ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Bush Went to Hell
Varghese T. Kozhimannil
CreateSpace
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Three Stars (out of Five)

In Dante's poem, Inferno, the author is led through nine circles of a hell populated by a variety of sinners punished in ways that reflect the nature of their sin in life. As Dante goes deeper, he introduces sinners who are based on Florentine cultural figures—his contemporaries. As they talk to Dante the character, their discussion gives Dante the poet and politician the opportunity to promote his agenda. In a way, a similar thing is done in Bush Went to Hell, the new book by Varghese T. Kozhimannil.

The book opens at the beginning of the Bush administration. Kozhimannil reminds readers of the controversies faced by the Bush administration (the recount, 9/11, various wars in the Middle East, Hurricane Katrina) through extensive real-life political commentary and fictionalized scenes where members of the Bush cabinet deal with these issues.

It's these events that eventually trip up Bush and his cabinet. In a not-too-distant future, they're tried and convicted as war criminals, but rather than face their punishment, the cabinet dies together by committing suicide. But the trial is too late anyway. Kozhimannil shows us the effects the Bush administration has on America and the world by taking readers through the next millennium, a dark and painful journey into a practically defunct world. It's the sins of Bush's past and his future that eventually take readers to the last judgment, where Bush is sentenced to hell.

Kozhimannil weaves an interesting and darkly amusing tale. Like Dante, Kozhimannil imagines various interactions not just with Bush, but with other public figures: on Judgment Day, the archangel Michael asks Martha Stewart if she plans on cooking in Heaven, and she responds that she plans to rest in Heaven. Competing news commentators Bill O'Reilly and Keith Olbermann get into an argument waiting for judgment. Once in Hell, Bush's Scottie terrier, Barney, visits him, is able to talk to him, and reprimands him for being a bad master.

The only drawback to this novel is that it doesn't feel like one. The opening chapters are an exhaustive compilation of quotes from political commentators and others on events in the

Bush administration, sprinkled with a few imagined scenes. Nonetheless, the extensive amount of research is almost as impressive as Kozhimannil's tremendous imagination at imagining Bush in Hell.

Overall, Bush Went to Hell is the type of political satire that is sure to spark the curiosity of readers and give people who oppose Bush a good chuckle and inflame those who support him. It's an effort that would make Dante proud.

Katerie Prior