and delight, for in this superb volume of selected essays they will find themselves in the company of one of the most thoughtful, courageous, and humane writers of the past century.

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Lundin, Roger. *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief*, 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. 318 pp. $24.00.

Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief is a biography that focuses on the interplay of religion, science, and other cultural trends in the life and works of the poet. Roger Lundin uses both textual interpretation and historical analysis for his exploration of Emily Dickinson's unique belief system in the context of nineteenth-century New England: "The key to Emily Dickinson's life and art lies not behind some hidden biographical door but before us in the remarkable body of poems and letters she left behind, as well as in the rich, complex history of the extraordinary period in which she lived" (xvi). Lundin's style is cogent and sometimes lyrical, with just enough alliterative pairs in the prose to suggest that he himself may be a poet or, if not, that he loves poetic expression.

The chief argument of the book is that Dickinson practiced an "art of belief" that "made her the greatest of all American poets and one of the most brilliantly enigmatic religious thinkers this country has ever known" (5-6). By "art of belief" Lundin means that she tested religious doctrines and intellectual theories in order to invent a personalized understanding of truth in daily life and an individualized representation of reality through creative writing.

Instead of relying on stereotypical dichotomies, Lundin confirms his argument by collating concepts that other scholars might present as antithetical. For example, instead of claiming that Dickinson totally rejected Edward Hitchcock's creation by design in order to accept Darwin's evolution by selection wholeheartedly, Lundin suggests that she was intrigued by and disillusioned with both ideas at different stages in her life. Instead of abandoning faith in order to embrace skepticism, she courageously challenged and continually examined multiple options. In other words, when faced with seeming contradictions, Dickinson had a tendency to explore alternatives, thus transcending competing worldviews. Her mindset was circumferential, not dialectic. Her perspective encompassed knowledge holistically rather than merely debating points of difference in a single universe of discourse.

Lundin confirms that Dickinson is “torn between her romantic aspirations and her realistic apprehensions” (25). Quoting terminology from Max Weber, Lundin suggests that Dickinson sings of enchantment and disenchantment (44). Invoking terms from Richard Rorty, Lundin claims that Dickinson believes that Nature is a type as well as a trope; she partook of truth and created truth (45-46).

Lundin’s analysis of Dickinson’s personal theology presents another interesting juxtaposition: Dickinson’s martyr-like renunciation of professional publication in favor of private correspondence as a mode of distribution. Her reluctance to publish commercially might seem paradoxical in light of her consistent practice of privately distributing hundreds of poems and letters to family members, friends, mentors, and other acquaintances. Yet Lundin states categorically that though Dickinson did not wish to publish poems for “Time” and “Money” in the mortal sphere (111), she firmly believed that her poetic works would be rewarded with everlasting fame in the eternal circumference. Even so, Lundin explains that Dickinson’s private dissemination of words to friends, neighbors, and other loved ones constituted a program of customized compassionate service. She sent poems and letters as good deeds for those in need of cheer, consolation, sympathy, or spiritual strength.

What seems implicit in Lundin’s discussion is that Dickinson let her poetic light shine so that her relations could see her good works and glorify her Father in Heaven (Matt. 5:16). Because she chose to give God the glory, she deliberately did her alms in secret instead of sounding a trumpet of publication in order to amass glory, fame, and praise (Matt. 6:1–3). Being a diligent biblical scripturalist, she knew that she could enlighten the world with inspired verses without becoming as “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1). She knew that packets of poems hidden in a dresser drawer or quietly offered to dear ones would bring their own reward if she shared them in her own domain rather than let them become lost in the fleeting parade of worldly recognition. She had faith that her works would come forth in due time.

Lundin gives careful attention to historical facts and details. Neverthe-less, the biography does not consistently and comprehensively provide biblical references as James McIntosh did in *Nimble Believing: Dickinson and the Unknown*, a biography with a similar focus, published in 2000. However, Lundin's disciplined interpretations and diligent details can help readers to make biblical connections on their own.

Although one applauds Lundin's biography for its strengths, some weaknesses sometimes hinder rather than help comprehension: empty generalizations, unexamined assumptions, unresolved contradictions, and a lack of chronological organization. General assertions that Dickinson "never grew accustomed to loss" (95) and "pitted her imaginative self against God" (167) seem stereotypical rather than enlightening. Circumstantial assumptions that her father was stiff and overbearing, that her mother was distant and uninspiring, and that Dickinson felt "homeless at home" (66) also lack evidence. Some of Lundin's unqualified statements seem contradictory. For instance, he states that "Dickinson would not let go of God" (4), but he later notes that Dickinson "felt that God was a cruel person" (126). Such statements have no specific time frame and thus seem to be generalizations that contradict textual evidence and undercut Dickinson's profoundly intimate communion with Deity.

Lundin's thematic approach in each of the eleven chapters is effective and evenhanded. However, the semi-chronological presentation of themes sometimes subverts the portrayal of linear time in Dickinson's life. Stories and events that seem random or disjointed create the impression that the biographical approach lacks organization. Claims that Dickinson was unable to accept conventional Christianity (47) or that she had misgivings about not joining a church (73) need to be connected to specific contexts and time periods; otherwise, they become unsubstantiated generalizations that readers may mistakenly apply to Dickinson's entire career.

Mark Noll's foreword to *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* declares that the "singular achievement of Roger Lundin's biography is to show how profoundly connected Emily Dickinson actually was to so many of the grand developments of her century" (x). Lundin breaks some of the stereotypes about Dickinson's religious training under Mary Lyon, stating that the "Christianity promoted by Lyon at Mount Holyoke was not a severe, otherworldly faith"; rather, it "set forth an elaborate vision of individual and cultural development" (38). Notwithstanding, Lundin's reading of Dickinson's family life and religious faith could be deeper, less conventional, and better grounded in primary texts from the nineteenth century.

Lundin acknowledges that Dickinson was creating a new religion through her writings (149). His argument suggests that Dickinson searched philology in order to invent her own theology. However, Lundin and other biographers have not yet adequately set out the influence on Dickinson of lesser-known Christian denominations, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith in New York; Seventh Day Adventism, preached in the 1860s by Ellen White and others working in Massachusetts; and the Church of Christ, Scientist, founded in 1879 by Mary Baker Eddy, who also lived in Massachusetts.

Like other scholars, Lundin stresses that Dickinson identified with the suffering of the Savior. He says that of all creeds she most wanted to believe in the resurrection of the dead (236), but he fails to foreground that she also identified with Christ's resurrection. However, Lundin's clear declaration of Dickinson's faith lays a firm foundation for further studies of her spiritual roots.

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