

It is a delight to see a truly gifted thinker at work. It is doubly delightful when the thinker, such as Nicholas Lash, is obviously a person of deep spiritual sensitivity committed to good theology precisely because bad theology leads to deformed Christian practice. Thus it is, he suggests in dialogue with those who study religious questions using the techniques of physical science, "an implication of the Christian doctrine of God"—which emphasizes the unity of divine action and God's presence everywhere—"that we are as close to the heart of the sense of creation in considering and responding to an act of human kindness as in attending to the fundamental physical structures and initial conditions of the world" (92).

Nicholas Lash is a passionate man of faith who is at least as critical of his own Roman Catholic community as of any other, a prodigiously learned and erudite scholar, a determined advocate of God's peace and justice, and a consummate craftsman of beautiful and lucid prose. While I do not always agree with Lash, I do find that he is always interesting and stimulating. I have found new opportunities to deepen one's understanding of God's way with the world. In addition, I have discovered that to learn from him, even to wrestle with him, is always to engage with an amazingly lively mind and heart and to be engaged in a conversation about the things that matter most with a committed herald of the Gospel.

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GARY CHARTIER

Lockerbie, D. Bruce. *Dismissing God: Modern Writers' Struggle Against Religion*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. 254 pp. \$15.99.

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." A central tenet of the "new criticism," the dominant approach to literary study from the thirties through the seventies, was that an author's life is not to be considered when analyzing that author's work. The literary work (or fruit) speaks for the author, not the author for the work. However, Jesus also said, "A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit," and there is, today, more openness to admitting biography as evidence in literary analysis. D. Bruce Lockerbie's *Dismissing God* is an outstanding example of this, exploring the dismissal of God by a collection of major literary figures and its effect on their work. The book, thought-provoking and illuminating, deserves a reading by any theologian interested in how religion influences literature and how literature influences popular religious beliefs.

There has long been, among many English teachers at Christian colleges, a covert and perhaps unexamined assumption that art exists for art's sake, that literary beauty is good in itself and justifies to a great extent the study of works inimical to holy living and submission to God. Teachers may avoid assigning works containing profanity or pornography, yet teach with easy conscience, and without exploration or comment, works that present rebellion against God in an attractive light.

Lockerbie does not suggest that these works should not be taught. He shows, rather, the extent to which the full or partial rejection of God has influenced the work of various authors. He shows that this is a fertile and valid area of study, indeed crucial to understanding this literature. If his method were adopted in Christian colleges, students would receive great benefit.

Drawing primarily from biographies and letters, Lockerbie reveals the development of the disbelief or unbelief in his authors and the effect on their work. This is not, for the most part, information found in the usual introductions in anthologies, and it is enlightening. It is especially interesting to note how many of these authors had relatives who were pastors, or attended church-related schools, attended evangelistic campaigns, or had parents who were devout. Every one of these authors had documented opportunities to accept Christ, yet chose to turn away.

Lockerbie begins with Matthew Arnold, an influential Victorian poet and critic whose father was a notable educator and Christian humanist. Arnold was hungry for faith, yet found it stripped from him by the scientific revolution ushered in by Darwin and Huxley and the concomitant "scientific" theological revolution. The American poet, Emily Dickinson, attended church regularly, had devout parents, yet was one of the few women in her year at Mount Holyoke who did not surrender to God. For the rest of her life she flirted with God, yet could never quite give in to him. Walt Whitman, considered by many to be America's poet, often attended church as a boy but came to worship and celebrate himself in verse. His contemporary, Ralph Waldo Emerson, studied theology at Harvard, but soon after rejected all of Christianity but Sunday observance and preaching, preferring "self-reliance" and ideas about God and the afterlife that he borrowed from India. Emerson's essays had an immense influence on nineteenth-century American society, and continue to live on in Theosophy and New Age ideas.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of *The Scarlet Letter*, wrote constantly about the religion of his Calvinist forebears (one of whom was a judge in the Salem witchcraft trials), but found their faith dour and harsh. His friend, Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick*, was raised in the Reformed Church and read deeply in the Bible, but lost his respect for Christianity when he watched how Congregational missionaries in Polynesia treated the natives. The father of Stephen Crane, author of *Red Badge of Courage*, was a Methodist preacher, but Crane rebelled against God at a young age and never came back, writing prose and poetry in which humans live in a cold, uncaring universe. Mark Twain, Lockerbie shows, saw so much religious hypocrisy around him that he turned to a belief in industrial progress as humanity's best hope for salvation, yet retained a profound sense of humanity's total depravity.

