



Latimer Trust Monthly Reading List - May 2018

This is a summary of recent books read by Martin Davie, compiling his evaluations and the commendations of others.

In this edition:

Author	Title	Martin's opinion
Ryan Anderson	<i>When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment</i>	This should be read by anyone who wants to understand the impact that the transgender movement is having on Western culture
David and Marybeth Baggett	<i>The Morals of the Story: Good News about a Good God</i>	This is a book that all thinking Christians ought to be buying and giving away to their non-Christian friends. Rational apologetics at its best.
Wallace Benn	<i>Ministry of the Word</i>	This book is an excellent resource that highlights in a clear and concise fashion what the ministry of the Word needs to involve. Highly recommended.
Craig A Carter	<i>Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis</i>	Even if one does not agree with Carter's argument, this is a book which is definitely worth reading by anyone who is concerned with how we should interpret the Bible in accordance with its God given nature.
Kelly M Kapic and Hans Madueme (eds.)	<i>Reading Theology in the Protestant Tradition</i>	This is a very useful introductory guide which identifies classic works we need to read and provides reliable introductions to assist us to read them with understanding.
Thomas Noble, Sarah Whittle and Philip Johnston (eds.)	<i>Marriage, Family and Relationships: Biblical, Doctrinal and Contemporary Perspectives</i>	It is a book which deserves reading by anyone who wants to take Scripture and the Christian tradition seriously while also taking seriously the challenges posed to the Church by developments in contemporary culture.
Stephen Um	<i>Micah for You</i>	This is a clear and inspiring Christian commentary on Micah which could be used with profit as the basis for personal and group Bible study and as the basis for a sermon series on Micah.
George Westhaver (ed.)	<i>A Transforming Vision: Knowing and Loving the Triune God</i>	An important collection of essays that provides a snapshot of scholarly current thinking about the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian theology and Christian living.
Paul R Williamson	<i>Death and the Afterlife: Biblical Perspectives on Ultimate Questions</i>	This book is a clear and reliable guide to the issues it covers. If you want to know what the Bible has to say about death and the afterlife then this book will tell you.
Tom Wright	<i>Paul: A Biography</i>	This is now the new standard biography of St. Paul and Evangelicals need to engage with it.

Ryan Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, Encounter Books, ISBN 978-1-59403-961-4, £19.99 (e edition and audio download also available).

Martin's opinion:

This is an important book which should be read by anyone who wants to understand the impact that the transgender movement is having on Western culture and why the truth claims made by transgender activists are misleading. It shows with enormous clarity the scientific and philosophical reasons why Harry cannot become Sally and highlights the enormous damage that can often follow when people (and children in particular) are encouraged to go down the transgender route as the solution to their gender dysphoria. Anyone who wants information on these areas needs to get a copy of this book.

However, Anderson's book is aimed at a general, rather than a specifically Christian, audience and this means that what it does not do is give a theological critique of the claims made by the transgender movement or look at how churches should respond pastorally to those with gender dysphoria. Those who want help in these areas should turn instead to books like Vaughan Roberts' *Transgender* (The Good Book Company 2016) or Andrew T Walker's *God and the Transgender Debate* (The Good Book Company 2017).

Overview:

Dr Ryan Anderson is an American scholar who is a Senior Research Fellow at The Heritage Foundation in Washington DC, and the founder and editor of the online journal *Public Discourse*. He has written extensively on matters of ethics and public policy from a conservative Christian perspective.

His new book begins by noting that:

In 1989, the classic film *When Harry Met Sally* dealt with one thorny issue: Can a man and a woman really be 'just friends'? That question may still be up in the air, but Hollywood took on a more fundamental one with the 2015 film *The Danish Girl*: Can a man really become a woman? The answer from Hollywood was a resounding 'yes.'

As Anderson sees it, the change of topic between these two films reflects the fact that America is now in the midst of a 'transgender moment' in which the idea that a man can become a woman (or indeed has always been a woman) and vice versa is achieving widespread public acceptance. He also notes however, that there are dissenting voices on this issue, the most prominent of which is Professor Paul McHugh who in 1979 convinced Johns Hopkins Hospital to stop performing sex reassignment surgery on the basis that it was not to the benefit of the patients concerned.

