



Icon

Georgia Briggs

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Icon

Georgia Briggs

Icon Georgia Briggs

Forget your name. Forget your parents. These are the things Euphrosyne's grandparents and counsellors tell her. But if Orthodox Christianity is a lie, why did the icon so dramatically save her life? And what can she do to get the icon back?

In a post-Christian America, where going to church, praying, or owning holy things means death, a twelve-year-old girl searches for the truth. Finding it may cost her everything.

Icon Details

Date : Published 2017 by Ancient Faith Publisher

ISBN :

Author : Georgia Briggs

Format : Paperback 205 pages

Genre : Christian Fiction, Christian, Young Adult

 [Download Icon ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Icon ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Icon Georgia Briggs

From Reader Review Icon for online ebook

Brianna says

I tore through this in two sittings, broken up only because I had to go to work. This book is amazing.

- more review to come later -

And, finally, here's the review:

It's been a long time since I've had a novel I no kidding could not put down. It's been a while since I've had a book come and abandoned everything I was currently reading to finish it in one sitting. It's been a while since a prayer moved me to tears. Icon did all of this.

What I liked

* Eurphrosyne! She was the POV character, and the only one who's character was really explored (it being 1st person), and she was so well done. She's 12, and all the confusing and conflicting emotions were so familiar, so real. She acted completely her age. I loved that she was a mess of contradictions, and I really, really related to her struggle of trying to do the right thing and failing constantly. Honestly, there were a lot of similarities between me and her, in our thought processes and reactions. According to my friend she even looks like me.

* How near to home the dystopian world was. I guess this could be consider a good thing or a bad thing. With most dystopian novels, you get a world that's almost totally different. Yeah, it's often commenting on something going on in society today, but it's so far in the future and so removed that the sense of "this looks like home" is often gone. But this had Walmart. And McDonalds. It looked like home. Kids had cell phones - all the technology was the same. Everything was the same - except Christianity was persecuted. The whole "tolerance" movement taken further along the direction it's going. It was honestly unsettling. Like, I could see it happening a whole lot more easily than I could see something like Hunger Games happening.

* Feeding off of that, I loved how it showed the implications of totally getting rid of Christianity, yet still trying to keep the semblance of holidays and such. Christmas became Winter Holidays, etc. Which is funny, because "holidays" is a contraction of "holy days." But to get back on track, everything was shallow. Eurphrosyne talk about it a little, how there was no depth to anything. It looked pretty, but that was it.

* Saints and miracles play a large part in this, too, especially in the inciting incident. I won't say more here, because spoilers, but it was done in an absolutely beautiful way. One scene in particular reminded me of a picture one of my little brothers' picture books.

* The prayers. There were prayers and hymns littered all throughout the book which really added to the story. In liturgy, I was able to chant aloud what was written, because I knew it. The Nativity hymns were familiar, even if I couldn't remember the tones. When Eurphrosyne prayed Psalm 50 (51 for everyone without a Septuagint), with the way the plot had gone at that time, I found myself praying it desperately along with her, my mind filling in the gaps when she forgot the words. At one point, there was a cliff hanger, then before you read the resolution there was a set of prayers I personally had never seen before, but several sentences in I started realizing what they were and started sobbing. I think there's probably still tear splotches on my book.

What I didn't like

* The ending. Probably part of it was I cried all the way through, but (view spoiler)

* While I realize the limitations of the story and the audience that it was intended for, I still found it unrealistic how the only Christians in the entirety of the book were Orthodox, except for maybe some of the kids that showed up at one point. In a near future American where Christianity is severely persecuted, I'd imagine that there'd be quite a few Protestants and Catholics, and it wouldn't be that hard to work in. At one point there is a man who sings Silent Night on a stage as part of a "winter holidays" program. All the way through the song I honestly assumed he was Protestant, before he leaned into the mic and said "Christ is born" before being dragged away, something I've only ever heard Orthodox say.

All in all, though, those two "eh" things were not enough to detract from the amazingness of this book. It gets a full five stars from me.

