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The Book Reviewer

ST. MARY'S PARISH LIBRARY

FEB 09

The Inn of the Sixth Happiness (DVD)

The Inn of the Sixth Happiness is a 20th Century Fox film based on the inspiring true story of Gladys Aylward, a young British woman who had dreamed all her life of traveling to China as a missionary.

Ingrid Bergman stars in the film as this real-life missionary in the 1930s. Initially, Gladys was rejected as a potential Protestant missionary to China because of her lack of education. Undaunted, she worked as a British maid and saved her money to purchase a ticket on the Orient Express, choosing the more dangerous overland route to the East because it was less expensive. Against the advice of

practically everyone, Gladys traveled into the war-ravaged interior of China to spread the Christian gospel.

After the difficult journey, Gladys joined another missionary in the town of Yang Cheng and they established the Inn of the Sixth Happiness, a roadside hostel for merchants, where the travelers could get a hot meal and also listen to stories from the Bible. The local Mandarin, played by Robert Donat, employed Gladys to bring some of the modern laws to his people, and she gradually earned the trust of the local Chinese. During this period she met a captain in the Chinese army, played by

Curt Jurgens, and the two of them fell in love.

Meanwhile, China was invaded by Japan and the town of Yang Cheng was one of the many towns that were attacked by the Japanese army. Gladys soon discovered that she had fifty orphaned children in her care. The situation became even more difficult when another group of children arrived from a neighboring town.

Gladys and a Chinese friend managed to guide the children through the countryside and mountains to the next province, where trucks were waiting to drive them to safety.

Reviewed by Pat Dalcher

The Shack by William P. Young (Fiction)

In this engaging story by William P. Young, we accompany Mackenzie Phillips as he suffers the unendurable: the abduction and murder of his youngest daughter. The terrible grief and alienation that shadow him—"the Great Sadness"—deprive him of the ability to fully engage with his wife and remaining children, who are suffering in their own way.

One day Mack finds a note in his mailbox which invites him back to the ruinous shack where the evidence of Missy's

death had been found. In spite of his profound misgivings—could this be a cruel act of taunting by her murderer?—Mack, out of desperation and with fragile hope, goes to meet "Papa", the author of the note, at the appointed time.

What follows is perhaps one of the most heart-rending, expansive, and enlightening interpretations of our triune God ever written.

Young captures the deep despair of loss, as well as the

fear, self-blame, and anger that accompany it, especially when innocent life is taken in such a senseless, violent manner. We discover, with Mack, that our response to such events comes out of our narrow understanding of who God is and how He (She?) operates in our lives.

This story of love and transformation will forever change your perception of the One who created us all.

Reviewed by Susan Triplett



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DVDs:

Life is Beautiful

Christ in Evolution by Ilia Delio (Theology)

We live in an interesting age in which scientists have discovered a cosmos which is quite unlike the old mechanistic idea of our world and of the universe. Science and religion—the religion of the mystics, rather than that of the institutions—have grown closer together; and religion is evolving, as is the world.

This book focuses on the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit paleontologist/geologist; Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk; Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk; and Raimon Pannikar, a Catholic

Hindu scholar. Each one of these finds Christ not only as the center of all things, but as all things evolving into Christ. Their views involve not only a total acceptance of evolution as scientific fact, but also the realization that each individual, and indeed the whole of creation, is evolving into Christ. “Without Christ creation finds neither purpose nor fulfillment.” (R. Pannikar) Theirs is a truly universal religion; not erasing the individual, but fulfilling him or her. Christogenesis and progressive evolution is not some romantic

fallacy which denies evil in the world. Evil comes about through all of the backward forces which cling to their own retrograde traditions, and clash with other traditions and cultures; and from individual free choices of greed and violence. All of this was aptly explained by St. Paul nearly two thousand years ago in Romans 8: 18-25 and aptly stated by Bede Griffiths in India: “Christ is the term of the evolution of the universe, which is evolving in space and time, and achieves its true being in Him.”

Reviewed by Clare Dinno

Religion in the Making by Alfred North Whitehead (Philosophy)

In an era when scientists and philosophers were falling all over themselves in their eagerness to pooh-pooh religion, Alfred North Whitehead stands almost alone in his learned defense of the concept of God. A brilliant mathematician and philosopher, he stands out against Freud and Bertrand Russell, and others of his nay-saying generation.

His analysis of reality is basically Platonic, based upon questions of how the ideal is present in experienced facts. The first two chapters of the book are a carefully and

densely worded attempt to examine the facts of creation, and the human experience of creation. He comes to see God as immanent in the world, as an aesthetic experience of order and beauty; and as the creativity of the universe as witnessed by our understanding of evolution: a world of ever increasing complexity, and in the end, greater simplicity.

“The order of the world is no accident. There is nothing actual which could be actual without some measure of order...The religious insight is the grasp of this truth: that the universe ex-

hibits creativity with infinite freedom, and the realm of forms with infinite possibilities...impotent to achieve actuality apart from the ideal harmony, which is God.”

Whitehead’s concept of God necessarily imposes a limit on God in order to account for the existence of evil—real, factual evil.

“The limitation of God is His goodness. It is not true that God is in all aspects infinite. If He were, He would be evil as well as good...this unlimited fusion of good and evil would mean nothingness.”

Reviewed by Clare Dinno