The purpose of Anderson's book is to argue that McHugh and the other dissenting voices are correct. This is because:

The best biology, psychology and philosophy all support an understanding of sex as a bodily reality and of gender as a social manifestation of bodily sex. Biology isn't bigotry. Every human society has been organized around a recognition that men and women are different, and modern science shows that the differences begin with our DNA and development in the womb. It is true that men and women differ among themselves, and that some people have difficulty identifying with their bodily sex. But this doesn't mean that sex is either fluid or subjective, as transgender ideology maintains. This book is an effort to provide a nuanced view of our sexed embodiment, a balanced approach to policy issues involving transgender identity and gender identity more broadly, and a sober and honest survey of the human costs of getting human nature wrong.

Anderson develops this argument in eight chapters. Chapter 1 looks at the impact of the transgender movement in the realms of 'culture, law and medicine.' Chapters 2 and 3 look at the arguments put forward by transgender activists and the counter testimony of those who have gone down the transgender route and found it wanting and have therefore reverted according to their original sex. Chapter 4 sets out the basic biological and philosophical arguments against the claim that a biological male can be a woman and vice versa. Chapter 5 shows why the arguments for a biological basis for gender dysphoria are unconvincing and why gender dysphoria is best treated as a psychological condition. Chapter 6 explores the best ways to respond to gender dysphoria in children and the dangers of encouraging them to go down the path of gender transition. Chapter 7 traces the philosophical roots of the transgender movement in the attack on the idea of differences between men and women from some parts of the feminist movement and explains why this attack needs to be resisted. Chapter 8 then looks at the public policy implications of the argument Anderson has put forward in areas such as 'access to single-sex facilities, pronoun

policing and health-care mandates.'

A concluding chapter explains why Anderson wrote the book and sets out a strategy for fighting back against the transgender movement 'politically and culturally' and for offering 'healthier ways to deal with gender dysphoria.'

Commendations:

John Finnis writes:

'I always read Ryan Anderson with great admiration. *When Harry Became Sally* is an always focused, informative, fair-minded, lucid and fact-based guide to just and reasonable policies in place of government- and corporation-mandated falsification of science, medicine, public records and history; suppression of free speech and family rights; and many-sided, often irreversible injustice to the vulnerable.'

David and Marybeth Baggett, *The Morals of the Story: Good News about a Good God*, IVP Academic, ISBN 978-0-83085-207-9, £19.20 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

This is a book that presents the moral argument for the existence of God in a comprehensive yet accessible fashion. We live in an age that believes in morality but is often doubtful about God. The Baggetts show with great clarity and force (and some good jokes) that this makes no sense. To make sense of morality we have to believe in God and specifically in the kind of God made known to us in the biblical revelation. This is a book that all thinking Christians ought to be buying and giving away to their non-Christian friends. Rational apologetics at its best.

Overview:

David and Marybeth Baggett are both Professors at Liberty University in the United States. David Baggett has previously written two heavyweight defences of the moral argument for the existence of God in collaboration with Jerry Walls (*Good God*, OUP 2011, and *God and Cosmos*, OUP 2016). Now in collaboration with his wife he has produced a more popular version of the same argument.

As they explain at the beginning of the book, their starting point in writing the book is the conviction that:

We live at a time when penetrating moral insight is in short supply, when horrific evils are perpetrated with reckless abandon or claimed to have divine approval, when a sense of moral proportion needs to be restored, when clarity about the function and foundation of morality is crucial. Morality can indeed shed light on who we are, on the human condition, and on the meaning of life, but only if, and only after, we grasp its significance and import rightly. This book aims to provide some help to do just that.

As they further explain, their book is an exercise in moral apologetics:

To do apologetics is to speak in defense of something: to do moral apologetics in particular is to offer arguments based on morality for the existence of something, such as freedom or immortality. In the case of this book, moral apologetics will be specifically used to defend the existence of God, as presented both in classical monotheism (the belief that there is only one God) and Judeo-Christian Scripture.

They develop their argument in the form of a three act play.

Act 1, 'Setting the stage,' sets the stage for 'the cumulative moral argument' of the book by explaining what is meant by the terms 'God' and 'morality' and tracing the history of the moral argument for God's existence.

Act II, 'The main characters,' sets out 'the moral case for theism,' looking in turn at the significance of moral goodness, moral obligation, moral faith, moral transformation and the connection between virtue and joy.

Act III, 'Enacting the comedy,' finally 'puts all of these pieces together to reveal the cumulative strength of the whole case, to show that power of theism and Christianity to explain this assortment of moral realities in a coherent and compelling way.'

Commendations:

James Dew declares:

'This is exactly the kind of book that philosophers need to write and that students need to read! David Baggett and MaryBeth Baggett offer a clear and compelling account of why it is that God is still the best explanation of the moral facts of our world. But best of all, they do so while reminding us that philosophy need not be stuffy or boring, and that Christian apologetics need not be contentious or hostile. This book caused me to think deeply and, at times, burst out in laughter. I look forward to using this in my own courses and recommend it with great enthusiasm!'

