



The Psalter

Galen Watson

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A medieval prayer book, an Irish saint's prophecy of the last pope, and a forgery that changed the church—forever.

Father Romano has run afoul of the modern inquisitors before. This time, it leads to a medieval manuscript and murder. Was it an ordinary theft gone wrong or something more? The Carabinieri in Rome would like to know.

Michael Romano is an American priest working in the Vatican's Secret Archives with a penchant for stepping over the line. Church Inquisitors have noticed -- and they aren't happy. Nevertheless, Romano is also the Church's senior paleographer, an expert in ancient manuscripts, and his expertise is needed to examine a ninth-century codex known as a Psalter.

Father Romano's examination leads him into the past as he uncovers an historical narrative of medieval forgeries, Saracen invasions and a legendary fight for the richest kingdom on earth. Yet he has unwittingly become a target for those who will stop at nothing to possess the secret of the Psalter.

*Untraditional Christianity Warning

The Psalter Details

Date : Published October 31st 2012 by Watson

ISBN :

Author : Galen Watson

Format : Kindle Edition 394 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Thriller, Fiction

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From Reader Review The Psalter for online ebook

Magiccats says

This a really enjoyable read. Very intriguing and thought provoking . I like the blend of the historical story around the Psalter to explain the history behind it and tie it into the present day mystery. I actually cried when Sergius was dying and he said " I just wanted to make music, but they wouldn't let me". Considering he was a weak not so likable character, I was surprised to find tears running down my face. I am thoroughly enjoying this novel. 5 stars so far.

Cindy Lyle says

I was given a copy of this novel, for an honest review, thank you.

Let me start off by saying that I really enjoyed this novel, but it does require an open mind. There are many religious and political views covered throughout this story that not everyone will agree with. However with that said, this is a work of fiction and the author did an excellent job incorporating all these different views respectfully and for me it was very educational and entertaining.

The main focus of the story centers around an ancient prayer book called a Psalter. It is discovered in modern day, in the library of the Vatican. The discovery of this book sets off a chain of events which leads the reader down a path of murder, betrayal, and revelation. Not only do we see how this Psalter affects the characters in the present, the reader is also taken back through time to where the Psalter first appeared and the many sacrifices these people went through to preserve the secrets the Psalter holds.

For me I enjoyed the historical part of this story more than the present, but that is because I'm a history buff and I really don't know much about religious history so this was something new for me. The author did a fantastic job making these characters come to life and I could tell that he did his research. I was pulled into their world filled with turmoil and their quest to discover the truth. Not just the truth behind ancient scrolls and writings but the truth in their own hearts and their beliefs.

My only complaint would be that I wanted to learn more about Father Mike. I feel there were some unresolved issues with him that I would have liked to have answers too. Maybe there is a sequel??

The Psalter was a solid read and I would recommend this book to anyone with an open mind and a thirst for a good mystery. The characters are wonderful and the story is daring and intriguing. I hope to see more from this author in the future.

followbooks says

Thought this was a great book! See our full review here: <http://followbooks.com/the-psalter-by...>

The Pirate Ghost (Formerly known as the Curmudgeon) says

Wow! this is a provocative story. Pillars of the Earth meet Ted Dekker's Black with shades of Martin Luther thrown in to sweeten the pot. It's an open question waiting for us to find the answers.

SEEK! and Ye shall find. **ASK!** and ye shall receive. And don't stop until you get an answer.

This is a difficult review to write because the questions raised by this book may not be complex on the surface turn out to involve a fairly complex set of players, actions and circumstances while making obvious statements about religion that have huge implications in the spiritual world. Yet, it's also a pretty good action adventure story with guns bombs police secret societies and lots and lots of mysteries. A few things even blow up. I'm rating it a 4 star read (3.5-4.5). I'll break down my likes and dislikes but for those who only read the first paragraph of a review then move on, I'll explain that rating like this:

“The Psalter” is an Indie-Pub that reads like a polished novel. It has a fun, interesting story and plot that may have gotten a bit loose towards the end, but stayed together well enough to keep me entertained and engaged. It has wonderful, likeable endearing characters who were engaged in situations that I knew were dangerous for them. Never mind the guys with guns, swords spears shield and bullet proof vests and the bombs and stuff now we’re talking about some heavy duty spiritual stuff here. It’s also covering subject matter that is going to be hard to stomach for a large portion of readers who identify themselves as “Christians” especially for conservative Catholics. In the end, I felt the skill shown in weaving such a tale, for a first time author, and the delicacy used in serving up the difficult issues, not to mention the courage to do so, were commendable enough to raise it to a 3.5 to 4.5 star read for me. I averaged it out at 4.

