplain to Buckingham for a brief time, he was either off at war or back home in such disgrace that nobody would have him; in Dean Prior the women were all too unsophisticated for him to live with. Herrick wrote his poems as sublimation, coping with sex without participating in it.

C. Given how secular Herrick was about assuming his religious vows, one is impressed with how well he coped with his priestly duties. There was the lapse, of course; Herrick was away from his parish without leave for a good part of the year 1640. But before his defection he had put in a full decade of impeccable service, after the defection six years of service until the Puritan interlude, and after the Restoration fourteen years of service. Herrick rendered thirty years of service to the Anglican Church, in a rural community which he loathed, and he rendered the service without ever feeling particularly called to it. Pastors with a more urgent sense of calling to their ministries have been known to be less enduring about fulfilling their missions than Herrick.

D. Against the background of the biography, the poems do not look like raw bawdiness. The poems have the same flavor as Herrick's biography: bawdiness restrained - barely restrained, but restrained nevertheless. The poems are at once outlets for Herrick's sexual energies, but also the simultaneous curbing of those same sexual energies. The bawdy content and the severe form of the poems are perfectly appropriate to each other. The paradox is resolved.

V. The Question of Religious Direction

A. Christians with more articulate professions of their faith than Herrick have been less discreet than he, less disciplined in their sexuality, less self-ironic about the burdens they had to bear, less faithful in discharging their duties. While part of us wants to condemn Herrick for palming off his slick religious poems as genuine, another part of us wants to celebrate Herrick's triumph over his sexual dilemma.

B. "To choose what is difficult all one's days," says Auden, "As if it were easy: that is faith." Auden's definition of faith is too narrow, of course; the definitions of Hebrews 11 and Q&A 21 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* are more accurate, but Auden's definition of faith prompts the following kinds of questions: Would Herrick have been able to do what was so difficult as though it were the merest bagatelle, would he have been able to do that if he had not been a Christian? Would he have endured his enforced celibacy with such a jocund mood if the Christian faith had not motivated him?

C. The Christian gospel, if it is embodied in the poems at all, is expressed in the disciplined form more than in the verbal content; it certainly is a strange vehicle for the Christian gospel, far too subtle; few sinners, I am sure, have been moved by Herrick's poems to respond to God in faith and obedience. Certainly one would not hold up Herrick's poetry as a model for all Christian writers to follow.

But neither can we say that the religious direction of the poems is unambiguously Devilward. A "direction" need not be the full achievement of the goal. Herrick's poems are certainly no more than minimal statements of the Christian faith, but even the saintly George Herbert's poems do not do full justice to their lofty Christian themes. Is it impossible that Herrick's poems are the results of the motions of grace? Is His *muse was jocund; but his life was chaste* necessarily a Devil-directed utterance? Would not His *life was jocund; but his muse was chaste* be far worse? Or are Christians confined to saying His *muse was chaste; and his life was chaste*?

Once inside of Herrick's poems, one is faced with the anguished question mark of God's strange ways with man. To call out the correct religious direction of Herrick's poems is a difficult matter. It isn't just one of your holiday games.

VI. Assignment

We ask the same questions next time in the context of Herrick's *carpe them* poems: "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time," "Corinna's Going a Maying," and "To Dianeme." Herrick gives his sadness, his sense that life has passed him by, the same unsentimental expression he gives his erotic dilemma. Does Matthew 11:30 apply to Herrick's poetry?

LESSON TWO: George Herbert and the Poetry of Polemics

The following lesson is taught regularly to juniors and seniors at Calvin College in the course entitled "English Literature of the Seventeenth Century" in which course a unit on the poetry of George Herbert follows a unit on the poetry of John Donne. The objective of the two units together is to get the students to appreciate both the poems of Donne and of Herbert, different as the poems of one are from the poems of the other. For while both poets were orthodox Christians, their sensibilities were quite different. Donne was the radical convert and Herbert the gradually progressing convert. Donne was paradoxical and troubled about his faith; Herbert grew more and more serene. Donne was concerned with theology and commitment, but comparatively little with liturgy; Herbert was fulfilled by the liturgy of the church as a vehicle for theology and as an expression of commitment. Though both were high-church Anglicans, Donne was accidentally so, Herbert essentially so. One of the inescapable, non-literary, moral by-products of the two units together will be the student's discovery that religious orthodoxy does not mean

uniformity in temperament, nor in life styles, nor in the experience of one's faith, nor in self-expression, nor in art.

