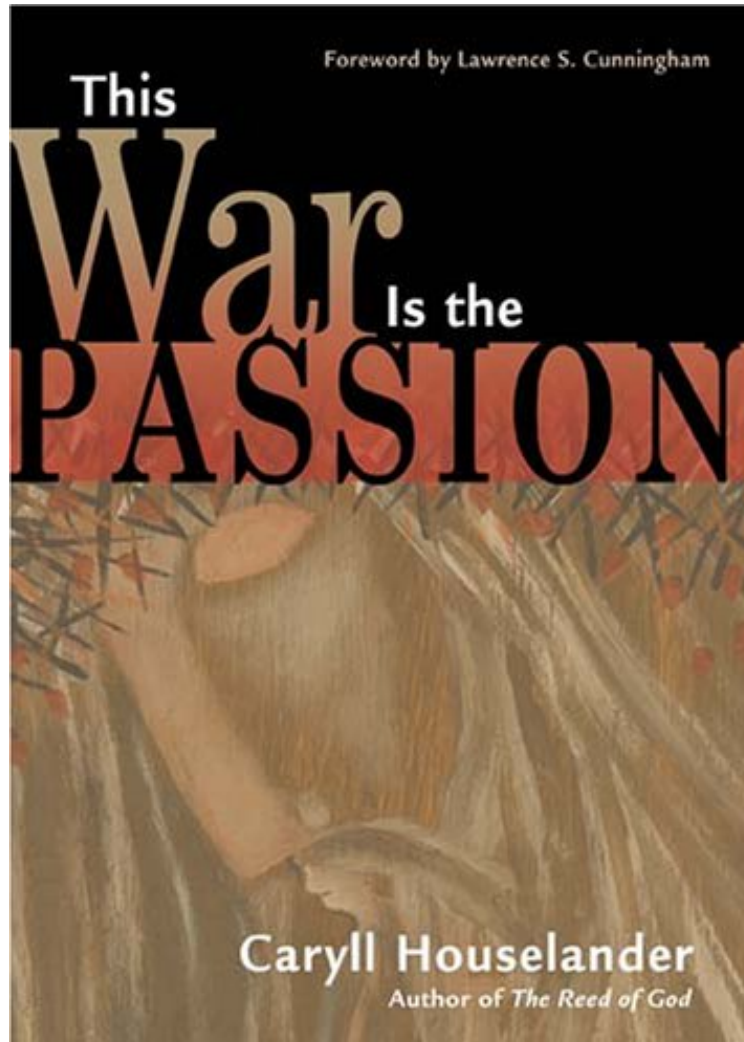


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## This War Is the Passion

Caryll Houselander

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**Caryll Houselander : This War Is the Passion** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised This War Is the Passion:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. He is alive today as He was in WWII By JimR We too have been in prolonged war, full of anxiety, sorrow, and deprivation. Christ in His humanity showed us how to cope with these unpleasant changes through His life, death, and Resurrection. Houselander, a woman, an artist, and mystic writes in plain English using examples of every day happenings. She is most noted for seeing Christ in those around us. We cannot know the outcome to war but we can be on a path to eternal life, which is the goal for all Christians. If you like C. S. Lewis writings you will see the comparison in style, rhetoric, and theology. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant By Jason If you suffer in life you will love this book. Caryll Houselander's words touch to the

heart. She had a deep understanding of the Passion of Christ during her time of suffering in the war, but she also applies it to everyday suffering to everyone who is a Christian struggling to carry their crosses in this world. I highly recommend this book to everyone!! God bless

