

The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way

Anonymous , Walter J. Ciszek (Foreword by) , Helen Bacovcin (Translator)

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This enduring work of Russian spirituality has charmed countless people with its tale of a nineteenth-century peasant's quest for the secret of prayer. Readers follow this anonymous pilgrim as he treks over the Steppes in search of the answer to the one compelling question: How does one pray constantly? Through his journeys, and under the tutelage of a spiritual father, he becomes gradually more open to the promptings of God, and sees joy and plenty wherever he goes. Ultimately, he discovers the different meanings and methods of prayer as he travels to his ultimate destination, Jerusalem.

The Way of a Pilgrim is a humble story ripe for renewed appreciation today. The recent changes in Russia have revealed the great religious traditions of that land, and this work, freshly translated for modern times, is among the finest examples of those centuries-old traditions.

The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way Details

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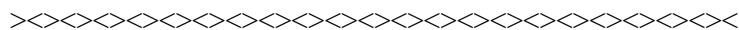
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From Reader Review The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way for online ebook

booklady says

I can see why I was so taken with this book the first time I read it. Then it opened doors into prayer which I never knew were possible. Now, years later, it seems less profound but still sweet and full of wonderful little vignettes about the possibilities that a life of constant prayer can offer.



Read this MANY(!) years ago--shortly after my daughters were born. Don't know if it was the book itself, my spiritual immaturity at the time, Grace or a combination of all three, but this was a life-changing experience for me. Although there are not many spiritual mystics, we are all called in Holy Scripture to a life of contemplative prayer. The anonymous pilgrim in this "Way" offers his insights and experiences for our benefit.

God willing, I hope to re-read this soon!

Abe says

This book lets the reader enter into the spiritual life of the 19th century Russian Orthodox Church. The narrative form makes it enjoyable and easy to read, even if the stories are more allegorical than autobiographical. The best insights from this book come from the extensive quotes from the "Philokalia", the ancient Greek Christian manuscript about deep spiritual prayer. The narrative just keeps the text from being too dense, and provides a real life practical example of what these teachings would look like if carried out to the extreme. It's humbling to compare the life of that pilgrim to our modern lives full of distractions and luxury. If only we could all be so loving, peaceful, and thankful in every circumstance. As the book says, the key is constant prayer.

Carsten Thomsen says

By the grace of God I am a Christian man, by my actions a great sinner, and by calling a homeless wanderer of the humblest birth who roams from place to place. My worldly goods are a knapsack and some dried bread in it, and a Bible in my breast pocket. And that is all.

So begins this russian pilgrim his tale of spiritual search. He walks from place to place seeking advice on mysticism and the prayer life. He acquires The Philokalia, a collection of writings by eastern orthodox church fathers, and in it he finds a lot of wisdom on prayer.

But the charm of the book is his account of the people he meets who also tell their story. He finds shelter and friends but also some people who exploit him. He's always searching for a place where he can meditate in silence and solitude but the outer world seem always to interrupt and make demands of him.

Some spiritual classics are too heavy on mysticism for my liking - but this was different because it was more a biography. A soul on a spiritual journey - but along the way a lot of wisdom is found.

Tom says

Another book I encountered when studying Christian Mysticism and Eastern Orthodox practices. Like "The Cloud of Unknowing" it makes use of the "Jesus Prayer"

The Jesus Prayer (Greek: Η Προσευχή του Ιησοῦ) or "The Prayer" (Εὐχὴ, Greek: Η Εὐχή - the Wish) is a short, formulaic prayer esteemed and advocated within the Eastern Orthodox church:

“Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡλθέσθαι με τὴν ἁμαρτωλὴν.”

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

The prayer has been widely taught and discussed throughout the history of the Eastern Churches. It is often repeated continually as a part of personal ascetic practice, its use being an integral part of the eremitic tradition of prayer known as Hesychasm (Greek: ἡσυχάζω, hesychazo, "to keep stillness"). The prayer is particularly esteemed by the spiritual fathers of this tradition (see Philokalia) as a method of opening up the heart (kardia) and bringing about the Prayer of the Heart (Καρδιακή Προσευχή). The Prayer of The Heart is considered to be the Unceasing Prayer that the apostle Paul advocates in the New Testament. (Remember Paul was the Apostle who went to the Eastern Church while Peter went to Rome and the west.) St. Theophan the Recluse regarded the Jesus Prayer stronger than all other prayers by virtue of the power of the Holy Name of Jesus.

