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CLARION REVIEW ★★★☆☆ RELIGION

The Glory of God Coming to a Town Near You

Loretta McCutchen
CreateSpace (Nov 18, 2013)
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McCutchen's tale could help others wrestling with the meaning of their own supernatural experiences.

The Glory of God Coming to a Town Near You, the first in a planned series from the formerly homeless Loretta McCutchen, is a brief and unusual account of the author's "personal experiences of God working supernaturally" in her life.

In the dedication, the author says that the book was written in "the woods" of Lakeland, Florida, where homeless friends helped McCutchen survive the elements. In the preface, McCutchen also sets an expectation for a story about "[walking] around America listening to the voice of God as He explained…how to get from point A to point B by trusting him" and how God also helped her to "survive homelessness in America." It comes as a surprise, then, that the story eases into a narrative that is primarily contained in the setting of a small church building where McCutchen has one supernatural experience after another.

McCutchen is jobless when her religious grandfather dies, leaving her questioning her own faith. She is awkwardly embraced by a community (a small gathering of "dirty hippies"), which to her seems cult-like compared to any mainstream expression of faith. She's allowed residence in the church building where she offers her janitorial services in return.

It is here that McCutchen has supernatural encounters of biblical proportions ("manna" falls from heaven). She attributes these experiences to God, and must fend off the skepticism and fear of the pastor, the church secretary, and other churchgoers, all of whom have censored her from speaking in the meetings due to the collective belief that she is under the influence of demonic possession. Ultimately, the pastor accuses her of witchcraft and excommunicates McCutchen from the congregation. Her story leaves off here with an exhortation that "even around good, evil is present," but "overcoming it will always be an option."

The mechanics of McCutchen's writing are solid, with only a few punctuation marks missing. However, the stream-of-consciousness writing style leads to gaps in interpretation. The book doesn't offer theories for why some of the supernatural activity is happening, nor does it help us make sense of McCutchen's feelings at times (for example, the "sexual feelings" she begins having when seeing people "kiss in the church").

There are also occasions when the author's experiences are a direct replica of biblical accounts, such as when a voice says, "This kind [of demon doesn't] come out except by much prayer and fasting"—a passage almost identical to what Christ said to his own disciples, but it's unclear if McCutchen is aware of the parallel. If she is, she might have drawn conclusions for herself and readers about her experiences based on the original biblical references.

The book is written primarily for "those who have experienced the supernatural in God and didn't know how to explain themselves and their experiences to their friends." In other words, this book is not for skeptics, but for those wrestling with the meaning of their own supernatural experiences. Yet McCutchen also writes to those who haven't yet experienced the supernatural. Her title functions as a metaphor for her target reader: "You are the town the glory of God wants to come to."

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