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Juvenile Nonfiction

A King James Christmas: Biblical Selections with Illustrations from around the World
Catherine Schuon, editor
Michael Fitzgerald, editor
World Wisdom
978-1-937786-03-8
(October 16, 2012)

In their new book, *A King James Christmas*, artist and translator Catherine Schuon and award-winning author and editor Michael Fitzgerald have collaborated as coeditors to present an exquisite, very traditional holiday volume suitable for the entire Christian family. Using relevant selections from the King James Bible, they have arranged their chosen verses into three separate sections, one each about the birth, the childhood, and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Every section is abundantly and superbly illustrated.

The first part, in particular, contains what many consider to be "the true story of Christmas"—the more popular verses that many choose to read during the Christmas season. The selections are presented here in chronological order, rather than as the verses originally appear in the Bible, helpfully allowing the selections to be read easily as an ongoing story. Schuon has selected from among the countless works of art created over the centuries to celebrate the glory of Christ's birth, and she includes at least one illustration, and often several, in every page spread to complement the verses presented. The artwork ranges from a sixth-century mosaic and a seventh-century Russian icon to tenth- to fifteenth-century European oil paintings and stained glass to more contemporary Ethiopian, Asian, and Coptic works. She includes several of her own twentieth-century paintings, as well. The juxtaposition of so many styles and interpretations of the very same biblical verses is both enlightening and, honestly, stunning.

The significantly shorter second and third sections of *A King James Christmas* continue with the one selection from the Bible that speaks of Christ's childhood, *Jesus Teaches in the Temple*, and the later *Sermon on the Mount.* The verses chosen here offer a look beyond the "Christmas story" and serve as an introduction to the rest of Christ's life and teachings.

Fitzgerald indicates that his and Schuon's book is intended for the entire family, and he

has modified the presentation via larger type and the inclusion of an occasional synonym for a difficult word to make reading it aloud a bit easier. Both the size and the layout of the book allow it to function well for this purpose. Schuon contributes both clarification and variety through her choice of illustrations, from recognizable works by a few well known artists like early Italian Renaissance painter Fra Angelico to less often seen early illuminations and more contemporary selections. Each work of art offers its own artist's interpretation of the verses it accompanies and begs to be studied both in context and on its own. Children and adults alike will be intrigued. Fitzgerald and Schuon's thoughtful individual contributions to *A King James Christmas* blend harmoniously to make this truly a book to be shared. Theirs is a distinctive and appealing telling of the traditional story of the first Christmas, and it deserves to become a family holiday tradition in its own right.

Cheryl Hibbard