“So one said, ‘I beg your pardon. It’s not quite clear, that which you just spoke. Is that a parable or a very subtle joke?’

*God shuffled his feet, and glanced around at them.
The people sipped their wine and stared right back at him...”*
(God Shuffled His Feet – Crash Test Dummies 1994)

I like this kind of story. I fear that those who feel challenged by these issues, or who are not looking for anything that excites intellectual curiosity and invites debate may give this low marks simply because the “challenge” presented is unavoidable and it challenges the authenticity that some christian beliefs are based on. That’s the cost of writing a provocative book. You can let the cat out of the bag, but not everybody is a cat lover and those who do not love challenging cats are likely going to sense insult and take offence. It’s still going to get high marks from me. I like cats.“

I will discuss the book in general here, and in more detail on this Goodreads Discussion thread:

<http://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/1...>

I’m taking this approach because I really liked the book and I don’t want to give away the books secrets or spoil it in any way for those who might like to read it. All I can say is, “hold on to your hats, the earth will shake on this one.” I will say this to everyone. **If you start this book, stick it out to the end, even if you have to force yourself and you will be rewarded.** How the questions this book raises are phrased and how they end are as important as the questions themselves.

The Psalter by Galen Watson

The Product

By product, I mean those things that have to do with quality but nothing to do with plot, story and message. I mean mundane, marketing matters that mean a lot to publishers in open ways and a lot to purchasers in not so open ways. Ordinarily this isn't important but this is an Independently Published eBook sold through Kindle. Indie-pubs have a reputation for poor editing, chintzy looking covers, bad grammar and poorly written mechanical plots. I cannot vouch for things like appearance and quality materials with an eBook. I liked the cover-art (it won a small contest in our Goodreads Discussion Group). I found no formatting problems with the text, though that sometimes varies reader to reader and book seller to book seller. I also found no grammatical errors that stood out to me, misspelled words etc. This story was a smooth read that had very few, if any rough edges.

Basically this reads and feels like any book that has had the benefit of being run through a major publishers publishing mill. In fact, I doubt I would have thought this an Indie-pub if I hadn't known it was before I read it. So, for Quality Product, I give it an A-

Having said that, I can understand why publishers will likely balk at publishing this. The underlying themes are too volatile for them to want to take a chance on and publishers like to micro-manage the risks taken by their authors. There's no micro-managing this is too much "cat" to put back in the bag.

The Story

The story has two phases, one told in the past, and one told in the present. They are interconnected, which I liked but have different strengths and weaknesses. This is likely the area I'll give the lowest marks, but that's a comparative point of view. Even the low marks I'd give here are good. I'm not going to give a complete synopsis because much of the entertainment value is tied up in some tricky but well written plot devices that I don't want to spoil for anybody.

I'll deal with the modern story first.

The main character is a Catholic Priest named Michael Romanov, and American Born to poverty in a tragically abusive home who learned to live on the streets until taken in by a Catholic Priest who helped get away from the dangerous streets and enjoy a good education that eventually led him to wearing the clerical collar as a Priest himself. This is a priest still smarting from getting hammered for his role in an obscure Church Intrigue that is explained in the book better than I can here. He's young, relatively, athletic, a trained boxer, ruggedly handsome, and, as a priest, easily considered a bit of a radical where his personal thinking is concerned, though he is still very loyal to the Catholic Church. At story start, Father Romanov's confessor and friend is murdered by an unknown assailant who attempts to steal a Psalter (Prayer book) in the priests possession that belongs to the Vatican Library and was written at the end of the first millennium after Christ, a little before 1000 AD. Father Romanov recognizes the Psalter as one written by the Scribe he and his friend and confessor have been calling "Giovanni."

Father Mike takes the book to Paris where a Lady Professor is able to take pictures with infrared and ultraviolet cameras so they can see the original text. The Psalter turns out to be a key to a hidden treasure of religious writing greater than the Dead Sea Scrolls and it looks like they can't even trust the church. Even their enemy's enemies are not friends here.

