

The Christian Imagination: The Practice of Faith in Literature and Writing (Writers' Palette Book)

By Leland Ryken

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The Christian Imagination brings together in a single source the best that has been written about the relationship between literature and the Christian faith. This anthology covers all of the major topics that fall within this subject and includes essays and excerpts from fifty authors, including C.S. Lewis, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Sayers, and Frederick Buechner.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
The Christian Imagination is an exceptional exploration of Christian belief, imagination, reading, and writing. Leland Ryken has collected essays and excerpts, long and short--nearly 500 pages' worth--all devoted (some more directly than others) to "thinking Christianly about literature." Contributors including J.R.R. Tolkien, Madeleine L'Engle, Flannery O'Connor, and T.S. Eliot discuss such topics as a Christian philosophy of literature, success and failure in current Christian fiction and poetry, realism, fantasy, and narrative. Perhaps the most common thread among these pieces is the understanding that Christian art "is by no means," as Ryken puts it, "always religious art." If you want to make a Christian work, advises Jacques Maritain, "then be Christian, and simply try to make a beautiful work." Also of particular interest is Clyde S. Kilby's "The Aesthetic Poverty of Evangelicalism." Despite the fact that the Bible is "a piece of art ... an imaginative book," says Kilby, the people who spend the most time with it "are in large numbers the foes of art and the sworn foes of imagination." --*Jane Steinberg*

From Publishers Weekly
This sweeping, magnificent anthology challenges Christians to think more deeply about the connections between faith and literature, creed and imagination. Ryken, who has previously explored the intersection between the literary and the spiritual in How to Read the Bible as Literature and The Discerning Reader, brings together Christian thinkers from a broad spectrum of time periods and literary disciplines. The collection opens with a section called "Christian Philosophy of Literature," which despite its dry title features memorable selections by luminaries such as Annie Dillard, C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer. Other sections address issues such as imagination, beauty, teaching, realism, myth and fantasy, poetry, and narrative; with a collection of this size, it is surprising that the essays are of such consistently high quality. One wishes that all fiction editors at Christian publishing houses would read Richard Terrell's essay "Christian Fiction: Piety Is Not Enough," in which he identifies the problems inherent in creating "safe" fiction that must always be devoid of profanity, violence and sex. Other gems include Frederick Buechner's masterpiece "The Gospel as Fairy Tale," J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Consolation of the Happy Ending" and Madeleine L'Engle's "Is It Good Enough for Children?" Walker Percy and Flannery O'Connor offer strong autobiographical essays on being Christian novelists. Poetry is not neglected here, with essays by Luci Shaw, Wendell Berry and others testifying to the importance of poetry in the Christian experience. This is a rich, judicious collection of reflections on Christianity and literature.

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From the Inside Flap
"The Christian Imagination brings together in a single source the best that has been written about the relationship between literature and the Christian faith. This anthology covers all of the major topics that fall within this subject and includes essays and excerpts from fifty authors, including C.S. Lewis, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Sayers, and Frederick Buechner.

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