Wallace Benn, *Ministry of the Word*, 10 Publishing, ISBN 978-1-912373-24-6, £2.99.

Martin's opinion:

This book is an excellent resource that highlights in a clear and concise fashion what the ministry of the Word needs to involve. It will prove invaluable both to those involved in this ministry and to those responsible for their training. If the money were available, it would be great to be able to place a copy in the hands of every Evangelical ordinand. Highly recommended.

Overview:

Wallace Benn, the former Bishop of Lewes, is spending his retirement preaching, teaching and writing. *Ministry of the Word* is the latest fruit of his writing ministry.

In this little book he looks at what we can learn about the ministry of Word from St. Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus recorded in Acts 20:17-38. He focuses on this passage because he believes that:

As we, in God's good providence, overhear Luke's record of that conversation we learn crucial things about Paul's priorities for those involved as overseers and ministers of the Word in churches.

Benn argues that these verses teach us that the ministry of the Word is not something confined to the pulpit but is to 'dominate and control every aspect of the life of an overseer/presbyter,' that it needs to be undertaken by a team of people (as in the plural Eldership in Ephesus) who care for themselves and their families spiritually, emotionally and physically, and that it needs to be a grateful response to what Jesus has done for us.

He also examines seven verbs that St. Paul uses to describe the ministry of the Word and argues that they illustrate different aspects of this ministry that in principle need to be held together:

We don't just teach, we preach; we pastor and care for as well as warn. We are heralds with a task to announce but that may best be as a whisper if by a sick bedside. We just need to always be faithful. We pray for, look for, and seek to take every opportunity.

Paul didn't need a pulpit, as he proclaimed the Gospel whenever he could, sensitively and bravely, 'in public and from house to house' (v20). And so should we!

Commendations:

R Kent Hughes commented:

'Wallace has done all pastors a great and necessary service with this book. Read it in an hour. Pray it in daily.'

Craig A Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis*, Baker Academic, ISBN 978-0801098727, £18.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

It would be an understatement to say that not everyone is likely to agree with Carter's argument. He is, after all, asking us to reject the entire modern tradition of Bible reading and to embrace Christian Platonism to boot. However, even if one does not eventually agree with Carter's argument, in whole or in part, this is a book which is definitely worth reading by anyone who is concerned with how we should interpret the Bible in accordance with its God given nature. As Carter says, the Bible is not just like 'any other book,' so how do we read it in a way that reflects this truth and does justice to way that the New Testament writers interpreted the Old Testament as a book about Jesus Christ? Carter forces us to wrestle with these questions and for that reason alone he deserves to be read and his passionate argument pondered with care.

Overview:

Craig Carter is Professor of theology at Tyndale University College and Seminary in Canada. In his new book on biblical interpretation he challenges the notion almost universally held by professional biblical scholarship that we should 'interpret the Bible like any other book.'

As Carter sees it, this notion is completely wrong. Rather than being read like any other book the Bible needs to be read in a specific way in accordance with its unique nature:

The authority of the Bible is God's self-authenticating Word speaking through it, and in order to hear God's Word, it is crucial that we interpret it as a unified book with Jesus Christ at its center. The interdisciplinary practice of biblical studies as found in academic settings today is an agent of secularization in the church and needs to be reformed so that it becomes a servant of Christian theology and spirituality rather than a confusing amalgam of history, philology, archaeology, literary theory, sociological theory, and philosophy operating with unacknowledged metaphysical assumptions and without any material center. The meaning of the text for today is what we seek to hear as we study the text carefully, intensively, and reverently. Biblical exegesis is a spiritual discipline by which we are gradually made into the kind of readers who can receive with gladness the Word of God.

Furthermore, in his view:

Ancient reading practices, which have never died out completely in the church, can help us hear God's Word in less subjective and more ruled ways than modern hermeneutics makes available to us.

If we ask why the faulty modern approach to biblical interpretation arose and why, like the cuckoo in the next, it pushed out the more helpful ancient way of reading Scripture, Carter's answer is that the blame lay in the rejection of Christian Platonism at the Enlightenment:

Whereas the fathers found a kinship with the Platonists on a number of points and considered them the best of the Greek philosophers, the Enlightenment thinkers rejected the Platonists and embraced first the Atomists and the Epicureans (in the eighteenth century) and later the Stoics and the Sceptics (in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). The result was a crisis within Western intellectual thought, and this crisis expressed itself in two ways: (1) in the rise of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation from Baruch Spinoza onward and (2) in the revisionist or liberal theology that flowed from the impetus provided by Friedrich Schleiermacher. In the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, methodological naturalism became the central presupposition of exegesis.

