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God Mocks: A History Of Religious Satire From The Hebrew Prophets To Stephen Colbert



Synopsis

In *God Mocks*, Terry Lindvall ventures into the muddy and dangerous realm of religious satire, chronicling its evolution from the biblical wit and humor of the Hebrew prophets through the Roman Era and the Middle Ages all the way up to the present. He takes the reader on a journey through the work of Chaucer and his *Canterbury Tales*, Cervantes, Jonathan Swift, and Mark Twain, and ending with the mediated entertainment of modern wags like Stephen Colbert. Lindvall finds that there is a method to the madness of these mockers: true satire, he argues, is at its heart moral outrage expressed in laughter. But there are remarkable differences in how these religious satirists express their outrage. The changing costumes of religious satirists fit their times. The earthy coarse language of Martin Luther and Sir Thomas More during the carnival spirit of the late medieval period was refined with the enlightened wit of Alexander Pope. The sacrilege of Monty Python does not translate well to the ironic voices of Søren Kierkegaard. The religious satirist does not even need to be part of the community of faith. All he needs is an eye and ear for the folly and chicanery of religious poseurs. To follow the paths of the satirist, writes Lindvall, is to encounter the odd and peculiar treasures who are God's mouthpieces. In *God Mocks*, he offers an engaging look at their religious use of humor toward moral ends.

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Customer Reviews

This is a technical look at satire through the years, Judeo-Christian sources. Not light reading, well written, with abundant referencing of classic authors and texts for exploring. Enjoyable look at this topic.

“Within the sacred texts lie traces of holy taunting,” writes the author of *God Mocks*. He then goes ahead to back this claim by chronicling the relationship between Christianity and satire since time began. From the prophets like Ezekiel to modern day satirist like Stephen Colbert, *God Mocks* gives a chronology that includes over one hundred names with varying styles of humour unique to most. The book also recounts witty jokes that rocked the Christian world with careers that went down the toilet with them. *God Mocks* says that those who practice humour are like the prophets of old in the Bible. The book reveals prophets using satire as a chastening rod to nudge people into the right path. The author writes, “satire with the biblical texts exposes the follies of God’s people with both sensual and scatological imagery, such as the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel lying naked, writing about the large-membered mules that Israel runs after, and baking nauseous barley cakes with human dung. Such images unleash a shocking satiric judgement upon the unfaithfulness of God’s people.” This book does not only narrate the history of Christian satire, but tries to explain its very nature. *God Mocks* delves into what makes some kinds of satire successful and what renders others damaging and hollow. As far as style goes, *God Mocks* is quite a dry read. If you don’t mind a scholastic style with loads of names, then this might be for you. Though *God Mocks* is a book about humour, it does not seek to entertain; instead, it opts to instruct. Many thanks to NYU Press for review copy.

Not funny for having the word "satire" in the title, but a fascinating view of religious activity and what our pontifications and behaviors say of we humans.

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