READS OF THE YEAR

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Category: Reviews

I try to keep a record of everything I read in a library database called Biblioscape. However, I rarely manage to keep everything up to date,Â so I'm not actually sure what I have read this year, but with that limitation in place, here are my highlights.

It is hard to single out one Christian book as the best I've read this year. So here are four recommendations.

The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith is an excellent, and brief, examination of some of the difficult questions of the Christian faith including the infamous genocide of the Canaanites. This isn't a book to read if you want easy one word answers to complex questions, but if you want to explore what the Bible is saying, it's a great place to start. You can read fuller notes here.

ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch is a great challenge to place Jesus back at the centre of our lives as Christians. It isn't comfortable reading, but it's one of those books that I think every Christian should read. More notesÂ here and it is always worthwhile quoting their comment on John Piper's famous *mission exists because worship doesn't'* quote.

> *Someone once challenged us that in heaven thereâ€™ll be no mission only worship. We couldnâ€™t disagree more. Sure, we wonâ€™t be feeding the poor or planting churches. Those missional activities will cease when every knee bows, every tongue confesses, and every tear is wiped away. But in the world to come, we will still be charged with the task of declaring Jesusâ€™ rule over all of life. We are looking forward to that unhindered mission of the new age and to worshipping through the process of offering our world back to God.*

The two other books that I'd like mention are Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview (my notes here) and The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story (my notes here) both by Goheen and Bartholemew. The former gives an excellent picture of what it means to have a Christian worldview in a post-modern society, while the second gives the best short overview of the Biblical narrative that I know of. I love this quote from Living at the Crossroads:

> *To confess that Jesus is Lord is to say that Jesus, together with the Father and Spirit, has created all things; he sustains and upholds all things, he rules history and guides it to its goal, he restores and renews all things, and at the end he will judge all things. If we confess only â€œJesus is my personal Saviourâ€ and neglect â€œJesus is Creator, Ruler, Redeemer and Judge,â€ then we have an emaciated worldview. A biblical worldview is about getting right who Jesus is.*

The most enjoyable history book I read this year was one I finished this week: Spitfire Pilot by David

Crook is a first person narrative of the Battle of Britain by one of the protagonists. I can't work out why this excellent book is not much better known than it is. If you are interested in military history or the second world war, it is a must read.

I read a lot of novels and never manage to keep track of them. When I go to the library, I tend just to pick up a handful of books that look vaguely interesting. Because of this, I often find myself starting to read a book only to find that I read it a few years earlier. I also sometimes stumble onto a series of novels by accident, only realising that there is a series when I have read two or three books thinking that they are vaguely similar. One such series is the Inspector Banks novels by Peter Robinson. The Independent says *"Any reader who still misses Morse should promptly resolve to go north with Banks".* The north bit refers to the fact that these excellent novels are set in North-Yorkshire, which is getting close to civilisation! Here are a couple of good 'uns from the series.

- All the Colours of Darkness (Inspector Banks Mystery)
- The Summer That Never Was: An Inspector Banks Novel

Lastly a confession. I started the year with good intentions of reading through 24/7 Bible-NLT: A One Year Chronological Bible. However, as tends to happen with yearly reading plans, I gave up sometime in March. Though this edition is small and easy to carry around, I didn't take it with me on a three day trip to Germany, preferring to use the Bible on my Ipod. But that meant I lost track of where I was supposed to be...

I'll try again.