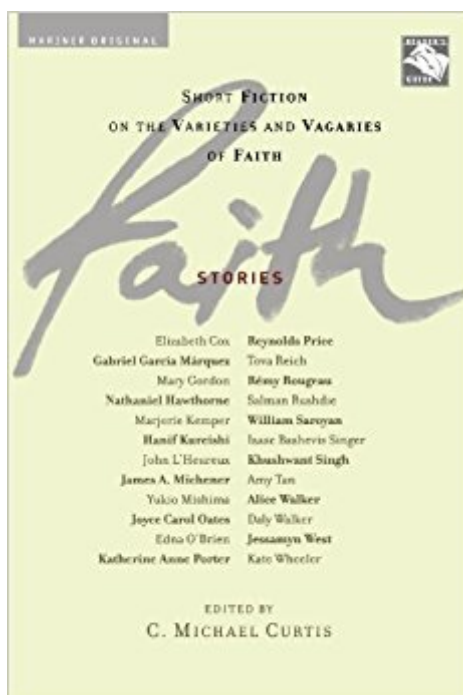


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Faith: Stories: Short Fiction On The Varieties And Vagaries Of Faith



Synopsis

Expanding the conversation begun in *God: Stories*, this important gathering of writers explores the diverse world of faith in all its guises: Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Quaker, and Confucian beliefs, as well as Jewish and Christian ones. From James A. Michener to Gabriel Garcia Marquez, from Amy Tan to Hanif Kureishi, *Faith: Stories* investigates the boundaries of faith and ritual in everyday life. In one story, a one-eyed Chinese child learns that all heavens are not the same. In another, a wealthy moneylender finds a relic of the Prophet Muhammad and decides to keep it instead of returning it to its shrine. In a third, a father whose son begins to blindly preach the Koran becomes engaged in a fanaticism of his own. With subtlety and surprise, wit and candor, these stories explore issues of faith such as sacrifice, superstition, myth, and disbelief. Together they form an illuminating prism of the religious experience in today's world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this collection of short stories about faith, Curtis, the fiction editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, plunges the reader into a sometimes baffling, often disconcerting world of belief. Unlike the sister volume, *God*, whose stories were rooted in Protestant, Catholic and Jewish traditions, this sequel includes entries that reflect Buddhist, Muslim, Confucian and Hindu views. The stories are often beautifully descriptive, like *my Rougeau's* gorgeously rich "Cello," about a provocative encounter between Cistercian and Buddhist monks. Salman Rushdie writes of the perils of faith commitment in "The Prophet's Hair," and Tova Reich looks at the reverberations in a Jewish family when the

granddaughter of Holocaust survivors decides to become a Catholic nun in "The Third Generation." In the poignant "God's Goodness," Marjorie Kemper unfolds the story of Ling Tan, who finds her Christian faith put to the test when she nurses a teenage boy with a terminal illness. Other contributors include Reynolds Price, Alice Walker, Amy Tan, James Michener and Jessamyn West. Although most of the writers are contemporary, there are a few historical authors (Nathaniel Hawthorne, Katherine Anne Porter). The offerings are varied and diverse; believers are portrayed very realistically, even unsympathetically, and the power of religion to provide hope and meaning often takes a back seat to the darker side of belief. These beautifully written stories provide a useful platform for reflection and discussion of what it means to have faith. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Starred Review The 24 stories in *Faith: Stories* follow Atlantic editor Curtis' well-received *God: Stories* (1998), a collection aimed at liberal Christians. Curtis casts an even more ecumenical net here, including such stories as Salman Rushdie's "The Prophet's Hair," Hanif Kureishi's "My Son the Fanatic," and Yukio Mishima's "The Priest and His Love." But he also gathers such American standards as Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and Katherine Anne Porter's "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," as well as contemporary tales such as Amy Tan's "Fishers of Men" and Alice Walker's "The Welcome Table." All of the stories are really more about faith as a literary conceit than "the substance of things hoped for," but this is a flawless collection and will be welcomed by readers weary of the rigidity found in most Christian fare. John Mort
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Curtis has two anthologies, one more recent than the other, and accommodating the objections that the first was too centered on the Judeo-Christian tradition(s). I can't recall as I write my review which was which (the other is called "God: Stories")--but together they make a good pair for anyone who wants to read and think about the relationship between the human and the divine. I also recommend supplementing them with a third anthology, *A Celestial Omnibus: Short Fiction on Faith*, which is more diverse still.

The short stories are good for small groups and conversations. Some are very good and others not so much. Our church group used it for inbetweenour novel time.

C. Michael Curtis's deft editorial hand has assembled a collection that demands intelligence of the

reader and then rewards him/her with a sense of lasting fulfillment. A far cry from ideology or pop psychology. (I agree with everything the previous reviewer expressed.)

Excellent reading for individuals or with friends! We are using this book in a church study group, and the stories always generate lively discussion.

Good summer time Sunday school discussion material.

Needed this book for a class I am taking. Cost a buck so you can't get any better than that!!

This collection of mostly contemporary short fiction, similar to Curtis's earlier collection ("God: Stories"), is a ready made adult Sunday school class on the subject of faith and doubt in literature. It is international in its scope and inter-denominational in its selections. Some of the selected writers are Christian; most are not. Each story illuminates some aspect of faith in a non-didactic way. These are NOT a series of inspirational "feel good" stories about God. They are instead a collection of thought provoking, very well written stories by major writers that probe one of the fundamental ironies of belief in God: that reasonable doubt is a necessary component. For other collections of short stories along these lines, also try "The Celestial Omnibus."

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