Carter's book is an attempt to correct this mistake by summoning Christians to reject the Enlightenment approach in favour of the reading approach found in the 'Great tradition' (Carter's term for the Christ centred reading of Scripture developed on the basis of Christian Platonism by the Nicene Fathers of the fourth century and generally accepted by orthodox Christianity as a whole until the eighteenth century). As he sees it, only this approach enables us to read Scripture in a way that conforms to the witness of the New Testament writers:

This book is an attempt to overcome the negative effects of the historical critical method by repudiating the

methodological naturalism that grows out of its Epicurean metaphysics and cheerfully embracing the supernatural, miracles, providence, inspiration, and other concepts central to the Great Tradition but often brushed aside by modernity. A great deal of the distance between contemporary theology and fourth-century pro-Nicene theology arises because even conservative and evangelical scholars today often view the allegorical methods of biblical interpretation used by the fathers as childishly inept. The fathers, following the explicit example of the writers of the New Testament, interpreted the Old Testament text as having multiple levels of meaning. The biblical text functioned sacramentally for them by manifesting Christ in the present. The christological meaning of an Old Testament text could be discerned on this side of the resurrection because it was always there in the text, even though it was not necessarily discerned (or at least not clearly discerned) by those who lived before the incarnation of God in Christ. The lively awareness of divine authorial intent, in addition to human authorial intent, enabled them to see the *sensus plenior* as resident in the text itself and not as something read into the text by readers. Without this way of reading the Old Testament, the New Testament writers could not have interpreted the Old Testament christologically and the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Scriptures could not have been convincing. So in a very important sense, our faith is dependent on the validity of patristic exegesis.

Carter's book develops this basic argument by exploring in detail why we should recover the tradition of pre-modern biblical exegesis and what such a reading strategy would look like in practice. As a worked example he looks at the question of how we should understand the identity of the suffering servant in Isaiah

Commendations:

Annette Brownlee writes:

'With comprehensive breadth, Carter argues that a theological interpretation of Scripture that is grounded in the Nicene faith, Christian Platonism, and christological literalism has always been at the heart of the church's great evangelical preaching. Carter links contemporary evangelical practices to the best strands of patristic, medieval, and Reformation exegesis, inviting us to grasp the interaction of exegesis, dogma, and metaphysics as part of a spiritual discipline in which the believing reader is united to Christ by being transformed and purified by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Readable and passionately argued, this volume is for those who want a comprehensive account of retrieving tradition as the way forward for evangelicals.'

Kelly M Kapic and Hans Madueme (eds.), *Reading Theology in the Protestant Tradition*, Bloomsbury T & T Clark, ISBN 978-0567266149, £28.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

As C S Lewis argues in his classic essay 'On reading old books,' in order to prevent our theological perspective from being unduly narrowed by the ideas and concerns of our own day we need to read books produced by Christians in the past. The problem lies in deciding which works are worth reading and understanding them when we do decide to read them. *Reading Theology in the Protestant Tradition* helps with both problems by identifying classic works we need to read and providing reliable introductions to assist us to read them with understanding. This is a very useful introductory guide to the riches of the Christian tradition that will be helpful both to students encountering the history of theology for the first time and to ministers and others who realise that there are gaps in their understanding of that history that they would like to fill.

Overview:

Kelly Kapic and Hans Madueme teach Theological Studies at Covenant College in the United States. Their book *Reading Theology in the Protestant Tradition* was first published in hardback in 2015 and has now been re-issued as a more affordable paperback.

The purpose of this book is to introduce Protestant theological students to the development of Christian thought from the Patristic period to the twentieth century.

The book is divided into five parts which look in turn at the 'Early Church Period' (100-500), 'The Medieval Period,' 'The Reformation Period,' 'The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,' and 'The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.' Each of these parts is written by a different author, or authors (including Kapic and Madueme themselves and other scholars such as Gerald Bray and Amy Brown Hughes).

Each part begins with an introduction to the period in question. This general introduction is then followed by a series of essays introducing readers to a series of classic works from the period in question. Thus Part III on the Reformation Period looks at ten works including Martin Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian*, Thomas Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* and Ignatius of Loyola's *The Spiritual Exercises*.