For the Modern story, I give the overall grade of B-. For me this was the weakest part of the story. Not

because I had issues with Father Mike as a main character. In fact, he came across as very interesting for a main character, and I liked some (but not all) of the internal conflict that came with him. My objections are only because there were so many parts of his story left unexplored. Tied to him, were the stories of Pascal (whom I loved) and Isabella. Since Mike was the main character, what's left unturned for him became unturned for Isabella. (Pascal came across as wonderful to me.)

And, though I liked the intricate tangled plot that wrapped a finger around Muslim Terrorists, Church conspiracies and hidden villains, I think some of these, perhaps intentionally were left with too much of them unexplored. Still, we're talking about the difference between a B- and an A here. Significant, relatively, but on both counts enjoyable

For the Action/Adventure Elements, I give the modern story a B+ maybe an A-. I had the feeling that we needed more time with Father Mike and the Rome Gang to fully understand all of the intricately interwoven parts to enjoy the conclusion. Towards the end, things seemed to rapidly tumble to a conclusion leaving all sorts of loose ends. The French Police and Carabinieri elements worked fine as did the anti-terrorism angle. I think, generally, one of the problems was that the modern story thread was overshadowed by what was going on in the historical thread. I also didn't think the way Father Mike's childhood story came out was the most effective.

I give a lot of points for the way this story leans on the historical story in a way that brings the same questions asked in 1000 AD to 2000 AD showing what impact they might have on the present. It also serves to beg the question, "what else don't we know about, what have we lost?"

Historical Story

I give the historical story an A-. This could have been a story all in itself, left just like it is without the modern story. There were more areas to explore and, even though it also rumbled like an out of control train to the finish, once it got started, it kept the basic idea, plot and theme together. In the historical story there was intrigue, action, suspense, everything needed for a good story, even villains and weasels. And secrets... oh, man the secrets... (but I'll stop here.) I've deducted to an A- because I liked this and thought the entire book could be a work of historical fiction.

Plot Complexity

Another B-. The front end (the modern story) relied on the historical end to support it and some of best questions were left in the past, however, tying them together with the "Psalter" was a good way to know that decisions made in the past have affected what we believe in the present. It also served to put all of us, Christianity, Judaism and Islam in the same boat.

For the underlying themes I give the Psalter an A+. This is another story directly asking questions about how Christianity came to be as it is, specifically the Catholic Church. As the only religion of the western civilized world, decisions made within the rank and file of the Catholic Church altered the way we understand our role as spiritual beings and what it takes to be Christians, Jews and Muslim's etc. I also like the "Big Tent" that puts all man in the same boat, spiritually.

I cannot say I agree with all conclusions, but I surely agree that these are questions somebody should be asking, and, in a public way, answering. What happened? Was that man's decision or Gods?

Warnings

- 1) Some violence but not enough to bug most healthy YA to OA.
- 2) Some underlying themes here that leave unanswered questions that may bother some readers.

3) Did I mention warning number 2?

Summary

God made Man. Man made the Church. To err is Human. To forgive Divine. As a tenant of your faith, question everything until you have answers.

4 Stars

Lisa says

if you liked the DA Vinci code you will love this.

some great learning, if you have ever been to Rome you will understand the descriptions if you have never been then this book will make you yearn for a travel trip.

Patricia says

This is one of my favorite sorts of books. Mr. Watson has written an exciting thriller set in the modern Vatican, with a colorful parallel story running in the past. He touches on several subjects that I find fascinating. I won't spoil the suspense by telling you what they are.

The book is well written and edited. I only spotted a few glitches. Local color is good. The characters are well thought out. His style might be a bit more fluid in spots. Overall, a very entertaining book.

It might deserve a warning for religious non-conformity.

Lee Harmon says

Hey, this is a fun one!

Let's start with the basics. A psalter doesn't psing psongs door-to-door, nor does it dispense psalt and pepper. A psalter is a devotional book of psalms.

This particular psalter is over 1,000 years old. Nay, nearly 2,000 years old, for in in the ninth century, it was written over the words of a first-century heretical gospel ... a copy of the Book of Thomas the Contender from the Ebionites ... as a means of secretly preserving the words of an original apostle. The story takes place half in the ninth century and half in the twenty-first century, when the original gospel is finally restored. It's a thriller that escalates in both story lines to an unexpected finish.

