THE SEED AND THE SOIL

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What an excellent book!

I read lots of books about the Bible; books on the history of the Bible, books about biblical interpretation and commentaries on the text of the Bible. There are books about the Bible on every bookshelf in our house and as often as not, you can find them on the dining table, too. We are not short of books about the Bible - you get the picture.

The Seed and the Soil: Engaging with the Word of God by Pauline Hoggarth is a more than worthy addition to our bulging library. However, this isn't a comfortable, intellectually stimulating book about the background to the Bible or some arcane aspect of biblical theology; it is a challenging book about engaging with Scripture. The first chapter, 'Transforming Word' opens up with a series of challenging stories from around the world which demonstrate the capacity of the Bible to change lives. This poses the inevitable question of whether we are willing to allow Scripture to do it's work in our lives, a question which is picked up in the second chapter which looks at the way in which people resist the transforming impact of the Bible.

The Seed and the Soil is written at a popular level, but it isn't an easy read; not that it is intellectually challenging (though it is certainly not simple) but rather that it continually causes you to question your own reaction to Scripture and ultimately to the God of the Bible.

Pauline Hoggarth has divided her life between the UK and Latin America and has evidently spent a good deal of her life in multi-cultural contexts. This brings a depth of understanding to the book that is missing from many books about the Bible which are written from a purely Western context. This is vividly illustrated in a quote I posted a few days ago.

This book doesn't shy away from difficult areas; it includes a helpful brief section on Muslim and Christian approaches to sacred writings as well as overviews of Old Testament genocide narratives and the Bible's teaching on homosexuality. Clearly, space does not allow these themes to be elucidated in detail, but these are excellent brief introductions.

If someone were to ask me to recommend books to help them with reading the Bible, I would have no hesitation in suggesting How to Read the Bible for All Its WorthÂ for help in understanding the text of the Bible andÂ The Seed and the Soil: Engaging with the Word of God as a help in letting the Bible get under your skin and transform your thinking and actions.

I am very grateful to the Langham Partnership for providing me with a copy of this book free of charge.