

Reflections

reading notes

DECEMBER 2003—*Bram Stoker's Dracula*

Bram Stoker, living in 19th Century England, was concerned about the unbelief that characterized England in his day. This concern provoked him to write *Dracula*.

The book begins with Jonathan Harker traveling on business to see a new client who wants to buy property in England. His new client, he discovers soon after his arrival, is a monster. Robert Hart summarizes, "Dracula plans to reside in England, where he may feed upon the people who are naive *because* they are sophisticated. They are without defense against him because they cannot believe that he exists" (Touchstone, July/Aug. 2003, p. 24).

Van Helsing, one of the heroes in *Dracula*, reflects on the credibility of the story he has found himself in: "A year ago which of us would have received such a possibility, in the midst of our scientific, skeptical, matter-of-fact Nineteenth Century?"

Mr. Stoker isn't the only one concerned about disbelief. C. S. Lewis wrote *The Screwtape Letters* to combat the unbelief that characterized England a century after Bram Stoker. In the preface to his book, he writes, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight" (2001, p. ix).

George Barna provides the following:

- Nearly three out of five adults (58%) say that the devil, or Satan, is not a living being but is a symbol of evil (2001).
- 45% of born again Christians deny Satan's existence (2001).
- Nearly seven out of ten Catholics (68%) say the devil is nson-existent, compared to 60% of Protestant mainline church attenders, 51% of Baptists and 50% of Protestant non-mainline church attenders who agree that Satan is only a symbol of evil (2001).
- Men emerge as slightly more likely than women to believe that Satan is just a symbol of evil (61% to 55% respectively) (2001).
- Two-thirds of adults (69) are aware that the Bible describes Satan, or the devil, as an angel who formerly served God in heaven (1994).

The Bible affirms that Satan exists, and that he is as a roaring lion walking about seeking whom he may devour. Believest thou this? Consider the danger inherent in denying that a real enemy exists.

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