

IAM Readers Guild

November 2011

The Death of Adam by Marilynne Robinson

1. 1. Is suffering for contemporary society likely to increase as we lose national distinctions, according to M. Robinson?
2. Does the metaphor of a window or the metaphor of a mirror fit best for modern mans reading of his own history, according to the author?
3. Does civilization require "knowing what you see" or "seeing what you know" (a Hans Rookmaaker distinction) as a proper epistemology, according to M. Robinson? Or what sense should we be using in contrast to seeing?
4. Which portions were of particular interest to you?
5. If the subtitle of the book were "against modern thought" instead, which aspects of modern thought do you think Robinson would be against? On cynicism? She notes, " have been launched on a great campaign to deromanticize everything, even while we are eager to insist that more or less everything that matters is a romance." Thus it is that "when a good man or woman stumbles, we say, 'I knew it all along,' and when a bad one has a gracious moment, we sneer at the hypocrisy. It is as if there is nothing to mourn or to admire, only a hidden narrative now and then apparent through the false, surface narrative. And the hidden narrative, because it is ugly and sinister, is therefore true."
6. In her poignant essay on Psalm 8 ("What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"), she offers : "I have spent my life watching, not to see beyond the world, merely to see, great mystery, what is plainly before my eyes. I think the concept of transcendence is based on a misreading of creation. With all respect to heaven, the scene of the miracle is here, among us. The eternal as an idea is much less preposterous than time, and this very fact should seize our attention." What do you think of this?