I'd definitely recommend it for any Orthodox teenager, probably 12 and up. There are some rather intense, persecution related scenes that you wouldn't want to read to younger people.

While I really, really want to say "everyone should read this!", I really can't. Saints and miracle-working icons are weaved throughout all of this, and honestly it'd probably make most Protestants uncomfortable. So give it a go if you want - it's really good - but it's also very Orthodox.

Review @ Orthodoxy, Hobbits, and Tea

Daniel G. says

Many thanks to Georgia Briggs for this contribution. Bringing Orthodox Christian subjects into a sincere and effective conversation with modern YA dystopian lit is a tall order, but Briggs has pulled it off admirably. The book is well written, the characters engaging and well put together. The world is basically our own, in a near future in which Christianity is illegal and violently persecuted in North America.

It remains a little tough for me to imagine Christian persecution taking such overt forms any time soon (there are many more subtle ways to undercut the Gospel, as the world around us shows), but this isn't really the point of Briggs' work here in the end. What she has done is to present a compelling page-turner that discusses, especially with teenagers, the real potential costs of following Jesus Christ, as well as the reasons for which we must follow Him in spite of those costs. That discussion, and Briggs' message, is right on time, perhaps even more necessary for young people in our world than it would be in the world of violent oppression that Briggs creates.

The big warning here is that this is not a book for younger kids. I wouldn't give this to any reader under age 12. There is a good bit of violence, and Briggs' writing makes this fairly emotionally intense even for this grown-up reviewer. That should stand as a compliment to her writing, but be sure that any young readers are ready for a book involving explicit scenes of violent death, a physically abusive family, and torture.

My kudos again to Ms Briggs. Will look forward to more from her in future.

Nicole Roccas says

I think that one of the contributions this book makes to Orthodox/ General Christian YA Lit is that it helps to

recover a narrative of persecution and suffering for young people. Christians in North America are in many ways sheltered from the kinds of suffering that have been commonplace in most times/ places of Church History. As a result, we have grown disconnected with the reality and meaning available to us in suffering for our faith. There is not a "happy" ending in this book (in an earthly sense), and I think that this is somehow an important lesson for the way young people can approach faith in the twenty-first century.

That said, I bought this book with the thought of giving it to my friend's child, who is ten or eleven. However, after reading it myself, I will probably hang on to it for a while yet--it is a bit heavy for where she is at. This is not a negative, it's just something to be aware of for parents.

I purchased this book at the Antiochian Village, and it was the first novel I have ever read with an overtly Orthodox theme and plot. My favourite part of the book was the end, after (SPOILER ALERT) the main character died. I found the author's depiction of the memorial period thought-provoking and endearing.

I'm looking forward to more fiction from Ancient Faith!

Corinne says

I wasn't sure what to expect from this book as I had heard some negative things, but I enjoyed it very much. I don't think it would be appropriate for all teens, but for some and any adult it tells a dystopian story of persecution and how it could play out in America. Most Orthodox youth have heard plenty of torture in lives of the Saints in the past. This puts it in the here and now. I found the book sobering and hopeful.

Elissa says

I really enjoyed this distopian novel, which takes place in a future where the government will not tolerate intolerant religion -- and the Orthodox are high on the list for extermination, due to their insistence on holding tight to tradition.

This is a thoughtful and well-written novel aimed at middle schoolers, though my high school children enjoyed reading it as well.

Icon provides food for thought about ways in which today's tolerance is intolerant of opposing viewpoints -- but more than exploring such political questions, this novel explores the question of how exactly it is that God takes care of us, and how He might support those who are asked to lay their lives on the line for the faith.

Diana Maria says

Gloriously marvelous!

Dear Mrs Briggs,

Thank you for sending this precious gift out into the world, a hard-to-put-down, tears and thought provoking

gem. Living in a country where Christian persecution is not at all new, the Communist regime having had their share in the great number of martyrs that this country had offered during the 50s, 60s until late 80s, Euphrosyne's story has not been hard for me to read, understand and love. I could not help but empathize with her, the confusing and conflicting emotions being not so unfamiliar to me. Also that sense of someone watching your every move, word, the fear, the hiding, the pressure and the suffering is yet another page of our beloved country's history which thankfully I had not experienced and hope never to...I'm not sure if I would be as strong as Euphrosyne.