17 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Some beautiful insights

By Aquinas This is a beautiful little book (replete with poetic and mystical passages of real beauty and full of joy). It is not a classic (as her book the "Reed of God" most surely is) - it was her first book after all. But I think what marks her work out is a kind of intimacy - she knows what it means to be a friend of God - she is kind of tough and zany version of St Therese of Lisieux without the sentimentality. Not only is it an important spiritual work it gives a real insight into life in wartime London. Again, I wish to thank again Fr James V Schall for recommending Houselander as, but for him and indeed Dom Hugh Gilbert I would never have come across her and she does appear to be a spiritual master. But why is she so good - because like all great spiritual writers she has an understanding of the great mysteries as of in some way she inhabits them. Even so, I suppose I was a little surprised to her reaction to her forthcoming death from cancer - I suppose I expected she would greet her death with a kind of joy but she freely admits she would rather stay behind. In a way this showed me how holy persons really differ depending on their individuality - for example, all that people like St Ignatius of Antioch want is to be with the Lord. As a dying person, who has undergone a fair bit of suffering, I too can understand this desire to see the face of God, which surpasses all things. But let me give some extracts to show why this is a good book. In this extract, she understands precisely the extent of Christ's identification with us and the need for sacrificial love: "All of us can literally imitate him in the wholeness of sacrifice, in offering all that we are - and that, stripped of our selfishness - to God, as an act of adoration to God and of love for one another". "If Christ is growing in you, you are growing towards sacrifice...in real sacrifice there is joy which surpasses all other joys, it is the crescendo and culmination of love...it means a whole attention, a whole concentration, a whole donation". Here she tells us not to be fussily pious: "Don't be an expert in spiritual life. Treat Christ as the real person that he is, don't fuss and worry about your soul" And, she knows of intimacy with Christ: "Christ asks for a home in your soul, where he can be at rest with you, where he can talk easily to you, where you and he. Alone together, can laugh and be silent and be delighted with one another. ...Forget yourself, forget your soul, let him tell you how he loves you, show what he is like, prove to you that he is real... he asks only one thing, that you will let him tell you this, directly, simply; that you will treat him as someone real, not as someone who does not really exist...Christ is God's Word, saying to the world: "I love you...every moment has been a self-donation to you". And she really understands how Christ communes with us: "We are one body, Christ. His life in us is like the bloodstream in the body, a torrent which flows through the whole body into each part continually". And she knows how important that Liturgy and rhythm is for man: "The rhythm of the liturgical year is a natural expression of man's life in Christ. It is like the days and the nights, like waking and sleeping, like the procession from childhood to resurrection...the rhythm of the liturgical year is a natural expression of man's life in Christ. It is like the days and the nights, like waking and sleeping, like the procession from childhood to resurrection. At Christmas, Christ is born in us. At Passiontide, he suffers and dies in us." And rhythm is the key: "Rhythm makes the soul as responsive to God's will as the flowers, as ready to open at a touch and shine out with his splendour, or to close and relax into absolute peace" "From all this it is evident that rhythmic prayer must be pleasing to God, that he has designed everything, to work to a rhythmic law, that we do really fulfil his will in it only when we are in harmony with his great rhythm" Why was she not a Benedictine Oblate rather than a third order Franciscan? And she understands the need for adoration in the heart of man: "Adoration is necessary to man, his heart must adore or die; men fallen away from God adore - or idolize - power, State, machinery, anything that seems bigger than themselves, to combine mystery with might". And she understands how we may be called to suffer: "But trust does not mean believing that God will spare us from suffering. It means believing that if God lets us suffer it is because there is good for us in it, it is always an expression of his love, and even out of sin, which is evil in itself, good can come". "To try to avoid suffering is useless, for the seed of it is in the human heart". "It is the doctrine of suffering which distinguishes Christianity from every other religion, from every other school of thought" I would add here that it is supremely in Catholicism that it is best understood as building up the body of Christ - no doubt Houselander would have appreciated John Paul II's apostolic letter on suffering: "Salvifici doloris" Indeed she pre-empted it; "My personal suffering can lighten the world's suffering, by redeeming the world's sin...Through Christ, suffering has become, not an evil to be avoided at all costs, but a thing to be accepted willingly, even joyfully, as a means of sharing in the redemption of the world." As a practical point, I would be interested to know how the practical impact of the suffering caused by cancer impacted on her thoughts on this. And like St Therese of Lisieux she knows that God is to be found in the small things and doing the small things with love: "we learn at last to realise that waking, eating, loving and sleeping are the supreme prayers that we pray in so far as we concentrate our whole selves, all our love, into God's will for us, and his will is first of all that we live as human creatures, that we rise and work and eat and love and sleep". But where she is the master is in seeing Christ in everyone: "For we can learn Christ not only from the gospels, but from every single person with whom we come in contact". And she teaches us to contemplate: "To practise is this - you look at Christ until you become like him, just as by looking at the sun you become golden like the sun. You touch his wounds, and from them you learn the measure of his love. You share the experience of his passion with him, until through living with his love you become one with

him". Anyway what can one say but that this book is full of little paragraphs which are worthy of meditation - she simply radiates Christ as only a lover of Christ could!

Originally published in 1941, this book by the renowned British mystic and spiritual writer Caryl Chesson is once again new as modern readers learn from Chesson's encouragement of her compatriots to view their experience of World War II through the lens of Christ's passion. Writing with the intensity and immediacy of life in London during the blitz, Chesson's thought-provoking reflections continue to speak to believers today about the complex challenge they face to find Christ in the midst of the War on Terror. Writing in the tradition of Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, and Teresa of Avila, Chesson's words resonate with Christians today regardless of their perspective on theology and the Church.