

To See God

Bruce J. Berger

Black Rose Writing

(307pp)

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To See God is a moving spiritual novel in which a nun navigates the complications of a possible divine mystery.

Through the story of a nun on a mission, Bruce J. Berger's novel *To See God* explores the mystery and interconnectedness at the heart of Orthodox spirituality.

Sister Theodora is a nun who lives in a Greek Orthodox monastery. She was rescued from the Holocaust; she attributes this to the intercession of Mary. Following a vision, Theodora comes to believe that her grandnephew, Jackie, is Jesus reincarnate. Jackie is Jewish and lives in Brooklyn; Theodora travels to the United States to reveal his destiny to him. Her pursuits are detailed in dramatic terms: there's drama as she leaves the comfort of her Greek monastery for an unknown land (indeed, those who are closest to her think that she has gone crazy).

This is a book full of moving human struggles; its supernatural drama distinguishes it. Its prose is clear and engaging, and Theodora's contemplative states are described with imagination and depth—her feelings of being in the material world and in the eternal sphere at the same time are described in a poetic manner. The result is a multifaceted exploration of faith, doubt, and guilt. Its suspense revolves around the question of whether Theodora's vision was authentic—and around Jackie's biological father's decision to take legal action to gain custody of his child, removing Jackie from his family. These events are gripping, and their resolutions are uncertain until the end.

The book's characterizations are complex too. Fevronia, Theodora's superior at the monastery, loves and respects Theodora and believes that she has a supernatural relationship with Mary. She even tries to exploit that relationship in order to find the final resting place of her brother, who was killed by the Nazi regime. When this mission fails, Fevronia blames herself, rather than choosing to doubt Theodora. But once Theodora begins to claim that her nephew is Jesus, Fevronia's faith is tested; her pain in contending with this new challenge is palpable. Equally well developed are the book's secondary characters—including Theodora's brother, a psychiatrist, fellow Holocaust survivor, and a nonbeliever who regards his rescue as the result of a fortunate set of random events. He and his family have struggles of their own, including issues of mental illness, racism, and infidelity.

To See God is a moving spiritual novel in which a nun and those in her circle navigate the complications of a possible divine mystery.

MATT BENZING (March 24, 2023)

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