The Best of Jonathan's Corner

By CJS Hayward

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The Best of Jonathan's Corner, Revised and Expanded. 640 pages.

Foreword

By Sydney Nicoletta W. Freedman

The Best of Jonathan's Corner: An Anthology of Orthodox Christian Theology is a book that provides not only a good introduction to the author's work but also a dose of the clear thinking and spiritual wisdom prescribed for our times. The author lives to create treasure, and he has mined, refined, and gathered wisdom for our age. It is not new knowledge, but rather, it has been artfully distilled from the writings of Church Fathers and his own life, from study and experience.

The pieces in this book speak with clarity about spiritual topics and with depth about practical ones, addressing the intrigues and issues that we all face, explore, and question. Orthodox Christian readers will find insightful discussions of art and worship, such as Lesser Icons, and lucid, applicable discussions of the spiritual life, such as God the Spiritual Father. This Eastern Orthodox perspective may shed light on matters for readers from other traditions as well. Such is especially true for pieces on such timely issues as economic hardship (Money, and The Best Things in Life are Free) and the discussion of religion and science, including "Religion and Science" Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution. Regarding this latter work, a Roman Catholic reader recently deemed it to be one of the 'most intelligent and erudite' things that he has ever read. The essays on silence, the place of technology, and nature are treasures among the discussions of such popular and important issues.

The poetic and fictional works in this book offer the same spiritual knowledge for which our society thirsts but in the deeper and more elevated way that is inherent to their genres. Some of the poems, Open, for example, are prayers, which readers may find to voice some of their own words and which fittingly glorify God and His saints. Other poetry, such as How shall I Tell an Alchemist, pointedly deals with questions of spirituality and theology with the magnified acuity that only this particular art can achieve. Socratic dialogue (The Damned Backswing) and other creative forms play their part as well, rounding out the book.

The work that stands out most among the creative pieces, perhaps among all of

them, is that which opens the book, The Angelic Letters. I have had the pleasure of reading nearly all of Hayward's writings, and I was delighted that he undertook to write such a work. Readers who are familiar with C. S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters will recognize at once that it is the very book which that author desired, but felt unable, to write in order to balance the demonic correspondence. It is a mark of Hayward's skill, knowledge, and spiritual insight that he has successfully written something that such a theologian as Lewis did not wish to attempt, and according to a psychologist of his acquaintance, the average Harvard PhD has not ever met someone as talented as Hayward. He has of course accomplished this work with God's help, but one must realize the spiritual struggle, mental effort, careful study, and deep prayer that has gone into every piece in this anthology. Hayward has done much work for us. He has grappled with questions and problems that many of us face, but we may not feel that we have the resources to confront them. We therefore can find within these pages words that will perhaps directly answer some of our questions and certainly facilitate the difficult but necessary task of learning and discerning that we all must carry out, each is he is able. I am privileged to introduce some of the fruit that has come from the author's efforts to complete this task himself so that all may benefit from both its example and its contents. May it leave seeds of knowledge in all who read. This author has gathered pearls for us, and may we gladly look upon them. They hold glimmers that can reflect our lives.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward wears many hats as a person: author, philosopher, theologian, artist, poet, wayfarer, philologist, inventor, web guru, teacher. Some have asked, "If a far lesser C.S. Lewis were Orthodox, what would he be like?" And the answer may well be, "C.J.S. Hayward." Hayward has lived in the U.S., Malaysia, England, and France, and holds master's degrees bridging math and computers (UIUC), and philosophy and theology (Cambridge), as well as an advanced certificate from the Sorbonne.

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From reader reviews:

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