As the Introduction to the book explains:

Each essay begins with a brief overview of the author's life. Turning to the 'classic' under review, each article then offers a *descriptive* rather than a *prescriptive* focus; we were not aiming to dictate theological conclusions, but to guide our readers through the long arc of theological reflection found in each text. Our guides discuss the distinctive theological flavor or contribution of the original document by drawing attention to two to five distinctive themes or contributions that arise from each book. At the end of each essay, readers are provided a brief bibliographical list of relevant primary and secondary literature related to the book reviewed, highlighting reliable translations and accessible scholarly discussions.

In addition to the fifty eight works studied in the essays, each part also contains a wider list of significant works from the period that students would benefit from knowing about.

As the Introduction further explains, the overall purpose of the books is to call its readers:

...into a dialog. Not only are they invited to hear the concerns of past recognized leaders, but also to begin to ask their own questions. Why have these authors and their books been so valued through the centuries? What might these writers have missed? What is helpful in each, and what is hurtful? What contributions of these 'classics' should be retained and what elements strongly opposed.

Commendations:

Mark Thompson comments:

'Christian theology is a fellowship activity; we learn from those who have read the Bible both before us and alongside us. This introduction to some of the great texts of the Christian tradition is a welcome encouragement to do just that. It is a fascinating selection, one which does not rest content with the old favorites but introduces us to new writings and opinions. The past can challenge the preoccupations of the present, and reading these texts will undoubtedly stimulate us to look again, more carefully, at the word of God, so that we might both proclaim and embody the gospel faithfully in our own time.'

Thomas Noble, Sarah Whittle and Philip Johnston (eds.), *Marriage, Family and Relationships: Biblical, Doctrinal and Contemporary Perspectives*, Apollos, ISBN 978-1783595396, £17.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

This is a very significant collection of essays from some of the leading Evangelical scholars of our day. It is a book which deserves reading by anyone who wants to take Scripture and the Christian tradition seriously while also taking seriously the challenges posed to the Church by developments in contemporary culture. Neither ignoring the cultural challenge, nor capitulating to it, is a proper way forward. What this collection points us to is a better alternative in which there is a constructive engagement with culture on the basis of a fresh examination of the resources which the Bible and the Christian tradition have to offer.

Overview:

In the background of this collection of papers lies the fact that 'Family life has undergone revolutionary changes in Western society in the last sixty years,' the most recent manifestation of this change being the introduction of same-sex marriage. Responding to this changing context the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical and Theological Research convened a conference in July 2016 on 'Marriage, Family and Relationships.'

This conference was intended to be: 'a place where evangelical scholars, committed to the historic Christian view of marriage and the historic Christian understanding of the Scriptures, could interact and discuss their research together' and where they could explore 'the implications of biblical faith for fresh thinking on the Christian view of marriage, family and relationships.'

Some fifty papers were presented at the conference and of these sixteen have been brought together in this new collection. The collection is divided into two parts, 'Biblical perspectives' and 'Doctrinal and contemporary perspectives,' with eight papers in each part. It would be impossible to do justice to all sixteen papers in a review of this size, so I shall instead refer to three papers from each part as an illustration of the richness and diversity of the collection as a whole.

In Part I:

Rosalind Clarke's paper "Who is this coming up from the wilderness? Identity and interpretation in the Song of Songs":

..... examines the multiple levels of interpretation of the Song of Songs. Even at the so-called literal level the Song is about many things: sexuality and redemption, wisdom and women, marriage and kingship. But read as a canonical text of Holy Scripture, the exemplary role of King Solomon and his bride not only honours love and marriage but also speaks of the relationship between God and Israel. Given Jesus' own references to himself as the bridegroom, New Testament writers then apply this to Christ and his church.

Ian Paul's paper, 'Are we sexed in heaven? Bodily form, sex identity and the resurrection,' examines 'the declaration by Jesus that in the resurrection there will be no marriage,' and considers 'whether this implies the end of the differentiation between the sexes.'

Nicholas Moore's paper, 'Deferring to Dad's discipline: Family life in Hebrews 12,' looks at what Hebrews 12:5-13 has to say about 'the role of the Christian family in general and parental discipline in particular. He argues that it tells us that 'Family discipline is God-ordained and, while potentially flawed, provides a minor but important argument that those in the household of God should submit to his fatherly discipline.'

In Part II:

Onesimus Ngundu's paper, 'Marriage in early, Christian and African perspectives' surveys the history of Christian marriage law and customs. It contends that 'Developments in Europe and the West have added customs and expectations which are not strictly biblical, and from an African perspective, can present problems.'