Really looking forward for another book.

Lisa Wuertz says

YA Dystopian Lit meets Orthodoxy. Sounds cheesy and I was skeptical thinking, "Oh great Orthodox authors are going to start making 'Orthodox' alternatives to secular like what CCM did with secular music in the 90s. i.e. if you like Creed, you'll like Big Dismal..." This books did not come off as cheesy like or disappoint. I could not put this book down and read it pretty much in one day breaking only for things I had to do. Technically I started this a few days ago when I read the free Nook sample, but barely managed to restrain myself until my physical copy I had already ordered arrived and that is when I read it in one day. It made me cry three different times and books very rarely evoke such strong emotions in me. I was weeping through the last few pages. It captures so well the confusion and trauma of what the main character went through. I'm not sure people who are not Orthodox would enjoy it or not feel lost at certain points though as there are so many specific references to certain prayers, saints and services. This book is super intense and deals with really tough subjects. So even though the main character is 12, I am not sure that would necessarily be the right age to read this book. I would definitely recommend parents read this first to decide if their YA/teen is ready for it.

Brian says

Very good quick read. I usually don't read teen or YA fiction but picked this up after my wife read it. Story moves fast and had me wanting to pick the book up after busy life with four kids had me set it down multiple times. Story and characters are very interesting and realistic. Plot took a turn I wasn't expecting but should have seen coming. Good book for teens who want to mix their dystopian literature with hope and truth.

Mimi says

I don't agree that society is moving in the way that Briggs envisions, and found that she is not quite polished enough as a writer to make her argument without being forced. Having said that, though, it was a good, engaging read. As my dear friend mentioned, it is definitely heavy, though, and not for younger (or sensitive) teens.

Magda says

As beautiful and terrible as a storm. Explicitly connected to beloved books revealing truth, like the

Chronicles of Narnia, A Wrinkle in Time, and Number the Stars. I feel cleaner for having read it, and the highest compliment I can give it is that it makes me want to be a better person.

David Daugherty says

This book was incredible. Simple. Beautiful. Profound. I wept.

Jill says

This book is very intense in it's subject matter and persecution... in describing it to my daughter, she started crying. (She is a sensitive soul.) I look forward to reading more by Briggs.

Helen says

As a 19-year-old Orthodox Christian and aspiring writer, I was initially thrilled to see that Georgia Briggs set out to write an explicitly Orthodox fiction book for young adults. I hope that this is a sign that there is an audience for this genre, and judging by the high praise on this site, I think there is.

I am not trying to be mean by giving this a one star rating. I am not trying to trash talk Georgia Briggs as a writer. There were parts of this book that I genuinely liked. The imagery toward the end with the sign of the cross leaving an imprint on peoples' bodies was truly beautiful, and it was very exciting to see the lives and inner dialogues of modern-day Orthodox characters in small ways (like how the protagonist, Euphrosyne, fantasizes about leaving out her shoes on St. Nicholas's day.) The saints showing up in the trailer during Liturgy... an icon saving Euphrosyne's life... these are all things I would love to see more of, but in a different context.

Why in a different context? Because while far from the worst offender out there, I feel that this book has significant pitfalls when it comes to characterization and world building that are not only never addressed, but grow as the book goes on. None of the characters felt genuine to me, and I couldn't help but feel that they were there more to support a conservative political worldview than to function as people the readers could love and care about. Please be warned, there are SPOILERS TO FOLLOW.

First off, I had an issue with Icon's premise. It asks me to assume a lot of things that I find very difficult to believe would happen in the USA, at least in the manner depicted. In the novel, professing Christianity is punishable by death, and Euphrosyne's entire family is killed because of this. Her name is changed to Hillary in an attempt to force her to integrate into a secular society. Now, I have no problem with this premise as a whole. Christians have faced persecution in the past and continue to do so today. I don't, however, believe that the way the government goes about eradicating Christianity in the novel makes much sense at all. They send officials to burn churches and execute people before they ban books such as A Wrinkle in Time and The Chronicles of Narnia from the children's section of the local libraries.

