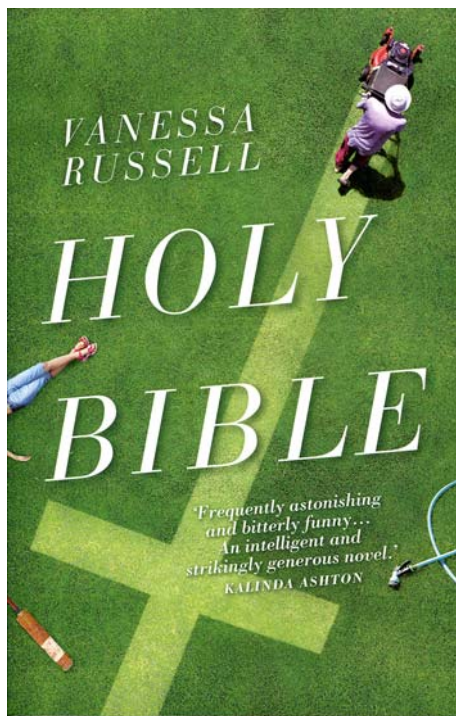


Holy Bible



Holy Bible

Vanessa Russell

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This is Vanessa Russell's first novel and it is beautifully and thoughtfully crafted. It delves into the underbelly of a Christian religious cult that, like many such groups in real life, has internal frictions that threaten to tear it open; and they eventually do.

The internal frictions involve and evolve from charismatic dictatorship, generational misunderstanding, male-female prejudices, fear of change, and Biblical (mis-)interpretation.

The book is written in the third person, looking over the shoulders of a small number of central characters: Tranquillity, the young woman resisting baptism; Amy, the outsider married to an 'insider'; Reuben, the insider with a stain on his existence; Violet, the mother with secrets, cast out by her own parents; Horace, whose leadership of the

group is informed by unassuaged guilt.

The author skilfully weaves this motley crew into a cohesive, complex narrative that inexorably draws us ever deeper into the mire and drags us along, as it drags the characters. The reader is moved to pray for divine retribution against the 'guilty'.

Vanessa Russell displays a good grasp of psychology and psychopathy, and the foibles (positive and negative) of human beings. This book is also a thoughtful examination of why people hang on in intolerable situations: especially women in abusive relationships and those 'caught' in a cult. It serves as a cautionary tale on so many levels.

This is an insightful exploration of humanity.