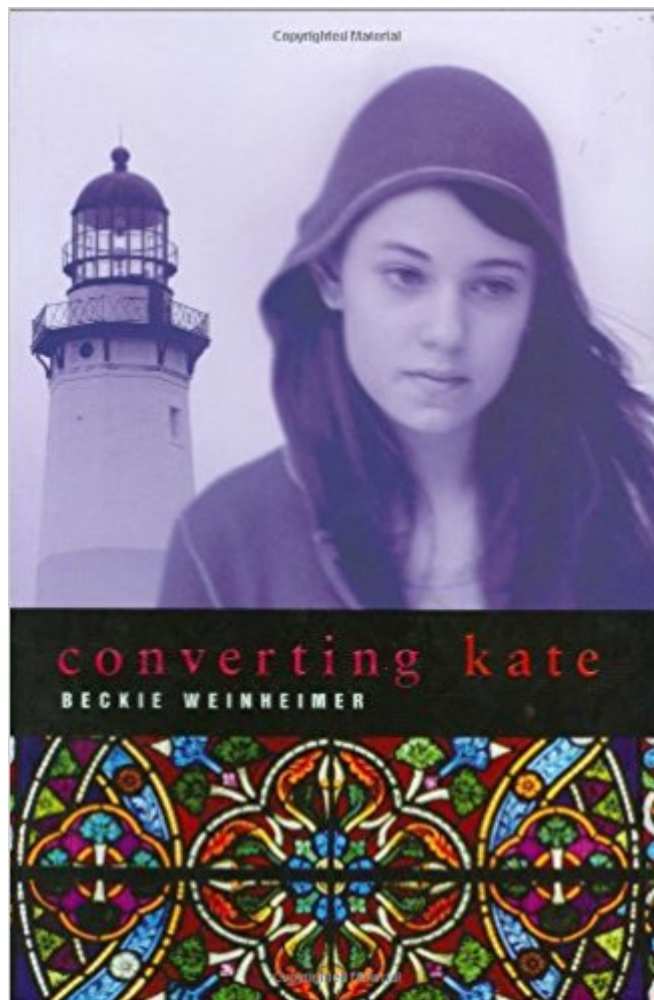




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Converting Kate



Synopsis

Kate was raised in the Holy Divine Church; it influenced everything from her homeschooling to her handmade clothes. But ever since her unbelieving father's death last year, she has suspected that there's more to life than memorizing scripture. Taking advantage of their move to a new town, Kate; to her devout mother's horror; quits Holy Divine. She joins the cross-country team, wears shorts to public school, and even tries a traditional Christian church. As she struggles to come to terms with her father's death and her mother's unquestioning beliefs, Kate discovers there's a big difference between religion and faith; and that the two don't always go hand in hand.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up
Having moved with her mom to Puffin Cove, ME, to live and work at her Great-Aunt Katherine's B & B, 16-year-old Kate has, in her own mind, already left the Church of the Holy Divine. But she hasn't yet told her mother, whose belief in the church is resolute. Kate's faith weakened following her parents' divorce when she was 10, and has further diminished since her father's unexpected death and her mother's cold refusal to have a funeral. As Kate makes new friends and shares new experiences, she begins to express her "conversion" away from the church to her shocked and angry mom. She experiences something of a crash course in the wide world that exists outside her mother's church's cloistered confines through her loving Aunt Katherine; Will,

the outgoing young lobsterman she likes; Jamie, her X-C teammate; Richard, an enigmatic rich kid; and other members of the local church youth group led by the young, liberal Pastor Browning. Occasional swearing by Will and Richard is realistic. Subplots about homophobia and the teen's changing feelings about Will propel the action, but the real story is Kate's heartfelt search for beliefs in which she has confidence. Discoveries requiring effort, courage, and strength, especially in the face of causing pain to her mother.