Maybe it's just me, but I feel like I'd make a better tyrant than the atheist government in this book. I would try to censor thought first by banning books and changing names before I skipped straight to burning down churches. I feel like that's how you get rebellions, not a shift in power. America is still around 70% Christian, at least nominally, according to Pew Research Center. I know from interviews with Georgia Briggs that she

wasn't trying to predict the future of America and was more interested in exploring an alternate universe, which I respect, but I cannot get behind an AU which I think makes no logical sense. How did a 70% Christian population go down so incredibly quickly?

And why is Orthodoxy, in particular, represented as the biggest threat to the secular society throughout the novel? Dr. Snead is a character who works for the government and is a huge, anti-Christ type proponent of the persecution of Christians. He acts as a "counselor" to Euphrosyne and tries to get her to renounce her faith in Christ. He also often acts like Orthodoxy is the worst form of Christianity because it is the "least tolerant." But why is the government so afraid of Orthodox influence in America? Sad as it makes me, we make up about .5% of the population. That's less than the Mormon church. If the government suddenly decided the Orthodox church was a huge threat, they might actually do our numbers some good. I've lived in the Bible Belt since I was 10 years old, and many of my Protestant friends didn't even know what Orthodox Christianity was until they met me. Even then, some of them thought I must be Greek to be Orthodox. Some persecution might actually draw attention to what we are and boost our numbers. People might think of our cause as worthy if they started witnessing people unjustly dying for the Faith.

I promise, I'm not trying to be funny here. I know what I'm saying might sound ridiculous but I really feel that if Orthodox Christians started being martyred in America, people would take notice and would come to our aid, even if they were outside the faith, the same way that people flocked to Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr..

Back to my point about the Bible Belt and the obscurity of the Orthodox Faith in America - this is not a story set in Massachusetts, where there are many beautiful churches of various ethnicities located in Boston alone. It is set in Alabama, where Evangelical Christianity has a much stronger hold. For some reason, however, nearly everyone Euphrosyne runs into seems to have some prior connection to Orthodoxy for unexplained reasons. Mimi, her local librarian, is the most egregious example. Euphrosyne only discovers that she is secretly Orthodox because she wears her wedding ring on a different finger than most people. This strikes me as an unintelligent move on Mimi's part, as it could give her away very easily, but that aside, it's incredible that Euphrosyne just ran into her. I have a hard enough time finding people who are Orthodox when I walk around with my Hellenic College t-shirt in broad daylight. In a plot twist at the end of the novel, it even turns out that Dr. Snead was once a part of the Orthodox Church.

While I'm wondering since when so many people in Alabama were secretly Orthodox, I'm also left wondering where all other religions have disappeared to. Dr. Snead makes allusions to Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism in the book, but we never meet anyone from any of those faiths. Yet we are never told that any religion other than Christianity has suffered persecution. So where did the other religious people go? Surely there must be a Muslim or a Jew somewhere who objects to the persecution of Christians and is helping harbor some in safety? And why isn't the government concerned with the so-called "intolerance" of these other religions? They all have restrictions on how one should live, moral codes one should follow, etc. If the government supposedly hates these so much, then why are Christians the only ones getting persecuted?

Here, we come to the crux of my issues with the book. I know I'm writing long, and I don't mean to complain just for the sake of hearing my own voice, but I would never recommend this book to any young adult I know. Why? Because I feel that it feeds off fear to create a piece of propaganda aimed at young Orthodox Christians such as myself, and I, as a reader, don't want to accept that just because it is propaganda that happens to promote my own religious beliefs.

