



Touching Heaven: Discovering Orthodox Christianity on the Island of Valaam

John Oliver

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"Deep in a northern Russian forest of jade and brown, far from any hint of civilization, Valaam Monastery sinks into the seasons of the year as it has for a thousand years before. . . ." So begins the story of John Oliver, a young evangelical American on a journey of discovery—a journey that leads him to an ancient Russian monastery, a place of peace and a place of struggle. For on Valaam, he encounters Orthodox Christianity and is reminded that the Christian life is not for the faint of heart. And on Valaam, the treasure of stillness requires a fierce guarding. Foreword by Fr. Jonah Paffhausen, abbot of the Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, in Northern California. Excerpts from book reviews: Lyrically, eloquently, and with great wisdom, this book speaks to the soul. Part spiritual autobiography, part penetrating description of what Orthodox spirituality can and should be, John Oliver's words evoke in the reader's mind and heart a longing for God, at once fierce and tender. "Great art, great architecture," he says, "always leads us inward and upward." This marvelous book does no less. It leads us inward and upward, until, for a moment at least, we even touch heaven. -Fr. John Breck, Author, professor of biblical interpretation and ethics at St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris Touching Heaven is a lovely book, quiet and contemplative, and full of peaceful revelations. -Frederica Mathewes-Green, Author of Facing East, National Public Radio commentator This is a gripping and finely written account of what drew John Oliver into the deeper waters of Christianity and made him an Orthodox Christian. -Jim Forest, Author of Praying with Icons, lecturer

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