

Latimer Trust

Monthly Reading List – February 2019

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
Sam Allberry	<i>7 Myths about Singleness</i>	This is a readable, biblical and practical restatement of the importance of singleness in the life of the Church. It needs to be read by everyone whether single or married.
Gerald Bray	<i>Documents of the English Reformation</i>	Students who do not already have a copy of this book should buy one in order to give them the material they need to begin to understand the history and theology of the English Reformation.
Tim Chester	<i>Enjoying God</i>	The key aim of the book is to help its readers to know God experientially by consciously developing a relationship with each of the three persons of the Trinity. The book will help its readers to achieve this aim.
Stephen J Duby	<i>Divine Simplicity</i>	This book is a published form of Duby's doctoral thesis. For those who have the requisite theological knowledge to benefit from it, this book has much to offer.
Alister McGrath (ed)	<i>Christian Belief</i>	This handbook is an excellent resource for anyone wanting an introduction to Christian belief that is user friendly, but also scholarly, up-to-date and orthodox.
John Lennox	<i>Can Science Explain Everything?</i>	This is a fine (and very accessible) introduction to the issue of the relationship between Christianity and science. It can be strongly recommended as a book to give away.
Ryan McGraw,	<i>Reformed Scholasticism: Recovering the Tools of Reformed Theology</i>	This handbook will help Evangelical students to understand better how to undertake responsible study in this area. Theological colleges should buy copies of this book for their libraries and those who know students with an interest in this field should alert them to its existence.
J P Moreland	<i>Scientism and Secularism: Learning to Respond to a Dangerous Ideology</i>	This is a very helpful popular guide to understanding and responding to the dangers of scientism and would make an excellent basis for a home group or a teaching series on this topic.
T F Torrance	<i>Space, Time and Resurrection</i>	Readers often have to read what he says a second or even third time to really grasp what he is saying but the intellectual effort is worthwhile. This is a must buy for all serious students of Christian doctrine.
Christopher J H Wright	<i>Knowing God Through the Old Testament: Three Volumes in One</i>	IVP academic have done us a great service by bringing these three volumes together in one. This is now the 'go to' resource for anyone who wants to understand the Old Testament roots of the New Testament's affirmation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Sam Allberry, *7 Myths about Singleness*, Crossway, ISBN 978-1433561528, £ 11.44 (e and audio editions also available).

Overview:

Sam Allberry is a minister and a well-known speaker and writer. He is a global speaker for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, an editor for The Gospel Coalition and one of the leadership team for the Living Out website. Allberry is single and his new book looks at what the Bible has to say to about singleness both to people like him and also to the Church as a whole.

In his introduction he explains that Christianity has a particular view about what it means to be single. He writes:

From the point of view of Christianity, to be single means being both unmarried and committed (for as long as we remain unmarried) to sexual abstinence. The Bible is clear that sex outside marriage is sinful, something that is underlined in the teaching of Jesus. To be single is to refrain from any sexual behaviour. If you're single long term, as a Christian this means being sexually abstinent long term.

For many people today both in wider society and also in the Church the biblical requirement for complete sexual abstinence makes singleness seem highly negative and very unappealing. However, says Allberry, this view of the matter is mistaken:

...singleness isn't actually a bad thing. In the Bible it's good. It's even described as a blessing. In and of itself it's a wonderful gift from God that should be affirmed and celebrated. Read on, and I hope you'll find out why. Most of what we think we know is actually untrue. And the point of this book is that the goodness of the single life is something the whole church needs to know. It's obvious that singles need to be clear about it, but so too does everybody else. The Bible's teaching about singleness is given to all of God's [people].

The way Allberry explains the goodness of the single life is by addressing seven common misconceptions or 'myths' about singleness (hence the book's title). These 'myths' are:

- Singleness is too hard;
- Singleness requires a special calling;
- Singleness means no intimacy;
- Singleness means no family;
- Singleness hinders ministry;
- Singleness wastes your sexuality;
- Singleness is easy.

