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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ RELIGION

Christmas: A Different Perspective

Beryl Mears
AuthorHouse (Nov 17, 2003)
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Christian author Beryl Mears is serious about bringing back the true meaning of Christmas. Written from the heart, *Christmas: A Different Perspective* offers her views on what is necessary for modern Christians to celebrate the holiday with the true joy it is meant to impart. “It is time to stop the fanfare and take a critical look,” she advises, adding that “Santa Jesus is not coming down the chimney.” Her words are sincere and well meaning, but her presentation lacks the polish and depth it needs to support her message.

Mears’s assertions that all the modern trappings of the holiday are out of control may ring true to some readers, but the hammering “repentance” she preaches may not satisfy as many. “Run, run to the Altar of repentance,” she declares, urging others to celebrate in the spirit and truth that the Bible dictates. Citing but not always directly quoting the Bible, she advocates looking to the true meaning of Christmas and remembering that it is Jesus who is to be celebrated. She relies on the Bible and her own exhortations to deliver her message, assuming that readers will understand. But those less well versed in the Good Book will not comprehend her message when, for example, she writes that, “In keeping the Lord’s Super we are keeping Christmas.” Some readers will wonder if this is a typo. Is she speaking of the Last Supper, or is there really something called the Lord’s Super? If she were to clearly quote from the Bible, her ideas might gain clarity.

Mears’s book is disorganized and often repetitive. Every chapter contains the same directives. Mears wants to encourage everyone to keep Christmas holy and emphasizes again and again that the only way to do so is “to get excited about Jesus, not about Santa Claus, gifts, trees, and lights.” While true believers may be convinced, others will not find what they need here. “Is this what Christmas is all about?” Mears asks, clearly capturing the despair of multitudes during and immediately following the hectic holiday season. But even those who agree in theory are offered only one solution: repent and pray. There is no mention, for instance, of volunteering or doing good work in the community.

Grammatical errors and unbalanced structure within the text further hinder Mears’s ability to share her message. Some readers will find it difficult to make sense of statements such as this one: “a personal relationship with Jesus” will “decorate our hearts to be in the right devotion of worship.” Despite her casual, first-person approach, the author often stumbles in making her arguments clear. Her numerous citations of biblical verses are accompanied by so few quotation marks that it is difficult to discern between her quotations from the Bible and her own opinions. Devoted readers of the Bible may know the difference, but others will not.

Mears exhibits obvious passion for her cause, but her *Christmas: A Different Perspective* is not so much different as it is interpretive. It is admirable that she wants to share the doctrine in which she so wholeheartedly believes, but there is little in her book that devoted followers of the Bible do not already know. For others, Mears’s words will sound preachy and confusing.

CHERYL M. HIBBARD (November 16, 2012)

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