

Review

film: *JoJo Rabbit*

Jojo is an ordinary 10-year old. He loves running, camping, throwing hand grenades and ... Adolf Hitler. With such 'blind fanaticism' that *'it took him three weeks to get over the fact that his grandfather was not blond'*, we see Nazi Germany through a child's eyes. But everything starts to fall apart when his beloved mother takes in Elsa, an enemy of their great nation, and a Jew.



Based on the novel, *Caging Skies*, I was a little hesitant in watching this comedy at first. After *Schindler's List*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, *Life is Beautiful* and many more, watching a child

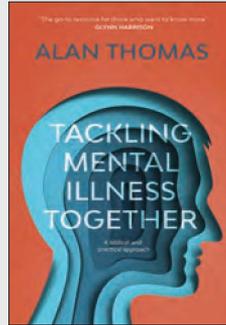
with Hitler as his imaginary friend made me wonder if it would whitewash the horrors of the Holocaust.

Taika Waititi, a director now famous for balancing humour with emotion, defended his controversial take on this historical event; far from disrespecting the darkness of that time, he says that comedy is *'an important tool against bigotry and intolerance and ridiculous world views'*. There was also the recurring theme of stereotyping - just as Jojo battles his preconceptions about Jews, we battle ours as we watch a bumbling and comic Nazi behave against expected norms. The film also contained a sober reminder that doing the right thing often has a price, a reminder especially important to us as Christians.

Although some may say *Jojo Rabbit* oversimplifies serious issues, Waititi weaves this engaging plot with lovable characters, deep themes and a recognition that every individual is inherently human. ■

Philippa Tan is a medical student at UEA

book: *Tackling Mental Illness Together*



Tackling Mental Illness Together - A Biblical and Practical Approach

Professor Alan Thomas,

pp232, Inter-Varsity Press
2017
ISBN: 9781783595594
Paperback £9.99

Helen Rimmel is a medical student at Imperial College, London

I had been rushed to hospital with chest pain...I cried when I learned how the people at church prayed for me because I remembered how different it was... when I became acutely ill with schizophrenia.'

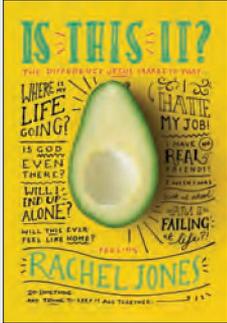
As this account shows, fear and misunderstanding of mental illness in the church can lead to sufferers being offered poor counsel or becoming isolated from their church family. How then can Christians instead be well-equipped to help and heal the mentally ill?

Professor Thomas' book provides a view on mental illness that is both accessible and nuanced. It goes beyond theology and theory to offer wonderfully practical guidance for making the deep relationships that exist within a church family valuable to recovery.

The book explores philosophical and historical lenses on mental illness, the difficult question of personal responsibility, options for psychiatric treatment and ends with case studies of each of the major mental illnesses.

Thomas avoids both over-spiritualisation and over-medicalisation, instead emphasising the 'psychosomatic wholeness' of humanity that makes it impossible to consider our body and soul separately. For this reason it seems to be a hugely useful tool for ensuring churches neither desert the mentally ill, entrusting them solely to the care of clinicians, nor try to impede their access to medical help by considering their illness as wholly spiritual.

This book offers clear guidance and hope in the face of a form of suffering that is often so taboo, and I recommend it as an invaluable resource for medics and non-medics alike. ■



Is This it?

Rachel Jones

208pp, The Good Book Company,
2019.

ISBN: 9781784983314
paperback £8.99

Sally Barker is a clinical
medical student at Imperial
College London

I was recommended this book three times before I read it (and even then, someone else had to buy it for me).

The front of *Is This It?* is covered in questions which encapsulate that quarter-life crisis feeling stereotypical of our generation: 'am I failing at life?', 'will I end up alone?' and 'will this ever feel like home?'. These are questions which I didn't really want to admit I had and definitely had no desire to analyse!

However, I am writing this review is because the book is really, really good. The author, Rachel Jones, describes herself as a '20-something trying to keep it all together' and the overall message of the book could be summarised as: 'it's okay, trust in Jesus'. With radical honesty, she shares twelve feelings that, whilst not inherently sinful, conflict with her Christian faith. Each chapter explores the origins of a particular feeling. Using Scripture, humour, and some brilliant stories, she shows how each one is an opportunity to run our race of faith harder and with greater joy. Some chapters resonated more than others but because each chapter finished with simple prayer points or questions to think about, all of them led me to prayer, repentance, and a renewed excitement in my identity as a child of God.

The feelings that Rachel explores – dissatisfaction, rootlessness, loneliness, self-doubt or simply meaninglessness – are feelings that my non-Christian friends also experience. They can be subtle, presenting insidiously and manifesting in different ways for different people, but they are common consequences of the millennial culture. To be able to name these feelings with my friends, share our common vulnerabilities and then speak into these areas with salt, light and hope was an unexpected yet wonderful consequence of this book.

I have a controversial habit of turning down the corner of the page when I find a paragraph or sentence that is particularly useful – I fear I have disfigured *Is This It?* beyond repair. Buy it now or ask around because, trust me, this is a book that you will want to share once you have read it! ■