Joel Shoemaker, Southeast Junior High School, Iowa City, IA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Kate Andersen is back in her father's Maine hometown, living in his aunt's B and B, which her mother now manages. Her parents divorced because of her mother's faith and commitment to the Holy Divine Church, to which Kate also used to be devoted. But her father's death changed everything, and, now, in a new place, Kate is willing to explore things her church (and mother) have long forbidden: books, boys, and religious questions. This is Weinheimer's first novel, and she overdoes it: too many subplots and too many characters. It's particularly difficult to get a handle on Kate's mother. In an effort to make her multidimensional, Weinheimer has characterized her as both a dowdy religious fanatic and a competent, sometimes flirtatious businesswoman--and the two sides never mesh. Yet the book is strong when it focuses on Kate's questioning of religion. Although Weinheimer overuses 1 Corinthians 13 as a thread that runs throughout the book, the first time Kate reflects on looking at existence through a glass, darkly, it's quite moving.

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I had saved this book to read over spring break when I had time to really enjoy it, and it didn't disappoint. I was quickly pulled into Kate's story, curious about her past, hoping she would find a way to feel comfortable in her life while remaining true to herself. Her doubts and questions were honest and ones I could easily relate to. Weinheimer's writing is smooth, easy to read, with dialogue that sounds natural and real. The story deals with so many topics that concern teens today - from one's religious beliefs to relationships with parents, peers, and members of the opposite sex to the ideas of charity and tolerance - and does it all in an honest and thoughtful way. I truly enjoyed this book!

Beckie Weinheimer's debut novel, *Converting Kate*, has converted me into a true believer in her talent. This book, which explores a young girl's break with an evangelical religion, is lyrical and at

times, magical. Her juxtapositioning of quotes from the tenets of the Church of the Holy Divine with quotes from great books is a compelling story in itself. And Kate is such a wonderful character with such gut-wrenching, true emotions, that the reader is enthralled from the first page. This masterful exploration of zealot beliefs couldn't have come at a better time and is a must read for all young adults.

Kate--already thoroughly "de-converted" by the time readers meet her on Page 1--is a thinly disguised voice for the author, who grew up under--and has now decisively rejected--the influence of the Church of Latter Day Saints. The author subsequently "discovered to [her] horror that Baptists, Born Agains, and the Fundamentalists....preach and believe the same things [she] abhor[red] and were the very issues that caused [her] to leave the Mormon church." As such, the "Church of the Holy Divine" we encounter here, and to which the title character's mother is so attached, may be seen as a pastiche of any number of conservative Christian/Protestant traditions. Any stereotype the media have popularized about believing Christians will be amply reinforced by the uncritical reader of this volume. All the standard cliched elements, fair or otherwise, are present: the hypocrisy of believers, the alleged conformity, fake smiles and manipulative proselytizing.... Sadly, the author seems to have traded one naive view of the world for an equally naive substitute. Equally sad, and despite the postscript about finally being at peace, the author's grieving and bitter spirit spills over onto almost every page. A fascinating case study for those interested at the scholarly level in the psychology of deconversion. As a volume for the young, provides at the very least an opportunity to discuss the kinds of stereotypes society often holds about so-called "religious maniacs." For Christian young adults, in particular, the volume provides an opportunity to consider some of the hostility and perplexity they may encounter as they grow up among an increasingly skeptical generation.

I could not have read this at a more opportune time. I was raised in a conservative Muslim environment, and my experiences and thoughts were almost identical to those of Kate's. This book is spot on with the doubts and uncertainty experienced when trying to get out of an extreme religious upbringing, and my praise and sympathies to the author for having to deal with this kind of stuff firsthand and then be able to write so eloquently about it. The whole book is just beautiful, and Kate is privileged enough to live in a place where a liberal church exists--I have never had that experience, unfortunately. I also like how the book ends on a kind of uncertain but hopeful note. Nothing in life is certain, contrary to what religion might sometimes claim, and Kate still has a lot of

thinking ahead of her. It is really refreshing to see young adult fiction portraying teens thinking about the role their faith plays in their lives. It's a natural part of most of our lives, and I wish there were more books that were open about that process. The only other YA I have read that addresses religion is Sara Zarr's *Once Was Lost*. Kudos to Weinheimer for her courage.

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