Jan-Maat says

I'm fairly sure that I stumbled upon this while studying Dostoevsky for my final year dissertation at university.

The first text, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, has a timeless feel. The pilgrim wanders across Russia from one place of pilgrimage to another. The pilgrim holds to the practise of continual prayer, first praying 'Christ have mercy on me', building up to 'Christ have mercy upon me, a sinner' and finally reaching 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me, a sinner'. The pilgrim walks. The words of the prayer fall in place to the pattern of the pilgrim's heartbeat. The praying is continuous. The non-believer suspects that the altered breathing pattern has an effect on the brain. It's a solid spiritual text. The author was unknown and I don't recall any details that hinted at the time or place of composition. There are no details or even hints about the pilgrim's life before pilgrimage and continuous prayer. But for the development of the prayer the pilgrim's way could be eternal or at least the continuous work of a life of pilgrimage.

The sequel, *The Pilgrim Continues His Way* is entirely different and unintentionally funny. It's firmly placed in the late nineteenth century. An odd group of characters, including a university professor, meet and discuss their religious experiences which frequently seem to include the devil appearing to personally tempt them (as in Ivan's fevered vision in *The Brothers Karamazov* but without Dostoevsky's literary gravitas). All of these characters are of higher social status, possibly to add social authority to their conversion stories or then again

it could be a wish fulfilment fantasy on the part of the anonymous author of the social elite sharing the spiritual outlook of people for whom the appearance of the Devil in everyday life was a believable phenomena. It's hard to imagine anybody but a hardened believer finding these stories remotely believable, unless they were also fond of adding too much vodka to their afternoon beer.

As spiritual reading I could only recommend the first part, I'm sure it has an appeal to non-Orthodox Christians as well. As a whole both books could be useful for a reader looking for some insight in to pre-Revolutionary Russian religious thinking for ordinary believers. This is part of the spiritual outlook of the minor characters of dozens of Russian and early Soviet novels.

Ruthmgon says

Found this years ago through my reading of Franny and Zooey by JD Salinger. Franny is obsessed with the book, and it sort of makes you want to see what all the hoopla is about. (Funny story about that sometime) I re-read this during a book purge, and I think ultimately it is a wonderful little book-- approachable from both a literary or a religious viewpoint.

Basically it is this, an anonymous journal/biography of a young man's search for God through the Jesus prayer. This is set in 1860's Russia, when it is apparently common that when life does not go well, that people often give up everything they know and hit the road--ie searching--for meaning or purpose in the religious relics or establishments of the day. This pilgrim knows that he can ask for bread or even shelter from anyone on his journeys and get assistance as he travels. He walks across Russia with his knapsack and trusts that God will provide for him. From the beginning he has one question "How does one pray without ceasing?"

He is given the answer by one aged cleric that he meets, and practices the exercise faithfully until he succeeds on a certain level, and is able to encourage and share it with others. He mentions other helpful religious works of the time... At the end of the book, you understand that he has been narrating this to someone else, and is off to Israel, where he has secured passage on a ship for free.

The journey and glimpses of the life in 1850s Russia is my favorite part of this, and yet the point is also about the average everyday person and the quest for truth.

Also there is a definite draw here for people who are interested in our western versions of meditation..some of the descriptions of how difficult it is to clear your mind and be mindful of practice, reminds me of similar writings of Buddhist meditation. Today's Christian who has no experience of liturgical religious practices may find the views on prayer really confining and outdated, but the main character's earnest desire to be closer to Jesus is also very modern.

Meg says

Finally, a book that made sense to me. Right from the beginning I saw myself in the Pilgrim. "That's me!" I immediately said to myself.

"On the 24th Sunday after Pentecost I went to church to say my prayers there during the

Liturgy. The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians was being read and among other words I heard these--'*Pray without ceasing.*'

"It was this text, more than any other, which forced itself upon my mind and I began to think how it was possible to pray without ceasing, since people need to concern themselves with other things also in order to make a living. . . .