Oliver O'Donovan's paper, "One man and one woman': The Christian doctrine of marriage' argues that the Christian doctrine of marriage arises from the Christian doctrine of human nature and that while some degree of 'pastoral accommodation' may be possible it is not legitimate 'to change doctrine, for example by overturning the universal doctrine of the church that marriage is between a man and a woman. The theological case for such a change in church doctrine has not been made.'

Steven Holmes' paper, 'On not handling snakes: Late-modern cultural assumptions about sexuality,' contends that:

....if we are to argue from Scripture and Christian tradition for the historical Christian doctrine of marriage, we have to address the ways in which we in the modern West had already allowed pagan, romantic notions of love and marriage into the church. If we are to be heard, we need a more biblical and modest understanding of marriage as an ascetic practice, a new understanding of the centrality of procreation to marriage, and a new understanding of the role of celibacy in the church.

Stephen Um, *Micah for You*, Good Book Company, ISBN 978-1-90955-974-5, £9.99.

Martin's opinion:

This is a clear and inspiring Christian commentary on Micah. It takes you through the book verse by verse and is fully informed by up to date Old Testament scholarship. However, it doesn't just tell you what the text meant to its first readers, but also, as indicated above, what it means for us today in the light of the coming of Jesus Christ. It comes with an accompanying *Good Book Guide* for small group Bible studies, and could be used with profit as the basis for personal and group Bible study and as the basis for a sermon series on Micah.

Overview:

Dr Stephen Um is the Senior Minister of Citylife Church in Boston in the United States and also teaches New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

The starting point for his new exposition of the book of Micah is the conviction that while we live in a world in which all, Christian and non-Christian alike, seek justice, this very desire for justice raises difficult questions. What transforms us to truly seek justice, even when this is at cost to ourselves? And what enables us to do so in a way that also offers mercy?

Um argues that a study of Micah provides us with the answer to these questions. As he sees it, the message of God to Israel through Micah is still his message to his people now. We are called to so enjoy the gospel that we are freed to seek true justice and offer real mercy.

As Um notes, Micah is normally seen in terms of a simple call to act justly, a reading based on taking Micah 6:8 in isolation. However:

... when we take the time to read the entire book of Micah carefully, we realize that God is not simply giving us a homework assignment about justice. The message for us is not simply a call to action to do good. God wants us to know the reason and the need for doing good—for his glory and for the flourishing of his creation—and to find the power to do it. Micah tells us that the sin of injustice is real, and that judgment is inevitable, but hope of restoration is coming.

In his view, when we read it in the light of the coming of Jesus:

... we find that Micah can inspire and transform us to do the justice we yearn for, and love the kindness we long to see, as we walk through life with the God of consistent justice and overwhelming kindness.

Commendations:

Don Carson has written:

'Micah for You is a very helpful lay commentary written by an experienced and expert Bible teacher. Stephen Um takes you through the argument of this reforming prophet, not only making sense of the flow of the book but expertly unpacking the nature of sin and idolatry, the threat of judgment, and the need for hope. Micah is well known for his passionate plea for justice and integrity, and through Dr. Um's exposition Micah, though long dead, still speaks to our broken generation. Particularly helpful are the ways in which Dr. Um draws carefully thought-through connections between this prophet in ancient Israel and the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel.'

George Westhaver (ed.), *A Transforming Vision: Knowing and Loving the Triune God*, SCM, ISBN 978-0-33405-568-6, £35.00 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

At £35.00 this is probably not a book that many ordinary Evangelicals will want to acquire for their own studies and not all of the papers will be to everyone's taste. However, this is an important collection of essays that both provides a snapshot of scholarly current thinking about the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian theology and Christian living and introduces us to the biblical and theological sources that underlie this thinking. This is a rich resource for anyone who wants up to date scholarly reflection on what the doctrine of Trinity is, why we should believe it, and why it matters. Evangelicals may not want to buy this collection, but they will certainly benefit from borrowing a copy and reading it.

Overview:

Since taking over as the principal of Pusey House, Oxford, in 2013 the Revd Dr George Westhaver has greatly reinvigorated it. It has returned to being what its nineteenth-century founders always intended it to be, a vibrant centre for orthodox Catholic life and thought at the heart of the University of Oxford.

One of the fruits of this reinvigoration was a conference held at Pusey House from 29 June to 1 July 2016 on the topic 'A transforming vision: knowing and loving the Triune God.' The new book edited by Dr Westhaver, and carrying the same title, is a collection of the papers from this conference.

The book is in four main parts.

