

## The Novel and the Crisis of Faith

The late 19th and 20th century novel provided Christian authors with a genre through which to examine the conflict of faith in Christ with vastly strengthened anti-Christian forces in politics, culture, and society. The examination of the fictional depiction of the dynamics of salvation and damnation will aim at deepening our own understanding of the ways in which faith simultaneously engages the world while it disentangles itself from worldliness. The discussions are to focus on relatively short excerpts (40-90 pages) from the selected novels, although participants are encouraged to read the works in their entirety.

### **James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man***

Penguin Classics Edition (ISBN 9780143108245)

\$10.40 on Amazon

In this semi-autobiographical novel Joyce vividly depicts the circumstances of his upbringing in Ireland, concluding that, if he is to become an artist, he must shed three confining loyalties: to his family, to his nation, and to his Church.

### **Georges Bernanos, *The Impostor***

Bison Books (ISBN 0803261535)

\$10 on Amazon

Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) wrote of his favorite novel: "Georges Bernanos, who was haunted by the mystery of the priestly vocation and the tragedies of its failure, dramatically portrayed this danger in the character of Bishop Expelette in *L'imposture*. This popular bishop had been an academic; he is educated and kind and always knows how to say just what fits the situation and what the educated expect from a bishop in this position: 'The courage of this shrewd priest, however, deceives no one but himself. His *intellectual cowardice is immense ... No one is less lovable than one who only lives to be loved. Such souls, so clever as to change according to the taste of each and every one, are only mirrors*'."

### **François Mauriac, *The Viper's Tangle***

Cluny Media (ISBN 1944418261)

\$17.95 on Amazon

An aged lawyer makes it his business to intensify the misery of the family he detests, and in his attempt to explain the reasons for his malice paradoxically opens up the channels of divine grace.

**Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov***  
Digireads (ISBN 1420954369)  
\$17.99 on Amazon

One of the best-known passages in modern literature, this recitation mythically confronts Christ with Satan, portraying the latter as claiming to be in league with the Church.

**Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich***  
Vintage Classics (ISBN 0307951332)  
\$7.64 on Amazon

A life of modest worldly success and smug self-interest has insulated Ivan Ilyich from authentic knowledge about the state of his soul. Only his encounter with a life marked by compassion and simplicity reveals his own self-delusion and frees him from the fear of death.

**Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited***  
Back Bay Books (ISBN 0316216453)  
\$8.78 on Amazon

An agnostic artist is pulled into the orbit of a family of aristocratic Catholics, whose co-operation with—and violent battles against—God's grace he observes with polite interest, then disdain, and finally life-changing sympathy.

**Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory***  
Penguin Classics (ISBN 0143107550)  
\$12.23 on Amazon

"You choose the weak and make them strong in bearing witness to you" (from the *Preface of Martyrs* for the Mass). The wreck of an alcoholic priest, operating illegally in the ferociously anti-Catholic Mexico of the 1930s, paradoxically teaches even those who despise him how divine power works through human weakness.

**Flannery O'Connor, *The Violent Bear It Away***  
FSG Classics (ISBN 0374530874)  
\$13.26 on Amazon

An agnostic secularist finds himself foster father to an orphan raised by his grandfather to be a prophet. His complacent superiority and superficial benevolence collide with a depth of conviction he can only see as crass superstition, yet which he fails to overmaster.