"What ought I to do?" I thought. "Where shall I find someone to explain it to me?"

I continue searching for a spiritual advisor, a person who is deeply spiritual, and not just on the surface, as the ones I meet seem to be. *sigh*

This book touched me more than the hundreds (literally) of books I've read in search of a clear explanation on prayer and the way to live a Jesus-centered life. I wish I had found this book years ago. Oh, and the biggest thing from this book--The Jesus Prayer. In all the books I've read, why have I never heard of this prayer? This is a huge revelation for me. I now say this prayer throughout the day, every day.

I love this Pilgrim, who has taught me so much in a kind and loving manner, but I still need that spiritual advisor, and will continue my search.

Fergus says

Exactly twenty years ago this April, I quit smoking.

It was the WORST ordeal of my life - bar NONE.

No kidding! I just quit cold turkey.

They say there's no fool like an Old Fool!

That day I felt lost, rootless - I felt I was in a lifeless vacuum.

I was suddenly a disembodied soul.

And that's exactly what happens when you quit cold turkey.

Previously, your life is so busy and tied up with the endless routines of work - and smoke breaks are your reward, and thereby part and parcel of your work and of such work-like stress that arises during family times as well - that you think NOTHING of quitting.

Poor fool.

NOW, I no longer had the cigarettes that were the crutch for my Social Self!

I was in a Void.

Each day was brute agony. Rather than lose my mind - which may well have happened - I had to fill that void with a voice.

My own.

Praying.

Praying what?

One simple prayer...

THIS is the story of that prayer, a prayer this time by a solitary soul who's on an endless pilgrimage across Russia.

He has left behind everything that he holds dear - except his Faith.

Some brave people chance all on a wing and a prayer!

So this quiet, humble narrator walks thousands of miles - casting his fate to the wind - and to God.

Carpe diem -
Quam minimum credula postero!

Yes, this little unassuming man takes the worldly Roman Horace to his Christian heart, seizing the day and leaving what it and tomorrow will bring to his Master's will.

Who among us could do that today?

For sufficient to each day is not only the good of it, but the evil, as well.

And this little man is repeatedly robbed, screamed at, and beaten within inches of his life. Yet he keeps walking humbly.

Just like me at my office - which was now a Void - except for the the thousand nicotine devils that had gathered around my screaming brain and now bludgeoned it within inches of my sanity!

What's the secret?

This one prayer.

The very heartbeat of the Russian Orthodox Philokalia, a copy of which the pilgrim has been given and which he carries all across 19th century Russia in his backpack.

And the prayer is...?

Simply, 'Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

Which he, and I, repeated without ceasing.

Through blizzards. Over mountains. In the midst of wincing pain. To his amazed hosts, when given hospitality. In the midst of angry mobs. On cold silent nights alone under the stars -

A man and his prayer.

And you know what?

He sees himself as such an extremely little and insignificant part of this great universe...

THAT HE NEVER EVEN TELLS US HIS NAME.

For the fact is, as I was learning, you become nameless under such unbearable circumstances.

And your agony is nameless!

And this little nameless pilgrim's book is such a crucial but gentle gift to the World, from such an unpretentious but grateful citizen of that world...

That it can be a LIFE-CHANGER for us!

And it can give us the Courage we need for the LONG HAUL.

It did it for me.

Josiah says

If you're looking for a book which extensively covers the topic of "prayer without ceasing," then I highly recommend this one. It also highlights the importance of inward/ interior prayer, which is often ignored or not stressed enough in Western Christianity.

Christopher says

The anonymous confessions of an early 19th century Russian aesthetic to his spiritual adviser, THE WAY OF A PILGRIM is a classic of Orthodox Christian spirituality and contains within its humble account a message accessible to every reader. Far from being a highfaultin' work of theology, its theme is simply the ability of any individual to dwell in the presence of God.