One could simply teach Herbert's poetry as a foil to Donne's. The sense of crisis in Donne's poems appeals immediately to the existentialist in every twentieth-century student; the quietness of Herbert's poems is harder for today's student to experience. The taste for Donne's poems is almost automatic upon exposure; the taste for Herbert's poems is almost always an acquired taste. But teaching Herbert's poetry as a foil to Donne's would not be fair to Herbert's poetry and would not be fair to the students. Just as students discover within themselves the same religious anxieties which they discover in Donne's poems, so they must learn to discover within themselves the same rare quietness which they discover in Herbert's poems. The discovery about Herbert's quietness is harder to make than the discovery about Donne's anxiety, and precisely for that reason the discovery about Herbert is the more valuable. Only after such aesthetic discovery of the poems of both Herbert and Donne are students really ready to compare. The unit on Herbert, therefore, begins by concentrating on discovering the ethos of his poetry and postpones the statements of preference until later, although from the very first lesson in the unit on Herbert students are urged to make descriptive comparisons, free from all implications of preference.

For this first class in the unit on Herbert the students have been assigned to study the biographical sketch of Herbert in the text; only such biographical data as are germane to the poem being discussed in class will be introduced into the lesson. The objective of this hour is to get students to feel their way into Herbert's sensibility through a presentation of his poem "Love

The strategy of the lesson is as follows: I. To trap the students into a discussion of the Lord's Supper and its meanings among Christians, including an apparent ambiguity in the Christian Reformed Communion Form. This controversy is opened in part for its own sake, in part to resolve some anti-Anglican feelings that may stand in the way of a Christian Reformed student's getting into Herbert's poem, and to provide the background to the polemical burden of the poem. II. To explicate Herbert's poem on the Lord's Supper. Later in the unit students will explicate poems by Herbert, but it is best to begin with a demonstration since Herbert's poems are so foreign to contemporary sensibility. Therefore, the teacher explicates. III. To ask students, "How can you tell that Donne did not write this poem?" This is the beginning of the descriptive comparison which will metamorphose in later lessons into the question: "Which do you prefer: Herbert or Donne?" At this point the question is asked mainly to test how much of Herbert's sensibility has come across through the explication of "Love." IV. To give the assignment, which is for students to analyze three poems by Herbert, just as we have analyzed "Love" in class; at the next class session we will explicate those three poems by the discussion method.

1. Discussion of the Communion

When the class comes into the room, three Communion formularies are on the board:

A. *Hoc meum corpus est.*

B. The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Eat and drink in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.

C. The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken unto a complete remission of all our sins."

The instructor begins the discussion by saying: "George Herbert partook and administered Communion by formulary B, the formulary of the Anglican Church. Is it more like A or like C?"

During the brief discussion that follows, any student may say whatever he pleases about the Communion, but the discussion will not be terminated until the following points are established and understood:

A. The Anglican formulary can be read with a high-church emphasis, a lower-church emphasis, and a low-church emphasis. The high-church priest announces, "The body and blood of our Lord, . . ." the remainder trailing off into incomprehensibility. The lower-church priest emphasizes the presence of Christ in the hearts of the believers: "Feed on him in thine heart, by faith, with thanksgiving." The low-church priest takes the Zwingli interpretation of Communion, and emphasizes the memorial: "Eat and drink in remembrance that Christ died for thee." That Herbert was Anglican says nothing about how he regarded the Communion.

B. Formulary C, the Reformed formulary, tends toward the Zwingli interpretation of Communion-memorial: ". . . remember and believe. - . ." Yet there are also lines in the Reformed Communion Service which point toward the "real presence" of Christ at Communion: "I Christ ... nourish and refresh your hungry and thirsty souls with my crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life These lines seem to emphasize the presence of Christ in the hearts of believers at Communion, and are similar to "feed on him in thine heart, by faith, with thanksgiving" of the Anglicans. Besides, Calvin said in the Institutes that while Christ is always present, "in the sacred supper he exhibits himself present in a peculiar manner.... (Book IV, Ch. XVII, Par. XXXI-XXXIV). Closed Communion and close Communion are usually linked to high-church traditions; a memorial service is open to the public, but when the real and peculiar presence of Christ is concerned, strict Communion becomes important. Yet, on the Zwingli side, a more recent tradition, Good Friday Communion, tends toward the memorial idea.

So in our own Christian Reformed Church we bring under the umbrella of a single Communion form at least two positions on the "real presence": The "memorial" position of Zwingli and the special presence of Christ in the hearts of believers at the time of Communion, the position of Calvin.

