

Open Discussion on Progressive Christianity

Open Dialogue and Inclusive Action in the Uniting Church in Australia, and with friends of the UCA

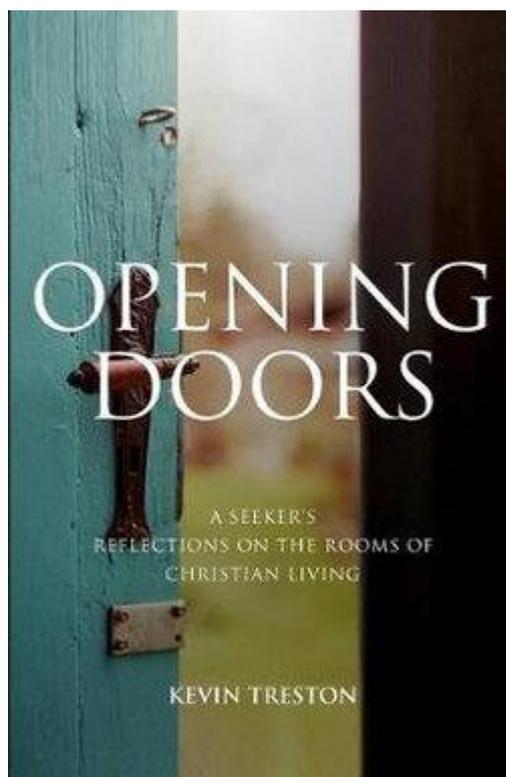
Book Review: Opening Doors

A seeker's reflection on the rooms of Christian living

by Kevin Treston

I have been looking forward to more from Kevin Treston since his *The Wind Blows Where it Chooses* made practical sense of the crisis facing western Christianity. *Opening Doors* is a great follow on from that book and once again he has produced a text that is useful for personal as well as group studies. This time the exercise is to reconcile a contemporary faith with modern science, cosmology and spirituality.

Dr Kevin Treston has taught and lectured for many years in 12 different countries. He is the author of 30 books, and a highly respected presenter among Christian educators. He was a visiting Scholar at Boston College and is a member of the association of Practical Theology Oceania. He was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for his services to education.



He calls himself a seeker because he has taken on board Jesus' invitation to open the door to him, get to know him better and at the same time bring Jesus wisdom into contemporary society. He invites us to be seekers and gives us the tools for shifting from the old anthropocentric (human centred) faith to an ecocentric faith better suited to our times. This is a very personal exercise and the book acts as a resource that guides the reader/s through a range of elements that enhance Christian living today.

For Kevin it is obvious that the Christ Story is told within the Great Story of the Universe which is a much longer narrative than the 2000 years of Christianity. The profound mystery of God within and beyond creation needs to be reframed within the wondrous story of the universe. He has developed this theme in previous books so that the three great movements from Jewish beginnings to the traditional story we are familiar with are linked to the emerging cosmic story including teachings, theology, liturgy, ethical living that form a new consciousness that includes modern science.

Kevin builds the discussion on a foundation of human evolutionary destiny for homo sapiens as an exclusive species of hominoids exhibiting unique attributes of self-reflection, language, art and consciousness over 150,000 years through towards today's global people to emerging trans human forms. This is accompanied by a history of the development of religions and especially in the Christian religion the rise of the clerical class which has had a depowering effect on individuals 'reducing them to a spiritually dependent lay state'. He makes the point that the propensity to be religious deeply embedded in the human psyche is not confined to those who endorse creeds and doctrines. But it does give each of us an inclination to consider the question *What Does it mean to live life given the fact that one day I will die?* He gives fresh insights into the meaning of 'incarnation' as core thinking in the human narrative.

The reader is given opportunities to consider the issues and questions raised by the author's commentary on life, religion, spirituality, advances in science, love and relationships, the divine, sin, God as Trinity, the worship of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus and the Cosmic or Universal Christ, the exercise of ministry, the role and status of women and the problems of patriarchy and domestic violence, morality and shifts in teaching about morality. All of this leads to Kevin's model for the spirituality journey which is really a framework for each of us to develop our own intentional model.

I found this book personally liberating and I was motivated to follow up on Kevin's invitation to describe the room of life that I would like to be in after opening the door. Highly recommended for individuals, conversations and self-directed groups who will find some great ideas for getting underway. It is a resource suitable inside and outside the church with particular benefit to communities looking at the renewal and relevance of their mission focus.

Paul Inglis 14th October 2019

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