

The Healer

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The questioning of religious faith lies at the heart of a novel about a man who must decide whether he will submit to a God-given destiny.

Christian Pendragon wasn't looking for a life-changing event when he visited Wales. But when a chance encounter with a car-accident victim and an enigmatic man named Nicholas Tewdrig leaves him in possession of an ancient relic known as the Dial of Ahaz, Pendragon has no choice but to reexamine his life. Whether he likes it or not, Pendragon has become a "healer," one of thirty-six miracle workers known in the Judeo-Christian tradition as the Lamed Vovniks. With the Dial of Ahaz in his hands, he can heal bullet wounds and cure cancer. The problem, of course, is that Pendragon is not certain he wants to wield such enormous power, especially when owning the Dial entails being pursued by antiquities thieves, arrested by the police, and betrayed by a beautiful woman. With intrigue and danger lurking around every corner, *The Healer* is reminiscent of an Indiana Jones movie. That is one of several positive aspects of the book; it manages to be entertaining even as it explores theological issues.

The flip side of that superficiality, however, is that adventure can't disguise that characters are thinly drawn or that there is little doubt what Pendragon's final decision will be. Pendragon certainly grouses a lot about the burden God has placed on his shoulders. Still, it's clear Pendragon won't scorn God's gift anymore than Indiana Jones will lose the sacred ark. The fun lies in discovering what will happen next as the story proceeds to a predictable conclusion.

The writing in *The Healer* is competent enough to hold the plot together and move the story along, but numerous typographical errors warrant more careful editing. More importantly, the narrative style is prone to cliché, and an overall emotional shallowness prevents the book from achieving an authentic sense of conflict between Pendragon and God. The combination of stock phrasing and two-dimensional characters ultimately deprives the book of spiritual depth.

DIANE TAYLOR (Summer 2015)

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