C. I want a show of hands at some point during the discussion as to which students take a Zwingli memorial position and as to which students take a Calvinistic real-presence position. I insist on the vote to show that at least two points toward Communion are represented within the Christian Reformed Church. The vote precludes the stock anti-Anglican argument: the Anglican Church is an uneasy alliance of disparate faiths and the Anglican forms are political documents of wicked synods which compromised principle to please everybody. Anybody who knows anything about any synod will have to admit that the Anglican Church is no exception when it comes to compromise. In fact, there is no other way of avoiding schism.

11. Explication of the Poem

The question "Is the Anglican Communion formulary more like the Roman Catholic formulary or more like the Reformed formulary?" must be changed, of course, since it can be interpreted as meaning the same as either. The question for Herbert needs to be changed to this: "Did Herbert construe the Anglican formulary as Catholic or as Protestant?"

That kind of question is not hard to answer, since Herbert's poems are almost all concerned with liturgy. The title of his collection is *The Temple*, and almost every poem needs to be referred to the liturgy of the temple in order to be understood. "Love" is such a poem.

*Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guiltie of dust and sinne.*

The words *dust* and *sinne* are significant, and both have special meaning for Herbert. An Elizabethan gentleman and a university MA, Herbert was even more fond of clothes than the usual gentleman and MA. When he took vows as a country clergyman, he had to give up fashionable clothes among other things—not such a great sacrifice for most people, but for Herbert an enormous sacrifice. That the guest is guilty of dust is only one of his many references to clothes. Even after he gave up his fine clothes, he found ways to sublimate his interest in clothes in his religious verse.

The *sinne* for which Herbert suffered such remorse was his breaking of a vow. He had made a vow to become a clergyman, but after graduation from Cambridge, he had stayed on at the school as an administrator, allowing himself to be diverted from his vow. When he came to ordination a decade later than he had expected, he came with a sense of being chief of sinners and the least of saints. When cathedral positions in urban centers were suggested to him, he refused them in favor of a country parish, a small church in Bemerton near Salisbury. On the morning of his ordination the people of Bemerton gathered around the church to congratulate their new minister when he came out of the church. Several hours passed, the crowd grew restless, and a brave parishioner stepped to the window to peek. The officiating bishop was asleep in his chair, but Herbert was prostrate before the altar, trying to resolve the guilt for what he considered to be the greatest of all sins: breaking a vow. The sins of thieves and lechers he considered a bagatelle, a momentary response to a temptation. But his breaking of a vow had been a deliberate defiance of God.

*But quick-eye's Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lackd any thing.*

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:

The simplicity of Herbert's attitude toward himself and God is what amazes the reader. It is like the simplicity of a child, but it is not the simplicity of a child. It is the simplicity of a Cambridge M.A. who had been allured by the glitter of the world. He was a highly complex person who achieved simplicity by religious discipline.

He was, for instance, among his other worldly positions at Cambridge during the years of what he considered his apostasy, orator for the university. He drafted all of the ceremonial Latin letters that the University sent to Oxford, to universities on the continent, and to the court. For instance, he wrote the ceremonial letter thanking King James in the name of the university for the first copy of the first edition of the King James Bible. From a competent Latinist one would expect a Latinate diction in a poem, especially a poem about the Communion: transubstantiation, consubstantiation, efficacy, elements, etc. The more Latinate the English style of a writer is, the more pompous and aloof; the Latinate words were brought into the language by scholars, and retain some odor of ink, while the native Anglo-Saxon words are the simple words, rich in connotation. An average English style, neither noticeably Latinate nor Germanic, has between 60

percent and 70 percent Anglo-Saxon words and between 30 per cent and 40 per cent Latinate words. Notice that in Herbert's poem, the diction is over 90 per cent Anglo-Saxon. He was not trying consciously for such a high concentration of Anglo-Saxon words, of course; but the high concentration of Anglo-Saxon words is an index to the simplicity Herbert is consciously striving for, not only in poetry but in life. Listen to the simple diction. Love, the gracious host has just asked what the banquet guest lacks, and the guest answers that he lacks a proper self to bring to the banquet.