I know propaganda is a harsh term, but I can't think of a better way to put this. The characters are very black and white in this novel, with few exceptions. All non-Orthodox characters in this book support or at least stay silent while the government massacres Christians. This includes Euphrosyne's own grandfather, who acts as though the literal murder of his son isn't anything much to worry about. Dr. Snead is a terrible, bitter man, and the implication is that he became such when he questioned the Church's teachings. All Orthodox

characters are good and forgiving, to the point that they feel more like philosophies than people. They do not have any input as to how to change their situation, and no plans are ever made to try to rebel against the government, or befriend agnostics/Jews/Muslims etc. to try to gain support (which, again, would be difficult, as we never see any evidence that characters of other faiths exist in this world). Euphrosyne is a passive protagonist, and the few times she makes decisions, it is mostly to follow what other characters have told her to do. She also feels more like a romanticized version of a twelve-year-old than how twelve-year-olds actually act. She isn't even comfortable thinking the word "sex" inside her own mind when she's read *Speak*, a very good YA book about rape, and doesn't know what Dr. Snead means by "free will" even though she's read Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Madeleine L'Engel's *A Wrinkle in Time*, both excellent books that explore free will carefully as part of their central themes.

I feel that the overall message this book is trying to get across is a harmful one. It acts as though everyone who is not Orthodox is out to get Orthodox Christians, that Orthodox Christians cannot rely on anyone but people within our own religious group, and that only Orthodox Christians would be able to stand up to the government if persecution on this scale were to happen in America. In the one scene where we see other Christian kids of different denominations at the end of the novel, none of them are able to stand up to Dr. Snead except Euphrosyne. The implication (at least, as I read it) is that because Euphrosyne is Orthodox, she is stronger than the rest.

As I read this book, I saw many opportunities that I thought were missed. Perhaps it could have focused on Dr. Snead rather than on Euphrosyne. It would be interesting to see the story of a man who lost his faith and began persecuting Christians, a sort of "Paul in reverse," if you will. Or to tell the story of Mimi, who lost her husband and has to deal with temptations of revenge.

Right now, I see a book riddled with persecution complexes. I wouldn't want any future child of mine to read this book. I don't want them to grow up thinking that they will not find supportive, empathetic people outside of the Orthodox Faith, because they will. Some of my best friends are not Orthodox, and I know for a fact that if anything like this were ever to occur, they would fight tooth and nail for my right to practice my faith in peace. And yes, these are people on the political left, which this book seems to demonize.

If the image of Christ is in all mankind, then I do not want to support a book that seems to say the opposite. It disappoints me that this book is getting high reviews from other Orthodox writers I respect when I think that there should be a higher standard for Orthodox fiction. I am also disappointed that Ancient Faith felt that this work was fleshed out enough for publication.

If you are looking for a great book that explores similar themes without dehumanizing non-Christians, please consider reading *That Hideous Strength* by C.S. Lewis. And if you're a young adult looking for great Christian themes in literature, I would recommend other books that Georgia Briggs references in *Icon* (and spoils the endings of, sometimes, by the way). *A Wrinkle in Time* (and its sequels), *The Giver*, *Harry Potter*, *The Hobbit*, *Narnia*, and many other books have shaped my world, and I am glad that Briggs points to them as inspirations.

And to Georgia Briggs, if you ever read this, please know that I am not trying to be a troll. I feel like we would get along if we ever met - I love to write and we seem to have the same taste in books, not to mention that I also love to bake cookies and sing along with recordings of Russian men's choirs, as the back of your book stated you love to do. I hope you continue to write and that the rest of your Pascha season is blessed. Please correct me if I have made any errors concerning your work. Christ is Risen!

Bev Cooke says

One of the best mid-grade dystopian novels I've ever read. Written from a religious perspective, but not preachy or in your face. One of its major strengths is how well it captures the confusion, grief and struggle of a young girl caught in a persecution, whose world is turned upside down in a matter of minutes.

Jane G Meyer says

Fast paced, engaging portrait of a young girl enduring a horrific time where she's constantly faced with difficult choices might change the fate of her own young life. During this time of Christian persecution in various countries overseas, an important read for Western youth who have never faced consequences for having personal, religious beliefs...

Beware of handing this off to readers under twelve--really meant for the high school crowd and up.