This is a Da Vinci Code twin, complete with a Vatican setting and a few jabs at the Church, but without the sensationalism. The conversation is well-written; it draws you into the era. It's fiction, but well-researched and plausible beneath the story-telling surface.

Definitely recommended.

David Schwan says

This was a fun read. This is written in the style of a Steve Berry or Dan Brown novel. The main character Father Romano carries a gritty past. He is an expert at analyzing writing found in old manuscripts. He teams up with a most improbable pair Pascal and Isabella in Paris. Pascal is an expert in Aramaic and Isabella at finding hidden writing in old manuscripts. They are up against a secret group with a secret agenda.

The book contained some nice surprises in the story one coming within pages of the ending. There are two stories interwoven in the book, one takes place in the present, one roughly 850 AD. Of the two stories the contemporary one is fast paced and a page turner, the story from the middle ages was interesting but not as compelling.

Bill says

I would never have expected to be so enthralled by a story that involved a modern mystery of 1st Century heretical texts, with a second plot line about 9th Century Papal history, but I was heart and soul into this book all week! There were a couple of places I was afraid the cars were going to fly off the track, but it was more than worth it to have held on to the end of the ride. If you liked Dan Brown's thrillers, and Ken Follett's historical series, I think it a sure bet you'd enjoy "The Psalter".

Ctgt says

The overall plot of this story reminds me of The Da Vinci Code from several years ago. You have a set of writings that are alternately being sought after and protected by secret groups and it revolves around the Catholic Church, but this is where the similarities end.

We meet Father Mike Romano, a Vice-Prefect for the Vatican Archives. His close friend and confidante Father Mackey, Secretary to the Pope is killed in a hit and run accident while removing an ancient text from Vatican property. This isn't an accident as the driver stops and removes the book from the vehicle before driving off with the police in pursuit. The killer dies when he loses control of his car during the chase and the text is recovered. Father Romano is called in by police and Cardinal Keller, The Defender of the Faith, to find out what was so special about this book that made it necessary to kill someone. Romano determines the book is a Psalter, a type of medieval prayer book and while worth 15-20 thousand dollars would not seem worth the trouble of killing Father Mackey. However, Romano does notice something about the text that makes him believe the book may have been written by a medieval scribe Romano and Mackey have named Giovanni. He sees small indentations in between the letters of the Psalter that have been left by a reed stylus known as a calamus.

Romano thinks that the original text was erased and the vellum used for the Psalter, so he takes the book to The National Archives in France, hoping to use their equipment to uncover the hidden text. He takes the book to Isabelle Heber at the Archives because he had attended a seminar she had presented and hoped she would be able to help.

The story then shifts to 843 A.D. and we meet Johannes Anglicus a pre-teen boy who is a novice in the Papal Palace of Pope Gregory IV. we are also introduced to Father Baraldus, a former soldier, Father Anastasius, Prefect of the Scrinium and Piero di Porca, Archpriest and Cardinal Priest of Saint Martins. The book continues to shift back and forth in time and this presents my one small quibble with the book. It interrupted the flow of the narrative for me and at certain times it would take me quite some time to get back into the rhythm of the current storyline.

The two story lines were good but I enjoyed the look into the past more so than the current tale. The author does a good job of keeping you guessing as to the identity of friend or foe and the action is good not great, but I found the final scene quite riveting.

If you liked the Dan Brown stuff you will enjoy this. If you're not a fan, I would encourage giving this a try anyway as I found the historical fiction part of the book very enjoyable.

Chrissy says

I'm very confused by this book. I'm not exactly sure what the heck just happened. It starts off as one thing, and then all of a sudden I'm reading a completely different book. The text switches back and forth between time periods, but that's not the confusing part. I dunno...it seems like the author wanted to do his version of The DaVinci Code, but ended up with....I don't even KNOW what.

Janet says

Awesome book ... stayed up until 5am to finish it.

Deb Novack says

This was a historical/religious fiction. The author made this a dual storyline with political and religious aspects from the time of the appearance of the Psalter to modern day. Some of the characters could have been developed more but with his research and great mind it ended up being a wonderful book.

If you like religious/political books and have an open mind please read this book.

Paula Howard says

The Psalter by Galen Watson - WOW. As much as I tried to read this book slowly and savor the story, I zoomed through it. It is one of those novels that consumes the reader even when not physically reading the book.

