



John Updike and Religion

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“Christianity gave me something to write about,” states John Updike in his memoir, *Self-Consciousness* (1989). So it seems, considering that he has dealt with religious themes in over fifty books. Although critics have long recognized the theological dimension of Updike’s work, it has never been thoroughly explored until now. Editor James Yerkes brings together a diverse group of theologians, philosophers, and literary critics who examine various facets of Updike’s fiction in light of his Christian faith. The magnificent result is *John Updike and Religion: The Sense of the Sacred and the Motions of Grace*.

Fifteen essays, divided into three sections, offer in-depth discussion of Updike’s spiritual sensibility. The first section, “Updike and the Religious Dimension,” features a fine introductory essay by Yerkes exploring the way in which Updike’s religious consciousness has shaped his art. The second section examines “Updike and the Christian Religion” and includes essays on Lutheran and Barthian elements underlying Updike’s prose. Finally, “Updike and American Religion” looks at how certain literary and cultural influences have informed Updike’s work, including the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. The collection also includes essays on less acclaimed works by Updike such as *Memories of the Ford Administration* (1996), as well as an opening poem and essay by the author himself.

Scholarly without being stuffy, the essays in *John Updike and Religion* offer an accessible introduction to general readers who possess only a passing familiarity with Updike’s work. The anthology also provides academics with a wealth of new insights into the writings of one of the most distinguished authors of our time, and is sure to become a benchmark reference for all current and future Updike enthusiasts.

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