Allberry devotes a chapter to each of these topics and shows that the teaching of Scripture (particularly, but not exclusively 1 Corinthians 7) supported by Christian experience, shows that each of the seven propositions is untrue.

For example, on the idea that singleness is too hard he concludes that while we should not say 'that singleness is easy or that it is necessarily easier than marriage' it is equally wrong to 'assume singleness is too hard.' This is because:

To do so easily overlooks the many ways in which marriage can be very difficult. It is not for nothing that the disciples said, 'It is better not to marry.' There are some specific 'worldly troubles' that come with married life. We must not overlook the ways in which singleness frees us up for undivided devotion to Jesus.

For another example, on the idea that singleness wastes your sexuality he notes that in God's economy sexual desire points us to the fulfilment of all our longings in the relationship we shall have with Jesus in the world to come. Seen in this light 'Sexual unfulfillment itself becomes a means of deepening our sense of the fuller, deeper satisfaction we await in Jesus. It helps us to hunger more for him.' It follows that:

Celibacy is not a waste of our sexuality; it's a wonderful way of fulfilling it. It's allowing our sexual feelings to point us to the reality of the gospel. We will never ultimately make sense of what our sexuality is unless we know what it is for—to point us to God's love for us in Christ.

As well as the seven chapters dealing with these issues, the book also has an appendix based on the teaching of Proverbs 5, looking at four ways to avoid sexual sin by fleeing temptation, considering the future, upholding your marriage and remembering that God is watching.

Martin's opinion:

This is a readable, biblical and practical restatement of the importance of singleness in the life of the Church. It shows that singleness is not a second class way of life for those who are not yet, or who have ceased to be, married, but a positive vocation which has its own distinct advantages as a way of loving and serving God. It needs to be read by everyone whether single or married and it would make an excellent basis for a sermon series or for discussion in a home group setting. Highly recommended.

Commendations:

Tim Keller has written:

Sam Allberry flushes out the several hidden, barely conscious assumptions about singleness and celibacy that control our attitudes toward single living. Once he makes these assumptions visible, he uses the Bible to dismantle them and show us a better way. It would be a great mistake, however, if we were to think this is a book only for singles. If Sam is right—and he is—the entire church must understand the biblical teaching on this subject. The local congregation must be not merely a loose network of families but a close-knit family itself, consisting of both married couples and singles, all living together as brothers and sisters. This volume will show us how to do that.

Gerald Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation* (3ed), James Clarke, ISBN 978-02271-7695-5, £35. (3ed), James Clarke, ISBN 978-02271-7695-5, £35.00

Overview:

Gerald Bray is Research Professor at Beeson Divinity School in the United States and Director of Research at the Latimer Trust.

Since the first edition was published in 1994, his book *Documents of the English Reformation* has been an invaluable resource which has provided new students and seasoned researchers alike with easy access to the key legal and theological texts of the 16th and 17th English Reformation.

The book contains fifty eight documents which cover the period from 1526–1770. Each of the texts is in English (as well as the original Latin where appropriate) and is in modern spelling and typography, thus making them easy to read. For this new edition Bray has made corrections to the text and added some new features such as the addition of biblical references that are not specified in the documents themselves.

As Bray explains, however the real changes in this new edition are in the introductions to each of the documents:

...most of which have been completely re-written in the light of modern research. The earlier editions divided the material into 'history' and 'theology,' the former designed to explain the background to the text and the latter its content. For this revision, the first section has been maintained and expanded, but the second has been re-labelled 'content' in order to reflect the fact that some documents are not 'theological' but are important for other reasons.

In addition to the main documents there are also four supplementary documents. These are the Lutheran Augsburg Confession (in Latin and English) and three English legal texts relating to the relationship between the English Church and Rome. There are also appendices giving the dates of English monarchs, Archbishops of Canterbury, Popes, and Easter and other major festivals, and tracing the development and interrelationship of the key reformation confessions of faith.

