

Essay of Argumentation

Satire: a Christian's Language?



Level 10

Satire is the literary art of exposing human folly or vice through rebuke or ridicule. Some believe that as such, Christians should not employ this technique. However, others take the position that this is a credible way for Christians to express themselves.

The main reason supporting the Christian writer's use of satire is the example of Jesus, who used it continually against human folly, but especially against the pompous, legalistic Pharisees. Matthew 23 provides some choice examples of the Lord's informal satiric style: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are." (Matthew 23:15) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead man's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." (Matthew 23:27-28) More traditional satire is found in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14, and in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Obviously, Christ did not shy away from using satire, and neither should we. God the Father also makes use of rebuke and satire. "You rebuke the arrogant, who are cursed and who stray from your commands." (Psalm 119:21) He commands us to do the same to others as well. "So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." (Luke 17:3) "Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning." (1 Timothy 5:20) "This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in their faith." (Titus 1:13)

The introduction explains the two options, but it does not clearly assert the writer's proposition.

It would be good to explain the biblical quotes. How are they examples of satire?



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Granted, there are some Scriptural objections to be raised against satire. God has commanded us to refrain from harsh dealings with others. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Proverbs 15:1) “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4:29) The Proverbs passage also highlights the negative effects that “banging people over the head” will take on our Christian witness. Satire of elders is clearly inappropriate: “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father.” (1 Timothy 5:1a) The key to this debate is how the satire is presented. Christians must be sure that their rebuke comes out of love for the person, and that it ultimately builds up the recipient.

Instead of saying that the “examples and commands” support your point, provide some of those examples or commands.

Is satire an appropriate way for Christians to write or speak? I believe that if done correctly, one should not hesitate to use it to correct and discipline others. The examples and commands of Christ and the Father amply support this view.