

Shorter Notices

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Psalms Night and Day. By Paul Beauchamp. Translated by Peter Rogers. Marquette Studies in Theology, 84. Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2015. Pp. 272. \$27.

First published in French in 1980, by Editions du Seuil, this commentary and meditation on the Psalms was translated into Italian and Polish a few years later, while an English edition has had to wait until now. Rogers, who studied theology in France and holds two doctorates in French literature, one from the Sorbonne and one from Columbia University, merits praise for producing a lucid translation that is a pleasure to read. The book's title alludes to the monastic practice of chanting the Psalter at various hours, and also points to the book's repeated focus on the absence and presence of God as expressed in the Psalms. The book's author was a Jesuit and a professor of Scripture at the Centre Sèvres in Paris and at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome; Beauchamp (1924–2001) was prolific with both specialized scholarly studies and works aimed at a broader audience.

B. divides this work into five sections and a concluding “recapitulation”: “The Psalms and Us,” “Supplication,” “Praise,” “Promise,” “The Psalms and the World,” and a very engaging consideration of Psalm 22, and its various voices and themes, as this book's summary and conclusion. B. insists that voices from three different eras speak in and through the texts: the Jewish writers of the psalms, Jesus of Nazareth, and ourselves. B. emphasizes the psalmist's focus on suffering and injustice and on seeking salvation and vindication from God. He highlights the drama of the just person's struggle for vindication, and thus similarities between the book of Job and the Psalms. B. also states that “the Psalmist is with his own when he is among the poor” (234). But B. does not simply dwell on those who suffer; he asserts that one who “does not understand praise understands absolutely nothing about the Bible” (107). Praise both precedes and follows supplication; it is “precise to call the Psalter ‘Book of Praises’” (107). For the suffering today seeking to find their voice, B. shows very clearly that the Psalms continue to have much to offer.

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