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Christ In The Psalms



Synopsis

The Psalms run like a golden thread through the beautiful garment of Orthodox worship. In addition to inspiring the public prayer of the church, the Psalms are an indispensable part of the private devotions of all who seek a closer relationship with God. Most important, however, the Psalms point toward the ultimate liberation of humanity from sin, death and despair through Jesus Christ. Father Pat Reardon, drawing on his long experience as an Episcopal, and then as a priest in the Orthodox Church, has produced a work of depth and devotion. He rightly understands that one cannot truly probe the deep meaning of the Psalms unless one understands them in the light of the redemption brought by Christ...He provides the fresh and intensely personal insights of a pastor to the study of the Book of Psalms. "Every now and then a book comes along that is a small classic. Here is such a book: elegantly written, deceptively simple, and utterly absorbing." Father Addison Hart, Priest, Newman Center, Northern Illinois University

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Customer Reviews

While Fr Reardon (a priest of the Antiochian Orthodox Diocese and an erstwhile Anglican) disclaims the mantle of Scripture scholar, these meditations on the Psalter are erudite and are evidently the product of close and learned examination. There are references made to the original Hebrew and to the canonical Greek of the Orthodox Church, and pertinent comparisons made to New Testament passages. There is often a brief comment about the liturgical use of the psalm in question (morning or evening prayer, Easter or Great Lent, and so on). While the ideal reader for Fr Reardon's reverent

study would be Orthodox, and not unfamiliar with the liturgical Greek, "Christ in the Psalms" can be read, with profit, by Western Christians as well. But beyond scholarship and ecclesial loyalty, a vigorous faith is needed; in Fr Reardon's words: "The Psalter has nothing to say to the worldly; it is not for the unconverted, the unrepentant. It is, rather, the prayer book of those who strive for holiness of life and the unceasing praise of God." (See the commentary on Psalm 4.) The numbering of the Psalm follows the Septuagint. Texts of the psalms are not included; Fr Reardon perhaps rightly assumes that the reader has a trustworthy translation on hand. He generally devotes two pages to each psalm. Most memorable, the comment on Psalm 51 (52), including an identification of the execrable Doeg the Edomite. "Christ in the Psalms" is not a book to be zipped through; take two or three psalm-essays at a time. These "pastoral ponderings" will be of profit only to those of an unhasty disposition.

In a time when many Christian traditions are opting to negate the Christological nature of the Psalms, Fr. Patrick argues persuasively that the Psalms are the backbone to a proper understanding of the human condition, the heart of God, and the nature of Christ's incarnation. Following the traditional exegetical method of understanding the Old Testament in light of the resurrection, Fr. Patrick illuminates the psalter in a manner both academic and devotional. Apart of Lewis's book on the psalms, there is really not much else out there of this quality in both regards. No previous knowledge of Greek or Hebrew is needed. It is not an intimidating read at all and it is the type of book that you will want to read over and over through the seasons. Very highly recommended!

Patrick Reardon has done me a wonderful service. I serve in a church that loves to sing the Psalms in worship (rather than hymns or other songs). One of my weekly goals is to show God's people that the Psalms are not just old covenant songs, but at their heart are truly centered on our Savior. Reardon's book does this, devoting a couple pages to each Psalm with the express mission of showing Jesus in each. An example: Psalm 84 begins, "How lovely, Lord of hosts, are your tabernacles to me." Most of us could take a circuitous route to finding Christ in this phrase, but Reardon goes straight for the heart when he quotes Revelation 21:22, "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." Jesus is our tabernacle! Great stuff, great book - would be well-suited for personal and family worship. As an evangelical protestant, I have significant theological differences with the author (and with parts of the book) and I would be remiss if I didn't mention that. But the substance of the book remains of a high enough quality for me to

recommend it!

Christ in the Psalms is one of the rare books that one can consider a true "blessing" to have read. It gives the reader a lot of spiritual 'meat' to chew on, and yet it is entirely readable and accessible. Erudite without being academic. Spiritual without being maudlin. Entirely orthodox and filled with dry wit and wry observations. Sometimes a passage was like a hand on the shoulder whispering kindly advice in my ear; other passages sharp but much needed criticism. Simply outstanding. At a time when I had a very poor spiritual director and so much unhappiness in the seminary, Fr. Reardon provided sorely needed mercy and respite through his book. I have read this book twice, and in two ways. First, cover to cover, but in two or three chapter bits as an aid to meditation in chapel. The other way was skipping from psalm to psalm as I progressed through the (Roman Catholic) Liturgy of the Hours...praying the Psalms of the hour and then reading Fr. Reardon's commentary on the Psalms just prayed. As I write this review, I cannot help but to think of the words of the Disciples on the road to Emmaus: "Did not our hearts burn within us he opened the Scriptures to us?" Perhaps the best thing I can say about the book is that it showed me the love and friendship of Christ in ways I had not known before. Therefore, I am compelled to recommend it to you and hope that you will get as much out of it as I did.

It's hard to believe that Reardon can pack so much depth into such brief and elegant essays on all 150 Psalms. If all you have is ten minutes you can read a Psalm and his essay and you will have both a heart-glow and a mind-challenge for the rest of the day. Filled with appropriate quotes from the church fathers and information about the formation of the liturgical life of the church---how a particular psalm is used in the church's liturgy.

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