

Gender - Balanced Belief

A New Ethic for Christianity

For many people in the churches, the recent decline in membership among women has been a distressing and deepening reality.

For centuries, women have been the mainstay of church life – those who managed housekeeping and catering chores, provided secretarial duties, organised fundraising and supervised the religious education of children, as well as being the majority of worshipping communities everywhere. Without their presence, churches have witnessed serious declines in family participation, the collapse of Sunday schools, and lower involvement in study groups.

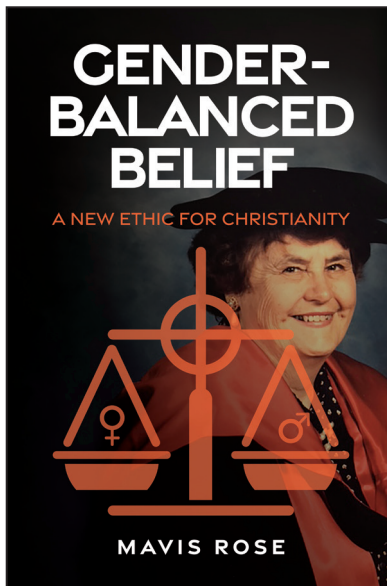
Inevitably, there is a deepening concern among older churchgoers for the future of their parishes and church life. The author's previous book *Freedom from Sanctified Sexism* was a history of women in the Australian Anglican Church from the end of the nineteenth century to 1992, when women were finally admitted to the Australian Anglican priesthood. *Gender-Balanced Belief* moves on from there. Mavis Rose acknowledges the significance and success of the Movement for the Ordination of Women but alerts us to deeper, more endemic realities of church life and governance that have prevented the full participation of women, especially in significant areas of church leadership.

She explores the reasons for this situation: the entrenched resistance among leaders of the churches to accept women in ministry, based on flawed theology, out-of-date approaches to the Bible tradition, as well as unhealthy and sexist approaches to the equality of women and their legitimate rights in contemporary society.

Gender-Balanced Belief calls on the churches to respect the Jesus tradition of including all people – irrespective of sex, class or ethnic group – to establish the reign of God in our time and place. In this way, women – and men – of faith may rediscover the heart of the gospel and recognise in renewed church structures effective contexts for proclaiming the good news and witnessing to its teaching.

Mavis Rose (née Robinson) was born and educated in Ireland. In Australia, she graduated B.A. Hons and MPhil in Modern Asian Studies at Griffith University, and, later, was an Honorary Fellow at Cornell University whose press published her book *Indonesia Free: A political biography of Mohammad Hatta*.

Her involvement in the Movement for the Ordination of Women led to her completing a PhD in Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland in 1993. Mavis married Calvin Rose in 1953 and they had four daughters. She died on 27 September 2019.



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Coventry Press
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