

IBRI...Satire and Fantasy

III. Satire and Fantasy...The Modus Operandi

We may treat both of our subjects under one heading in this discussion. The Question is...How do they work? How are they employed? Our method will sketch three of the works..but in very rapid fashion.

A. The Valiant Papers

An account of the finding and translating of a report prepared by a Guardian Angel and left (accidentally!) in the Cleveland, Ohio, bus terminal. The account is often satirical in portraiture of Christian life and activity, values and expressions. We are only left to wonder what the home office would think of a guardian angel who lost his report! But the point of satire is to make a total impression and if there is something in the background that takes too much time to develop...just drop it.

B. Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Lemuel Gulliver

Written in four parts, the Travels all find Gulliver at sea for some reason, lost for some reason, and found eventually in a strange place. Some of his travels then become intentional but a strong misfortune is a balancing destiny that brings him to the particular levels. Enormous imagination is shown by Swift in the creation of places. The situations suddenly become very much like settings in England...and the attempts of Gulliver to show the "adequacy" of English law and custom to some of the dubious leaders of other states are almost unnerving. Pronouncing Swift's imagined people and places is quite a chore as well. Eventually Gulliver lives among a people of rational horses and in spite of eventual mistreatment returns to his homeland with a deep distrust in people and a great fondness for horses with home he spends his remaining days. It is, as one reviewer saw is.."a diabolical indictment of man's folly, oppression, and animalism, of man's education, politics, wars, and commerce."

C. The Philippian Fragment

At a conference of Archaeologists in Baltimore, Miller tells us that he met "Helmut Niedegger", of the Library in Leipzig, and from him learned of an ancient document kept in a monastery on Coos in the Mediterranean. Niedegger did not have the document, indeed had never seen it, but had academic reasons for believe it to be there. As one might suspect, Miller later visited the island and in one of those rare providential moments came on the document. The Letter is then given as the text of the book and it purports to show something of developments in the church of Philippi in the post-apostolic period. Eusebius, the newly appointed bishop of Philippi, is writing Clement, pastor of Coos and the content delineates declension, hypocrisy, testimony and persecution in the church.

D. Summary: Satire and fantasy work like this or something like this:

1. A debatable subject is chosen on which differences of opinion are sharp and clear.
2. It is put into a framework that is hypothetical.
3. An account is told in the hypothetical that illumines the actual

*Tale of the
Tub.*

source