Lockerbie goes on to write of those he calls "The English Neo-Pagans," poets such as William Blake, Percy Shelley, William Morris, Edward FitzGerald, A. C. Swinburne, William Henley, and Walter Pater. He then analyzes Thomas Hardy, who wanted to become a priest but ended up an agnostic, and W. B. Yeats, the poet who combined the study of the Bible with the study of the occult, ending up with a syncretic faith which was not Christian. James Joyce, Lockerbie shows, wanted to be a priest, while D. H. Lawrence, author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was raised by a God-fearing mother, but both turned to the sexual nature for answers. Lockerbie devotes a chapter to F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, very different writers who both drowned out God with drink. Fitzgerald was born into a household of nominal Catholics, while Hemingway accepted Christianity as a boy, but turned to a belief in "rugged masculinity" as he grew up. Following a chapter on Nietzsche, Sartre, and Camus, Lockerbie ends with a rather weak chapter about literature since the Holocaust, which he

characterizes as showing a "religion essentially ignored as irrelevant, religion regarded with condescension and contempt as if religion had never existed" (225).

If I were teaching a course in literary aesthetics at a Christian college, *Dismissing God* would be a required text (along with Gene Edward Veith, Jr.'s *Reading Between the Lines: A Christian Guide to Literature*). I would also recommend it as a required text in American literature classes (it primarily covers American authors). Indeed, any literate reader could benefit from this book. Lockerbie is a sensitive reader of poetry, and he writes gracefully.

What does it do to the beliefs of students when so many of the major literary figures they study have rejected God? English majors often virtually worship literature, soak up ideas, adopt borrowed postures as their own. Can English teachers fairly claim that these authors' dismissal of God does not affect students? I think not. To my mind, Lockerbie's failure to conclude with a chapter devoted to this question weakens his book. It is interesting and useful as it is, but its conclusion is too brief, even though I agree with his closing sentence: "Can there be anything more ironic than to have given one's intellectual and moral energies to the extirpation of the only truth that matters?"

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ED CHRISTIAN

Mackey, James, ed. *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993. 432 pp. Paper, \$34.95.

In his introduction, James Mackey claims that this collection of essays is intended to serve as "a map for beginners" commencing research on Celtic Christianity, an introduction to its major locations, events, and characters.

If the reader assumes from this that the book might serve as some sort of "handy introduction" to the Celtic Christianity prevalent in Britain and Ireland before the arrival of Pope Gregory's "official" missionary, Augustine Canterbury, in 698, then he or she is going to be very disappointed. It is a disparate collection of essays, of varying quality, which represent vignettes on aspects of Christianity in Ireland, Wales, and Scotland from the birth of Patrick (c. 390) to the eighteenth-century Welsh Revival.

The only adequate window on Celtic beginnings is provided by R. P. C. Hanson in his essay, "The Mission of St. Patrick" (22-44). However, there is no equivalent essay on St. Ninian's work in Strathclyde, the Mission of St. Columba, the influence of the Celts of Lindisfarne, or the Mission of St. David in Wales. The essays on "Protestantism and Scottish Highland Culture" and "Medieval Wales and the Reformation" are of value, but do not adequately establish links with the distinctive Celtic Christianity prevalent in the first six centuries of the Christian era. Even in the overview of the theology of the Celts given by M. Forthomme Nicholson (386-413), there is only one reference to Columba and that, a flippant one. "Windows on Celtic Lands over Eighteen Centuries" would not have been a penny-catching title, but would have given a more accurate reflection of the book's contents.

In his Introduction (5) Mackey refers to the Celts' having held out longest