The author of the account speaks of how one day in a sermon he heard St Paul's exhortation to "pray without ceasing", and he wondered how that might be possible. When he asks the question of the abbot of a nearby monastery, the wise old monk introduces the pilgrim to the tradition of the prayer of the heart, or "Jesus prayer". The pilgrim wanders all over Russia, as far as Irkutsk in the east of Siberia. His account gives us an enjoyable account of Russian peasant life of the time. As he journeys about, he reads much of the Philokalia, the classic compendium of mystical writings by Orthodox saints. Essentially, the Jesus prayer is an attempt to come closer to God through ceaseless repetition of the phrase "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." In the initial steps of his prayer life, the pilgrim says this first hundreds and then thousands

of times a day. But the Jesus prayer is no mantra, having intrinsic value in its, nor is it "vain repetition". Rather, the prayer is meant to guide the Christian into a ceaseless longing for God in his heart. Without that centering in the heart, speaking the words of the prayer is an empty gesture.

The work is an important representation of Orthodoxy to non-Orthodox, and it dispells two popular misconceptions about the Church. One is the accusation made by some Protestants that Orthodoxy is ritualism mediated by a priest, and does not teach a personal relationship by God. You could hardly have a greater relationship with God than calling upon him every waking (and sleeping) hour. The other misconception is that Christianity has no mystical tradition comparable to the East, but *THE WAY OF A PILGRIM*, once you get past its rather staid prose, will reveal profound teachings on prayer and meditation that the hippest Hindu or Buddhist fads are the palest reflections of.

The book does have a sequel, "A Pilgrim Continues His Way", which is published together with *THE WAY OF A PILGRIM* in some editions. I have not read this yet, and I say that if you can't find an edition with it, don't worry, as the main text has more than enough to keep you occupied. *THE WAY OF A PILGRIM* is a common introductory reading recommended by Orthodox priests to inquirers and converts in English-speaking countries, and I can heartily recommend it. I should note however that the *Philokalia*, to which the author often refers, was written for monastics and is generally considered dangerous to read without the guidance of a spiritual father.

Mateo says

Of course I first came across this book in "Franny and Zooey". I later found it at a place called Urban Ore. I love how virtuosic the pilgrim is with his humility, how open he is to learning secrets from everyone he meets along the road, and how clearly he describes attaining unceasing internal prayer as an experiment of the imagination--to picture your heart beating in your chest and to slowly travel inwards with your creative intellect until you reach it, to sit silently in the spaces between heartbeats, and then feel the love, baby!!! He also did a good job of reminding me how to stay faithful to teachers who have passed through the portal of dreams and sometimes make us feel abandoned and alone. That's when a book can come to the rescue. I felt like whenever I put this book down I could not help but breathe deep and clear and walk along the sunny side of reality; a balm against those cut-off, suffocating parts of my judgemental mind.

The *Pilgrim Continues His Way* wasn't as good in my opinion.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Оtkrovennye rasskazy strannika dukhovnomu svoemu otsu = The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way, Anonymous

The Way of a Pilgrim, or The Pilgrim's Tale (Russian: «??????????? ???????? ????????? ????????? ?????»), is the English title of a 19th-century Russian work, recounting the narrator's journey as a mendicant pilgrim across Russia while practising the Jesus Prayer. It is unknown if the book is literally an account of a single pilgrim, or if it uses a fictional pilgrim's journey as a vehicle to teach the practice of ceaseless inner prayer and communion with God. The Russian original, or a copy of it, was present at a Mount Athos monastery in Greece in the 19th century, and was first published in Kazan in 1884, under the Russian title that translates as "Candid Narratives of a Pilgrim to His Spiritual Father."

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Michael O'Brien says

This is the story of a Russian peasant turned Orthodox pilgrim whose quest is learning how to apply the Bible's adage to "pray without ceasing". In so doing, he meets various fellow Russians whose lives he influences or who influence him to improved piety in their lives. It's an interesting book, and ends somewhat indefinitely in a discussion between Pilgrim, an elder, a priest, a professor, and a hermit on the importance of intense prayer and how to be successful at it. For me, I found the most helpful part of this book to be the Appendix in which Early Church Fathers and Saints explain how to use prayer to work toward that high state in which one can totally clear the mind and heart of all passions and desires and focus totally upon the Lord Jesus Christ and defeat the spiritual enemies and temptations that draw Christians into spiritual separation from God.