Part 1, 'Surveying the Mystery' introduces the key themes of the conference and considers how our understanding of the Trinity can be enriched by the teaching of St. Hilary of Poitiers and how an appreciation of music can shape our understanding of 'Trinitarian space.'

Part 2, 'Foundations,' looks at the foundational sources of Trinitarian theology in the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles and in the teaching of the Eastern and Western Fathers.

Part 3, 'Explorations,' provides 'a series of historical and theological explorations of Trinitarian thought.' It includes, for example, a study by Gary Thorne on how the Trinitarian theology of Richard Hooker was shaped by the Greek Patristic tradition and an essay by Gavin Dunbar arguing that Cranmer's liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer provides 'a verbal image of the Trinitarian 'Throne of Mercy' which replaced the visual images that disappeared from English altars and churches in the iconoclasm following the Reformation.'

Part 4, 'The Trinity in Prayer, in Life and in the Church,' explores how 'Trinitarian thought is both shaped by, and leads to, prayer and contemplation, action and ethical reflection.' It includes, for example, a paper by Lydia Schumacher on how 'the Christian doctrine of the Trinity' provides 'the ultimate foundation for enabling us to live the human lives – and be the human beings – we were designed by God to be' and a paper by Oliver O'Donovan in memory of the late John Webster that contends that 'it takes a Trinitarian God to elicit purposeful human action' and that Christian ethics is about 'the conformity between God's gracious act and our responsive action.' A conclusion by Rowan Williams entitled 'Knowing and Loving the Triune God' provides an 'overview and reflection' on what was said at the conference.

Commendations:

Matt Bullimore declares:

'Neither shying away from the difficulties of knowing God, nor from the discipline required to allow ourselves to be reshaped and reformed, the contributors show that the church is to be found where together we have accepted the divine invitation to inhabit the Trinitarian movement of giving and receiving love. They remind us that theology is a journey into the heart and mind of the triune God....In essays eloquent, elegant, playful, subtle and clear, we are shown that our prayer should be thoughtful and our thought prayerful. And the fruit of all our praying and thinking is a participation in a divine pattern of living in this world, albeit in all our messy glory.'

Paul R Williamson, *Death and the Afterlife: Biblical Perspectives on Ultimate Questions*, Apollos, ISBN 978-1-78359-599-0, £14.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

This book is a clear and reliable guide to the issues it covers. It shows in detail why the traditional understanding of eschatology held by Anglican Evangelicals is the one that is supported by the biblical witness. If you want to know what the Bible has to say about death and the afterlife then this book will tell you. It will prove very useful for students beginning the study of eschatology, ministers who want to be reminded what the Bible says about this topic and ordinary Christians who are often confused by the various views on the matter held in both the world and the Church and who need some reliable teaching to help them to overcome their confusion. This is an important book that people should buy, read and lend to others.

Overview:

Dr Paul Williamson is Lecturer in Old Testament, Hebrew and Aramaic at Moore College, Sydney. His new book, which is part of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series is based on the Moore College Annual Lectures for 2016.

His twin starting points are the fact that our mortality means that everyone has 'a vested interest' in the topic on which the book is focused, namely what happens to us after we die, and the fact that Evangelical scholars are now questioning issues to do with this topic 'about which evangelicals of various shades and traditions have previously agreed.' The purpose of Williamson's book is to respond to this intra-Evangelical debate by looking at what the Bible has to say about the issues in question.

The book is in six chapters.

Chapter 1 sets out 'the perspectives of both our contemporary culture and the biblical world' on death and the afterlife and then highlights 'the traditional understanding of the biblical perspective and the issues over which evangelicals have more recently been polarized.'

Chapter 2 looks at 'what happens immediately after we die' with the particular focus on the ideas of an intermediate state and disembodied souls.

Chapter 3 examines 'bodily resurrection' with 'particular focus on the timing and nature of this momentous event.'

Chapter 4 looks at the final universal judgement with 'particular focus on the relationship between 'justification by faith and 'judgment according to works.'

Chapter 5 looks at the fate of the reprobate focussing on the biblical support for the idea of hell as 'eternal conscious torment' over against the idea that the lost will be annihilated.

Chapter 6 explores 'the biblical concept of an eschatological 'heaven,' with particular focus on where such a paradise will be experienced and by whom.'