Martin's opinion:

Students who do not already have a copy of this book should buy one in order to give them the material they need to begin to understand the history and theology of the English Reformation. Those who have earlier editions should also buy this new edition to benefit from the recent scholarly work which Bray has incorporated. Basically, this should be in every student's library.

Commendations:

David Parnham comments:

It is a most welcome contribution to the study of theology and ecclesiastical history, and will establish itself as an essential reference for all students of the Tudor and Stuart experience of the Protestant faith.

Tim Chester, *Enjoying God*, Good Book Company, ISBN 978-1-78498-281-2, £7.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Tim Chester, who is a pastor at Grace Church, Boroughbridge, in North Yorkshire and faculty member of Crosslands Training, is the author of a number of well-regarded books. His new book is about how we can move from simply believing in God intellectually to enjoying the experience of being in communion with God.

He explains in chapter 1 that the book:

..... started with the realisation that for me it was the Father and the Spirit with whom I have a clear sense of a living relationship, but not the Son. I have a keen sense of the Father as the One to whom I go in prayer. I know what it is to ask him and receive from him. I don't always receive what I request, but I'm happy to trust him to organise the circumstances of my life—good and bad—for my good. And I have a strong sense of living through the Spirit's power. That's not because I'm zapping out miracles all over the place or getting tingling sensations down my spine. It's because I'm convinced that any good I do is done through the prompting and power of the Spirit. It's certainly not done in the power of Tim Chester. So I feel my dependence on the Spirit.

But I realised I had less of a sense of a present experience of the Son. I felt detached from him. I'm aware that he lived, died and rose for me so I could be reconciled to God. That's gloriously true and I'm profoundly grateful. I'm convinced all the blessings in my life flow from his work. But that was 2000 years ago and now he's up in heaven. That's a long time ago and a long way away. What does it mean to *know* Jesus personally? And what does it mean to relate to him right now in the present?

Why does this matter?

Because I believe in more.

What he means by saying 'I believe in more' is that he believes that Christians are meant to enjoy the experience of being related to all three members of the Trinity on the basis of the unity that they have with God through Christ. In his words;

....we can know the *Persons* of God. God lives in an eternal community in which the Father, Son and Spirit relate to one another in love. And when God relates to us, he relates to us in the same way—as Father, Son and Spirit. So when we talk about having a relationship with God, that's really shorthand for having a relationship with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

For Chester the practical implication of this truth is that:

... your relationship with God will be deepened and enriched if you think about how you're relating to the Father, to the Son and to the Spirit. Think how each member of the Trinity is relating to you and how you're responding to them.

When you pray, for example, think of addressing your words to the Father through the Son with the help of the Spirit. Or when you read the Bible, think of the Father revealing himself in his Son by the Holy Spirit, or think of the Son communicating his love to you through the Holy Spirit.

In the fourteen short chapters of his book Chester teases out 'how each member of the Trinity acts towards us and how we should respond,' by looking in turn at how in the midst of the pleasures, hardships, failure and temptations of everyday life we can consciously enjoy a relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus in chapter 4 he looks at how 'In every hardship we can enjoy the Father's formation', in chapter 8 he looks at how 'In every supper we can enjoy the Son's touch', and in chapter 11 he looks at how 'In every word we can enjoy the Spirit's voice.'

Each chapter has a suggestion for action we can take on the basis of the truth outlined in the chapter and a series of 'reflection questions' to help people think about the key lessons from the chapter.

Martin's opinion:

This is not a heavy book, but it is an important one. The key theme of the book is that Christians should not simply know about God, but actually know him experientially, and the key aim of the book is to help its readers to know God experientially by consciously developing a relationship with each of the three persons of the Trinity. The book will help its readers to achieve this aim. It is a book which people will benefit from if they study it on their own, but it would also be a very helpful resource for group study and would make an excellent basis for a sermon series.

