

This Incomplete One

Words Occasioned by the Death of a Young Person, edited by Michael D. Bush, 176pp,pbk, May 2006, £6.99, Eerdmans (ISBN 0-8028-2227-4)

There is no greater challenge to any pastor than the death of a child or a young person. Such tragedy reminds us of the sheer vulnerability and fragility of life. Such an experience poses the profoundest of threats to our faith.

This is a powerful, moving and encouraging book. It features sixteen sermons in which the preacher wrestles with experience in the light of faith.

What this reviewer finds most impressive about each of the sermons is the power and simplicity of the language. Each piece is carefully crafted to produce a moving reflection which takes as its inspiration the love and presence of God. The sermons manage to balance grief with hope.

How we remember and what we do with our experience, particularly when it is painful, are key elements of pastoral ministry. Any one wishing to examine their own practice of preaching at funerals would do well to use this book as a tool for critical reflection. I think that those who have been affected by the premature death of a precious one would also find in these sermons words of challenge and comfort; an opportunity to acknowledge the experience and in embracing the rawness of it look towards some transformation and hope.

James Woodward