*A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?*

The words are exquisitely simple, but Herbert's problem is complex, and the simple words are full to their semantic capacity. *Unkinde*, for instance, does not refer only to "lack of gentleness" but also to "unnaturalness" (OED), in this case Herbert's perversity in being diverted from his vow. Another example of expressive simplicity is the image of sight. The guest does not have look at the host, and there is the hint that the guest's besetting sin was a roving eye for the world's glitter. The host's question, "Who made the eyes but P" suggests that the host understands and pardons the roving eye, and his understanding elicits the guest's full-blown confession:

*Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
My deare, then I will serve.*

You catch, of course, the echo of the returning prodigal: "Make me, I pray thee, as one of thy hired servants." Do you also catch Herbert's willingness to serve Communion to others—a way of atoning by works for his sin—but his inability to accept the Communion for himself?

But Herbert does not leave that problem unresolved:

*You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.*

To understand how Herbert's poems work, it is useful to know that Herbert called them "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that had passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect peace." That description is part of the cover letter for *The Temple*; as he lay dying, Herbert sent book and letter to his friend, Nicholas Farrer. His description of the poems, is probably correct; each poem solves a problem. And most of the poems as one would expect in a collection entitled *The Temple*, turn on the liturgy.

When Love says, "You must sit down ... and taste my meat," it is obviously the high-church resolution. *Flesh* would have been more appropriate for the high-church interpretation than *meat*,

but *flesh* would not have suited the narrative; *food* would have been right for the narrative, but would not have suited the high-church theology. *Meat* is the perfect solution because it means both *food* and *flesh*, suiting both narrative and theology.

"You must sit down ... and taste my meat" is the equivalent of: "Do this.... This is my body." Herbert takes an unambiguous position for the high church view of Communion. For all of his gentleness, Herbert takes a stand on an issue for which blood was repeatedly spilled in the early seventeenth century.

Not only the last part of the poem is polemical. Approaching the poem with the polemical burden in mind, one finds the eye image of "I dare not look on thee." The low-church, Zwingli view of the communion as a memorial is a vivid remembering, a seeing of the crucifixion of Christ with the eye of faith. Herbert rejects the low-church position.

To be polemic one indeed must both affirm and reject. But look at the tone in which Herbert does his polemics. He rejects the low-church position, but he goes out of his way to make the point that he is not even good enough to partake of Communion in the freer, more Zwinglian memorial. This is not the holier-than-thou tone, in which polemics are so often cast. Herbert construes "This is my body" as Christ's command: "You must. . . ." There is only obedience to what he construes as Christ's literal command, not pride.

Herbert's high-church biases are apparent in almost all the poems of *The Temple*. There is no overlooking his pro-Catholic biases. Yet Richard Baxter, the arch-puritan, whom nobody would accuse of watering down his low-church convictions, said of Herbert: "Herbert speaks to God like one who really believeth a God, and whose business in the world is most with God." Now at the beginning of this hour we had a heated discussion between the middle position ("Real presence of Christ in the hearts of believers") and the low position ("memorial") on the Communion, both positions being represented in the Christian Reformed Church. That difference is not nearly so great as the difference between high and low, which is the difference between Herbert and Baxter. It is unlikely that Baxter simply overlooked Herbert's high-churchmanship, but he recognized that the faith behind Herbert's high-churchmanship was essentially a genuine relationship between Herbert and God. We are in a position like Baxter's. Few here would agree with Herbert's high-churchmanship, but few will also argue that Herbert's faith is not the real thing.

111. The Descriptive Comparison

"How can you tell that Donne did not write this poem?" Any answers are allowed, but the following ones must be mentioned by students spontaneously or otherwise elicited:

- A. Donne was not interested in clothes.
- B. Donne's diction is not this simple; it would be more Latinate.
- C. Donne's resolution would be rhetorical; the issue would not be settled.
- D. Donne exploits images, not narratives.
- E. Donne's position is rarely to be equated with the position of a party. Donne's polemics inveigh against all sides and parties, as in Satire III.
- F. Donne's guilt is for such explicitly carnal sins; Herbert's guilt is more for lack of zeal. Herbert's guilt is not so much for what he has done, but for what he is.
- G. Donne is full of imagistic fireworks; he anticipates an audience to catch on to all of it; Herbert's poems are private expressions.

IV. The Assignment

A. Nobody can make an aesthetic judgment about a work if he has not picked up its essential tone. We were concerned today with describing the tone of the lyric so that you could pick it up. Now we are ready to begin aesthetic judgment. For next time compare "Love" with any Holy Sonnet by John Donne and decide which one is the most aesthetically satisfying to you.

B. Also be prepared to explicate the following three poems by Herbert: "Prayer," "The Pulley," and "The Collar." We will explicate those three poems in class next time, all of the comments coming from you.

C. Be prepared to discuss which of the four poems by Herbert satisfies you most.