



Rev. Dr. Bob Robinson

## Books Worth Reading

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### *Embracing the Trinity*

Fred Sanders (IVP, 2010, £9.99, 256 pp  
ISBN: 9781844744831)

According to C.S. Lewis, belief in the Trinity "matters more than anything." Evangelicals do not question the doctrine, but neither do they particularly celebrate it. In this accessible and stimulating book, Sanders shows why evangelicals ought to embrace the doctrine of the Trinity wholeheartedly, and without reserve, as a central concern of their theology. Sanders demonstrates that the doctrine of the Trinity is grounded in the gospel itself and is central in our salvation, and in our Bible reading and prayer. To acknowledge the work of the Trinity in the gospel changes everything: worship, Bible study, mission, tradition, and an understanding of Christianity's fundamental doctrines. Subtitled 'Life with God in the Gospel,' the book certainly offers a refreshing and warmly relational vision of the triune God. I liked the title of the book's Introduction: 'Evangelicals, the Gospel, and the Trinity or, How the Trinity changed everything for Evangelicalism and can do it again.' A fine book.

### *The Gender Agenda*

Lis Goddard and Clare Hendry (IVP, 2010, £8.99,  
176 pp ISBN: 9781844744947)

Nearly all Kiwi evangelical Anglicans have come to terms with the issues of women in church leadership. However, it's still an issue for some in Britain (and Australia), as this book (subtitled 'Discovering God's plan for church leadership') indicates. In it, two women (both teaching at theological colleges and also serving on the staffs of large evangelical churches) search for Scriptural guidance—and come to opposite conclusions. They cover all the key passages from creation through to 1 Timothy 2 and, unlike some male colleagues, remain in both dialogue and friendly relationship at the end. A new Grove booklet (Women and Authority: The Key Biblical Texts by Ian Paul) covers the same ground in a briefer and perhaps even

clearer way. And in *As Christ Submits to the Church* (Baker 2011) theologian Alan Padgett offers a fresh look at the ethics of submission, gender roles, and servant leadership in the New Testament. Through his careful interpretation of Paul's letters and broader New Testament teaching, the author shows how Christ's submission to the church models an appropriate understanding of gender roles and servant leadership. As Christ submits to the church, so all Christians must submit to, serve, and care for one another. Padgett articulates a creative approach to mutual submission and explores its practical outworking in the church today. So, why do the debates remain unresolved? This reviewer thinks the issue is eschatological. To put it simply: if we live according to the past and present of the Bible, there might be a case for the idea of hierarchy within gender relations and the prohibition of certain forms of ministry for women. But if we live according to the Bible's present and future Kingdom vision as presented by Jesus, and by Paul in Gal 3:28, then we will model what will one day be: the absence of hierarchy and the acceptance of radical equality in ministry.

### *The Accidental Anglican*

Todd D Hunter (IVP, 2011, £8.99, 160 pp  
ISBN: 9781844745081)

In this book Todd Hunter chronicles his journey from the Jesus People movement and leadership in the Vineyard churches to eventually becoming an Anglican Bishop. Along the way he explains why someone with that Christian heritage might be drawn to the liturgical way. Subtitled 'The surprising appeal of the liturgical church,' the book argues that many younger Christians long for historical connectedness in their church-life and for theology that is "not tied to the whims of contemporary culture, but to apostolic-era understandings of Christian faith and practice." They also yearn for rhythms and routines that build spiritual health. Still others are responding to a call to participate in worship rather than merely sitting back and looking at a stage.

Liturgy offers all of this and more, he argues. This reviewer believes that a few Kiwis might warm to this argument—but is the number a small and shrinking one? (a bookish minority, especially without small children, comes to mind). Having said that, this book remains an appealing and warmly-written account of surprising journey by one individual from a non-traditional church into the heart of Anglicanism. Some chapter headings give the flavour and show the influences on Hunter's journey: 4 Shaping a Faith: J. I. Packer; 5 What Is a Rector? The Influence of John Stott; 6 Following the Holy Spirit in Anglicanism; 10 A Story to Embody: N. T. Wright; 11 Anglicanism and the Kingdom of God; 13 Anglican Leadership: Emmanuel Kolini and John Rucyahana; 14 The Spirit of Anglicanism: A Sweet Reasonableness.

### ***Confessing History***

Edited by John Fea et al (University of Notre Dame Press, 2010, US\$35, 376 pp  
ISBN: 978-0-268-02903-6)

Subtitled 'Explorations in Christian Faith and the Historian's Vocation,' these academic essays ask how the vocation of historian affects those who are also followers of Christ. What implications do Christian faith and practice have for living out one's calling as an historian? And to what extent does one's calling as a Christian disciple speak to the nature, quality, or goals of one's work as scholar, teacher, adviser, writer, community member, or social commentator? These are the sorts of questions answered by the teachers of history at a number of American universities and Christian colleges who contribute to the volume: 'Faith Seeking Historical Understanding' as one contribution puts it. Given the decisive link between history and the central claims of Christianity, these are important issues.

### ***Dear Abdullah***

Robert Scott (IVP, 2011, £7.99, 192 pp  
ISBN: 9781844745289)

Getting NZ's growing number of Muslims to discuss matters of faith with Christians is not at all difficult—especially if we approach the discussion "with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet 3:15b). Scott points out that there are four objections that most well-taught Muslims will fairly quickly raise: 1. Jesus did not die on a cross. / 2. Jesus is neither the Son of God nor divine. / 3. The Trinity is wrong. / 4. The Bible is corrupted. The great virtue of this book is that Scott doesn't want discussion to stall over these issues, vital though they are. He wants to go beyond them. Experience has shown him that "it can be really helpful to offer simple explanations

of other areas of the Christian faith (such as who God is, what Christians do each day and how this fits with Western culture). This can give our Muslim friends a deeper appreciation of what it means to follow Jesus Christ." Talking about these topics has also led them to ask genuine questions rather than repeat the more usual 'four objections'. So, we have the following eight questions as chapters (with the title also indicating part of the answer):

- 1 · How can we know an incomprehensible God? Allahu akbar! The God of the Bible is great!
- 2 · Don't Christians only do Sundays? Living each day for God
- 3 · What sort of God can be murdered? The certain victory of Jesus the Messiah
- 4 · What sort of God can be born as a baby? The Word took on human form
- 5 · But don't Christians worship three Gods? The personal and united God
- 6 · Where does Christianity end and Western culture begin? The multicultural gospel
- 7 · Hasn't the Bible been corrupted? The trustworthiness of God's living and powerful Word
- 8 · How can we be sure about God? Answers, assurance and hope.

This is an excellent book—clear, courteous, and written by someone who has obviously had a long and heartfelt acquaintance with Muslims.

### ***Moving in the Right Circles***

Chick Yuill (IVP, 2011, £7.99, 192 pp  
ISBN: 9781844745036)

An engaging discussion of what discipleship can mean for those (especially young adults) who find a sense of reality to be missing from their Christian experience. The author describes from the Gospel accounts the four concentric circles that make up authentic Christian discipleship: walking in the company of Jesus; growing in the community of believers; engaging with the culture of the times; looking to the coming of the King. The book can be described as passionate and honest (the Cross has a prominent place) and yet full of wisdom, common sense and lively illustrations. Recommended, especially for those in touch with younger Christians.