



Characters in Search of Their Author: The Gifford Lectures, 1999-2000

Ralph McInerny

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Is the conviction that there is a God the default position of the human mind? This is the suggestion of Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*, as well as Cardinal Newman and even St. Thomas Aquinas. But however natural it is for human beings to acknowledge their maker, it seems almost as natural to throw up obstacles between man and God. *Characters in Search of Their Author*, the Gifford Lectures delivered by Ralph McInerny in Glasgow in 1999–2000, is devoted to clearing away some of these impediments, mainly those fashioned by philosophers.

The first series of lectures traces the progressive dismissal of natural theology by modern and contemporary philosophers. Are all intellectual difficulties intellectual in origin? McInerny invites his reader to consider the ordinary acknowledgment or denial of God as analogous to falling into or out of love. The upshot may be a simple judgment, but the way to it is through the emotions and types of discourse that seldom appear in logic books.

The recovery of natural theology is the theme of the second series of lectures. Making critical use of philosophers from Kierkegaard and Newman to Thomas Aquinas, McInerny brings us to the point where the age-old task can once more begin.

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