Psalters were prayer books containing the Psalms that were used by wealthy women nobility beginning in and around the 9th Century. The Church used manuscripts that had been deemed heretical to create the Psalters. This was done by "erasing" the heretical text with lye. The Psalms were then written over the newly cleaned parchment.

Father Mackey removed a Psalter from the Secret Archives in the Vatican. Before he can reach his unknown destination he is run down by a car, killed and the Psalter is stolen. The Psalter comes into the possession of Father Michael Romano also a member of the clergy who works in the Secret Archives. He is allowed to take the Psalter back to the Archives for safe keeping. The police believe that the attacker was a member of a relatively unknown group known as the Children of the Book. Father Romano has discovered that the Psalter has very faint Aramaic (language of Christ) under the current writing. Romano is a Paleographer - an expert in ancient manuscripts. While he can date the Psalter and realizes that the "hidden" language is Aramaic who needs assistance is pulling it up and translation.

Father Romano heads to Paris to seek the assistance of Isabelle Heber who is one of the Directors of the French National Archives. Isabelle agrees to help him and uses her technology to photograph the Aramaic. She though needs assistance in the translation and calls on her father, Paschal. These three unlikely individuals become our heroes. Father Romano is a Roman Catholic Priest. Isabelle is a former Catholic who is now an atheist. Paschal is a non practicing Jew who believes that Jesus is the Messiah, but not in the same way as Christian belief.

Paschal's faith is connected back to a 1st Century religious group known as the Ebionites. This was a Jewish group who believed in Christ but not as divine or the Messiah. It was later deemed a Gnostic group by the Church.

The Gospel that is contained in the Psalter is the Gospel of Thomas. Thomas was believed by some to be the twin brother of Jesus - thus deeming this gospel as Gnostic. Father, Isabelle and Paschal are attached and the Psalter is once again stolen. Father Romano recognizes the style of writing as being that of Giovanni, as he has named him.

Flash back to the 9th Century. The 9th Century was a turbulent time for the Catholic Church over who should control it. This was still during the time when the people of Rome were allowed to vote for the Holy Father. While the Pope was chosen by popular vote, the Emperor had the final say. Our main character during this time period is Johannes (John). Johannes is a priest with a secret - but I will get to that in a moment. Johannes is extremely educated and rises quickly in Rome to work within the Vatican Library and becomes a Cardinal at a very young age.

Johannes has great despair in the destruction of religious text - even those that the Church deemed heretical. He begins to hide them. During a turbulent time of who should sit on the Seat of St. Peter, Johannes saves an Arab prince, Amed. Amed returns later in the story as as a slave that is bought and freed by Johannes and later saves his life.

Johannes - is a woman - elected pope - hence, the legend of Pope Joan. Who according to legend gives birth on her way to be give the miter and crozier by the emperor. She dies shortly after giving birth to a son named Johannes whose father is also a priest, Father Anastasius.

Anastasius is later made a pope, abdicates and is the 1st anti-pope of the Catholic Church. Once again, Amed comes to the aid of young Johannes. He and his descendants pledge to always care for the books of Johannes (female).... hence the Children of the Book.

Galen Watson has done a wonderful job of research into not only the Roman Catholic Church but also the Jewish faith. He was woven legends of the Church into the story.... not only of Pope Joan but also the sedia stercoraria, a marble bench with a hole that is said to have been used by the Church after Pope Joan to determine that the pope was a man. This is considered a legend as is Pope Joan by the Church but is the making of a great religious novel.

I am in no way doing total justice to The Psalter. I highly recommend the reading of the books. Rarely have I read a 1st novel by an author that is so researched and well written. It is my hope that Galen Watson will return with a similar story. I believe that there are many adventures that could be made with Paschal, Isabelle and Father Romano (whose full name is Peter Michael Romano - the final pope is to be Peter the Roman) Yes, I hope that I will be able to read of this trio's future adventures.

John Hanscom says

Maybe a little less, but an exciting story, with two threads, one historical and one in the present. It is sort of "Dan Brown-ish," though much better. However, there is a conceit in all these similar books - granted, the process of getting the present Biblical canon and the statements in the Creeds was pretty messy, but that does not mean it was a conspiracy. It could have been, of course, but it could have been Spirit inspired. Finally, in this book, the author's belief about what would rock the faith of the Church and mine are quite different. Still, a fun book.
