



**Williams, Rowan**

***Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief***

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth  
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*Tokens of Trust* is a slightly enlarged version of some talks that Rowan Williams gave in the Canterbury Cathedral in the week before Easter 2005. Williams says that he has *"tried to keep some of the conversational style of the talks; and [he has] also tried not to take for granted what readers might or might not know about the Bible or the Church's history."* (vii) In this Williams has succeeded. This book reads like a conversation that the archbishop is having with his audience, inviting pause for reflection and reaction to what has been read.

Williams' approach is interesting. He takes statements made in the Nicene Creed and uses them as his starting off points for each chapter. For example, he begins the first chapter with the phrase, *"I believe in God the Father almighty..."* before he proceeds to talk about what trust is and why we can trust God. The second chapter begins with the phrase *"maker of heaven and earth..."* and goes on to speak about how God created us to love us and be in relationship with us. This is the tone of the book.

What this book is not, is an introduction to Christian theology. One might get that impression from the subtitle, but they would be mistaken to think this. Williams has delivered however a very concise and thought-provoking introduction to Christian belief (i.e., faith). If you know nothing of Christian belief then this is certainly a great place to start, and if you've been a Christian for years then this is a great place to go and have your belief challenged. Nearly every page contains a sentence or paragraph that will cause you to sit back and examine yourself to see if you are in the faith.

From community to communion; prayer to baptism; the Trinity to resurrection; every topic of great importance is addressed in a refreshingly thoughtful manner. For instance, Williams defines the Church saying:

One of the simplest possible definitions of the Church is to say that it is meant to be the place where Jesus is visibly active in the world. And once

we have said that, we can turn it around and say that where Jesus is visibly active, something very like the Church must be going on. (128)

This is decidedly different from the common view of the Church as simply an institution or even a called out body of believers. Such a definition is decidedly missional which makes sense since the Church's mission is to reach out to the world at large and offer them Jesus.

There are hundreds of such jewels scattered throughout this book and the editors/publishers did well to emphasize them on just about every other page. When reading this book you won't only be taken aback by the subject matter, but also with the aesthetic beauty of it. There's some wonderful photos of various things from "*the volcanic landscape of Lanzarote*" (41) to "[t]he bread of life, broken for us" (113). I only wish that I could reproduce some of these photos in this review.

Williams also has a way of taking some very mundane examples to make his points clear that doesn't make the reader feel as if he is being condescending. It is in this that we see Williams as more than a conversation partner, we see him as a teacher. His writing is incredibly lucid and easy to understand, yet the thoughts he puts forth require us to read and then re-read them to fully grasp what he is saying. It's not that he is likely to be misunderstood if we don't do this, but rather they require more than a mere surface reading, they require careful inspection and meditation.

Coming in at a mere 159 pages of main text this is a very short book, but it is an incredibly dense book: dense with wisdom and dense with a care for the saints and for the world that the saints live in. This could easily be read in the course of an afternoon but I'd suggest taking your time with it. Let the full force of Williams thoughts and words sink in. I highly recommend this volume to the newly converted, the salty veterans, and even unbelievers. If one gains nothing else from this book, they'll at least gain an appreciation for what Christian belief is.