Commendations:

Don Carson observes:

'Christians were once known as those who knew how to die well. In the Western world today, however, many of us have succumbed to the pressures of the surrounding culture, making us slow to talk about death and what lies beyond. Our creeds teach us to long for the new heaven and the new earth, and to trust Christ so as to escape the judgment we deserve, but instead of joining Christian voices across the ages and crying, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus!', we sometimes succumb to a practical atheism. The first step toward regaining an eternal perspective is to rediscover what the Bible actually says about life, death, judgment, resurrection, and hell. And that is what Paul Williamson has undertaken. Taking care to understand the Ancient Near East and the Graeco-Roman world against which backgrounds the biblical documents were written, he surveys the emphases of the Old and New Testaments, working through the most important passages. This volume is likely to become the stimulus for more than one series

of sermons on this subject. More important, it may well stimulate its readers to live life now and die well because they have learned to live with eternity in view, cherishing the blessed promises and consolations of the gospel of Jesus Christ.'

Tom Wright, *Paul: A Biography*, SPCK, ISBN 978-0-28107-875-2, £19.99 (e edition also available).

Martin's opinion:

Over the years Wright's studies of St. Paul have divided the Evangelical world. Many Evangelicals have appreciated what they have seen as his fresh new insights into Paul's theology, while others have felt that his reading of Paul, particularly on justification, fails to do justice to Paul's teaching and has tended to caricature the beliefs which Evangelicals have previously held. Because this new book builds on his previous work, it is likely to have a similarly divisive effect, but it is nevertheless a book which all Evangelicals ought to read in order to be pushed hard to think for themselves about what the New Testament really tells us concerning St. Paul's life and thought. This is now the new standard biography of St. Paul and Evangelicals need to engage with it.

Overview:

Professor Tom Wright is without doubt Britain's most eminent contemporary New Testament scholar, and a large part of his huge literary output has been concerned with the life and work of St. Paul. Some of this work has been formidably academic, as in the case of his massive two volume study *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, and some of it has been designed to be accessible to a more general readership, as in his riposte to A N Wilson, *What St. Paul Really Said*.

Paul: A Biography sits between these two approaches. It is much more accessible than *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, but it is still a lengthy and ground breaking work of scholarship rather than a popularisation of material that he has already published in a more academic form.

This biography starts off with the observation that in the latter half of the first century a man lived and worked in Western Asia and South Eastern Europe whose ideas would transform the course of human history. In Wright's words:

An energetic and talkative man, not much to look at and from a despised race, went about from city to city talking about the One God and his "son" Jesus, setting up small communities of people who accepted what he said and then writing letters to them, letters whose explosive charge is as fresh today as when they were first dictated. Paul might dispute the suggestion that he himself changed the world; Jesus, he would have said, had already done that. But what he said about Jesus, and about God, the world, and what it meant to be genuinely human, was creative and compelling—and controversial, in his own day and ever after. Nothing would ever be quite the same again.

For Wright the fact that St. Paul's life and thought have had such an impact raises two questions 'for any historian or would-be biographer.' First of all:

How did it happen? What did this busy little man have that other people didn't? What did he think he was doing, and why was he doing it? How did someone with his background and upbringing, which had produced saints and scholars but nobody at all like this, come to be speaking, traveling, and writing in this way? That is the first challenge of the present book: to get inside the mind, the understanding, the ambition (if that's the right word) of Paul the Apostle, known earlier as Saul of Tarsus. What motivated him, in his heart of hearts?

Secondly, what took place to make St. Paul a follower of Jesus?

When Saul encountered the news about Jesus, his mind was not a blank slate. He had been going full tilt in the opposite direction. More than once he reminds his readers that he had been brought up in a school of Jewish thought that adhered strictly to the ancestral traditions. As a young man, Saul of Tarsus had become a leading light in this movement, the aim of whose members was to urge their fellow Jews into more radical obedience to the ancient codes and to discourage them from any deviations by all means possible, up to and including violence. Why did all that change? What exactly happened on the road to Damascus?

In his biography Wright sets out to answer these two questions by describing the intellectual, cultural and political context of St. Paul's life and work and then tracing his life from his upbringing in Tarsus, through his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road and the missionary activity that resulted from it, to his final imprisonment and martyrdom in Rome. Wright uses the testimony of Acts to provide the basic chronology of his study and then

supplements this with the evidence from the Pauline epistles (which for him include Ephesians and the Pastorals). As he explains in his preface, his reconstruction of Paul's life involves two assumptions. First that Galatians was written to the Christians in South Galatia and, secondly, that the prison epistles were written by St. Paul during an imprisonment in Ephesus.

Commendations:

Craig Keener has written:

'In eloquent and inviting prose, one of the world's leading New Testament scholars retells the story behind the story, the story of the Apostle Paul whose letters have shaped so much of subsequent history. . . A master teacher here communicates Paul in language every reader can understand.'