

Lloyd Geering
Wrestling with God
The Story of my Life
ISBN 9 781845 400774
Imprint Academic, Exeter, 2007, £17.95

I expected this autobiography of a theologian born in February 1918 in New Zealand to be boring and irrelevant - about controversies of a bygone age and another culture. And Chapter 1, arguing against the immortality of the soul, is not a gripping beginning.

But then the story carries the reader along - through childhood and youth in various homes in New Zealand and Australia, life at university and theological college in the 1930s and early 1940s, Presbyterian parish ministry in New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s, teaching Old Testament and Hebrew to ministers in training in Australia and New Zealand, going through the sudden death of his wife and his care for two young children while working more than full-time, including details of houses lived in and holidays taken, hobbies enjoyed and cars purchased.

Lloyd Geering's public fame - branded as a heretic for his published views on the resurrection of Jesus and the immortality of the soul - does not enter the story until halfway through the book, when he is 47 years old. The personal details of holiday itineraries, sights seen, family events and houses purchased continue interspersed with the story of Geering's spiritual and intellectual journey as a pioneer in Religious Studies and understanding the human religious quest.

And it is neither boring nor irrelevant. Lloyd Geering has been involved in New Zealand in tackling the issues David Jenkins and Don Cupitt have wrestled with publicly in Britain. He explains these issues clearly and accessibly, not as from an ivory tower but as a person with all the ordinary concerns of anyone - earning a living, falling in love, getting the laundry done, living with bereavement, enjoying holidays, DIY and gardening. Amid all these mundane concerns he is thinking, reading, teaching, writing and arguing about the huge questions of the nature of the universe, God and the human search for meaning.

There is very little about prayer or worship but a great deal to know about how faith and spirituality direct and energise a person's life.

Cecil King
Wolverhampton