Maureen says

tonight's my night for reviews about books that nearly drove me crazy.

this is one of those books. i had loved franny and zooey but i didn't think that the little book that nearly drove fanny crazy was anything more than a plot device. and then one day i walked into a bookstore i'd never been in before, and there it was. franny's special book, the one that changed everything. it was real.

i'd been struggling to maintain some kind of faith at that point. i wanted very badly to believe, and that need had been deeply ingrained. and so i took the book home. i read it. and then as franny did, i began to put it into practice: i tried to pray without ceasing. i believe i succeeded. and i got to a strange place in my mind that way. and finally i felt as i did about the ouija board as a child, that i was toying with things that were as big as they were simple, and i was frightened. i saw that my praying without ceasing made it impossible for me to live in the world. and so i put the book away. and i stopped praying. period. maybe i will start again someday. but certainly not today.

Jessaka says

The manuscript for this wonderful little book was found in the hands of a monk by the Abbot of St. Michael's Monastery at Kazan in Russia. Since then this book has been contributed to two writers: The first author is believed to have been Archimandrite Mikhail Kozlov who lived between 1826 and 1884. He converted to the Orthodox religion and then became a missionary. The second writer is believed to be Arsenii Troepolskii who was born in 1809 and lived until 1870. Like the pilgrim, he traveled between monasteries. The first manuscript is thought to be written by Kozlov, and then it was rewritten by Troepolskii. How they came to believe this, I do not know, but what is important about the book is its message, and the life of this sweet pilgrim.

This book first came to be published in 1884 in Russia, and in the U.S., it was first published in 1930. It fell into my own hands in the late 1990s when I was in a yoga religion, as this was a book that was prized but not practiced by them. They didn't use the Jesus Prayer in this book; instead they had their own mantra. The results are the same.

The first chapter of this book begins: "By the grace of God I am a Christian man, by my actions a great sinner, and by calling a homeless wanderer of the humblest birth who roams from place to place. My worldly goods are a knapsack with some dried bread in it on my back, and in my breast-pocked a Bible. and that is all."

When in church one day the little pilgrim heard a scripture from the Bible that said to pray without ceasing. He began to wonder how one could do this and so began asking questions at different churches. No one could give him what he felt was the right answer, so he began traveling around the country to different monasteries. After one year or more he was walking down a road and an old man who looked like a cleric overtook him. They began talking, and he ended up at his monastery where he was taught the interior Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus have mercy on me." This prayer was to be repeated all day long to oneself, but at first you had to begin slowly increasing the number of times you repeated this prayer. He began with 2,000 times a day until this silent prayer became a part of him completely.

The pilgrim decides to stay and learn from this cleric, so he finds a house in exchange for gardening and stays the summer. Near the end of the summer his teacher dies, and his job has ended. He moves on, teaching others along the way.

He says this about the results of his praying without ceasing: "I have become a sort of half-conscious person. I have no cares and no interests. The fussy business of the world I would not give a glance to. The one thing I wish for is to be alone, and all by myself to pray, to pray without ceasing; and doing this, I am filled with joy. And he also said, "If I happened to meet anyone, all men without exception were as dear to me as if they had been my nearest relations. But I did not concern myself with them much."

Later on in his travels he meets a priest who tells him, "Why do you want to be alone? Common prayer is pleasanter. God did not create man to think of himself only, but that men should help each other and lead each other along the path to salvation." The pilgrim, not listening to his advice, goes on his way.

As I moved from Hinduism to Buddhism, I asked my Buddhist teacher why it was that those who meditated did not socialize. I learned from him that meditation does indeed cause one to withdraw from the world. It

never affected me in that way. Anyway, this Buddhist teacher tried to prevent this lack of socializing in the monks by sending them out into the public, such as to the grocery store. I do not believe really works.

When my husband and I moved to another part of the country, there were no Buddhist or Hindu groups. I continued to find meditation to be peaceful, but then I let it go. One day I sat and contemplated on what I really believed, and it was this: "All that is necessary in life is caring for all life, which includes the earth. Nothing else is needed."
