

Resource reviews

- ★★★★★ very highly recommended / absolutely outstanding
- ★★★★☆ highly recommended / extremely good
- ★★★☆☆ recommended / good
- ★★★☆☆ recommended with minor reservations / mediocre
- ★★☆☆☆ recommended with major reservations / weak
- ★☆☆☆☆ not recommended / extremely weak

The Easter Swallows

Vicki Howie, 2007
CWR
hardback, 29pp, £4.99
illustrations: colour
ISBN: 978-1-85345-416-5
use: primary school, church, home



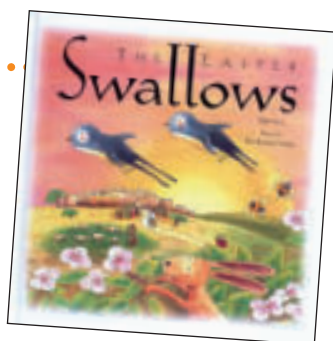
This delightful Easter story from the pen of children's author, Vicki Howie, will become a favourite with young children. It relates the story of two swallows building their nest beside an empty cave in Jerusalem.

The avian protagonists, Long-Tail and his wife, Short-Tail, encounter the events of Holy Week as they prepare to build their new home and, in so doing, meet Jesus. The birds keep him company in Gethsemene and learn that he is God's son and cares for them. Then they witness Jesus' death.

The swallows' eggs symbolise new life and, just as the four baby swallows hatch, Long-Tail and Short-Tail meet the risen Jesus.

The Easter Swallows is a beautiful hardback book. I especially like the illustrations, which really enhance the text. It is a wonderful classroom-cum-assembly resource and would make a lovely present for young godchildren. Highly recommended!

REVIEWER Lizzie McWhirter, RE Adviser for Coventry Diocese.



Boring Bible: Eggs-traordinary Easter

Andy Robb, 2006
John Hunt Publishing Ltd (O Books)
paperback, 128pp, £5.99
Illustrations: black and white cartoons
ISBN: 1-842981-67-6
use: Church groups, home, Christian groups



Eggs-traordinary Easter is part of the *Boring Bible* series (irritatingly and constantly referred to throughout this book) which is, in my opinion, a significantly inferior imitation of the *Horrible History* range. 'Boring Bible' isn't an exciting title, but the book cover is attractive and there are fun cartoons inside.

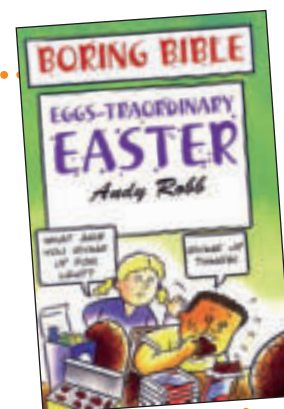
Originally American, *Eggs-traordinary Easter* is poorly edited and not very appropriate for British children. Imperial and metric measures are confused throughout and much time is spent on the Easter Bunny. Explanations of Lenten and Easter traditions are often inaccurate and a number – like Mothering Sunday – are missing completely.

I am unsure why there are highlighted words throughout the text. They aren't keywords; nor does there seem to be a pattern to their highlighting. The four mini-biographies provided (Abraham Lincoln, Amy Carmichael, David Berkowitz and Henrietta Mears) will not be familiar to most British children. Missing words in the Amy Carmichael story should have been corrected before going to press. The phrase 'temple prostitute' was used in the same story without any explanation!

Of the 128 pages, 29 are directly quoted from the *Good News Bible*. On the positive side, Christmas and Ascension Bible passages are included. However, although some explanations are given, most unchurched children will struggle to make sense of the Bible passages quoted.

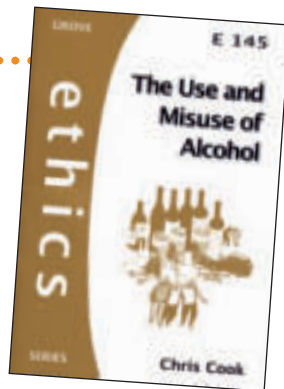
Finally, because *Boring Bible: Eggs-traordinary Easter* includes a clear evangelistic appeal – asking the reader to make a personal decision to accept Jesus as Lord – it is inappropriate for use in a typical school setting.

REVIEWER Moira Kleissner, School Librarian and Supply Teacher, Hillside Community Primary School, Ipswich, Suffolk.



The Use and Misuse of Alcohol

Chris Cook, 2007
Grove Books Limited
paperback, 28pp, £2.95
illustrations: none
ISBN: 978-1-85174-652-1
use: KS4, GCSE and beyond RS



More than a quarter of the adult population of England have alcohol-related harm disorders, the costs of which amount to £20 billion a year. The harms include death, injury and damage from drink-impaired use of vehicles and other machinery, violence inside and outside the home, reckless resort to crime and sex, absence from, or inefficiency at, work. Cook notes an additional effect, high among Muslim reasons for abstinence, which is spiritual damage to prayer life and other devotions.

In non-church education, Cook's booklet helps readers to see a Christian wrestling with the drink question. This could bring some surprises. The case against drinking alcohol seems damning. Any other substance that did such damage would be outlawed. There are serious calls for a drier society. Teetotalism is no longer a joke. Yet, as Cook shows, the Christian Scriptures associate wine with happiness and thank God for creating it (Psalm 104:14-15). True, there are counter-voices which warn against drunkenness and personify abstinence. But Jesus drank wine, made it central to the Eucharist, and supplied 120 gallons of good wine to a wedding party already too drunk to appreciate it.

Cook distinguishes between abstinence and the avoidance of drunkenness. He admits that for some Christians abstinence will be right, but finds thankful moderation the more common Christian practice. He commends strong criticism of excessive drinking and those who promote it. He describes rescue programmes, such as AA. He sees price increases as the most efficient way of reducing use and abuse of alcohol.

REVIEWER Richard Wilkins, former General Secretary of ACT, Watford, Herts.

Judas and the Gospel of Jesus

Tom Wright, 2006
SPCK
paperback, 88pp, £6.99
illustrations: none
ISBN: 0281058687
use: special interest to historians and anyone teaching about Jesus



Tom Wright's *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus* sets out to rebut the claims made by Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer and Gregor Wurst in *The Gospel of Judas* (2006, National Geographic Society). The latter was published amid a media fanfare that promised it would revise our understanding of Judas and Jesus. According to Kasser et al., Judas was no longer the villain of the New Testament (NT) Gospels.

Wright contrasts the NT accounts (which make it clear that Jesus died in order to set people free from the burden of sin) with *The Gospel of Judas* version (which does not mention sin at all but, instead, states that Judas handed Jesus over to the authorities so that his death would make it possible for the divine spark within him to return to heaven).

Wright's book is important for at least four reasons.

- 1 He clearly demonstrates the differences between the beliefs of the first Christians and the later second century Gnostics.
- 2 He shows how *The Gospel of Judas* is a Gnostic gospel, ie written more than 100 years after the NT Gospels.
- 3 He demonstrates how and why some writers and publishers want to undermine the NT accounts and reconstruct the history of early Christianity.
- 4 The author demonstrates the critical realist approach to historical study that he has so ably employed elsewhere.

As such, Wright's book will be of general interest to many teachers, of particular interest to those teaching about Jesus, and of special interest to historians.

REVIEWER Arthur Rowe, Lecturer in New Testament and World Religions, now retired.

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