Commendations:

Andrea Travenna declares:

I absolutely loved this book. It has been a huge blessing, like cool refreshing water for my soul. I frequently found myself identifying with the sin, struggles and faulty thinking Tim Chester so vividly describes in various scenarios and illustrations, which also helped me see how my view of our triune God is often so flattened and limited. My heart was softened and warmed as Tim held up all that the Father, Son and Spirit have done, and continue to do, to enable us to truly experience and enjoy an intimate relationship with God and know his daily goodness, grace and love in the messy reality of our daily lives. I finished the book marvelling at our glorious God, feeling humbled, excited, encouraged and spurred on.

Stephen J Duby, *Divine Simplicity*, 978-056768-366-3, T&T Clark, £28.99 (Hardback and e editions also available).

Overview:

Stephen Duby teaches theology at Grand Canyon University in the United States. His book on the doctrine of divine simplicity was originally published in hardback in the T&T Clark studies in systematic theology series in 2015, but it is now available in both paperback and e editions.

As Duby explains in his introduction, the doctrine of divine simplicity, which has formed part of orthodox Christian theology since the Patristic period, holds that 'God is not composed of parts but rather is identical with his own essence, existence and attributes, each of which is identical with the whole being of the triune God considered under some aspect.' Thus God is not partly loving, partly holy and partly just. Rather, God in his entirety is love and holiness and justice.

Duby goes on to explain that that his account of divine simplicity has three distinguishing features. First, it is grounded in the belief that the doctrine is based on the teaching of the Bible, specifically 'Holy Scripture's portrayal of God in his singularity, aseity, immutability and work of *creatio ex nihilo*.' Secondly, it 'draws especially from the works of Thomas Aquinas and Reformed Orthodox figures.' Thirdly, it engages seriously with 'the reservations about the doctrine found in prominent modern systematic theologians as well as the criticisms advanced by analytic philosophers interested in Christian theology.'

The book is in five chapters.

Chapter 1, 'Some historical bearings,' gives an overview of the history of the doctrine of divine simplicity from its first origins in the patristic era to the modern discussions of the doctrine in systematic theology and analytic philosophy.

Chapter 2, 'Contours of a dogmatic approach,' explains the methodology of the book and the 'essential content' of its account of divine simplicity.

Chapter 3, 'An Exegetical-Dogmatic Case for Divine Simplicity (Part One),' looks at how the doctrine is derived from the biblical witness to God's uniqueness and self-existence.

Chapter 4, 'An Exegetical-Dogmatic Case for Divine Simplicity (Part Two),' looks at how the doctrine is derived from the biblical witness to God's immutability and infinity and the biblical teaching about creation.

Finally, chapter 5, 'Objections to Divine Simplicity,' responds to the objections that 'the doctrine does not pay heed to the plurality of the divine attributes,' that it 'eradicates God's freedom in creating the world and acting towards us' and that 'it does not cohere with personal distinctions to be made in the doctrine of the Trinity.' The chapter finishes with a conclusion summarising Duby's case for affirming divine simplicity.

Martin's opinion:

This book is a published form of Duby's doctoral thesis. As such it is high level piece of academic theology which presupposes a good knowledge of both Scripture and the history of Christian theology. This means it is not a book for beginners in theology, or for the average Christian in the pew. It is unashamedly aimed at the academy.

However, for those who have the requisite theological knowledge to benefit from it, this book has much to offer:

- It is based in thorough and up-to-date research, particularly on Protestant scholasticism.
- It is clearly and carefully written in a way that makes it both easy to follow and does justice to the teaching of the scholars whose thought he expounds.
- It is written on the basis of commitment to the authority of Scripture and explains with great thoroughness and clarity how the doctrine of divine simplicity is rooted in biblical teaching.
- It shows why contemporary attacks on the doctrine are not persuasive.

A great resource for both theology students and ministers who want to be pushed to thinking more deeply about what the Bible tells us about the nature of God and how this teaching has been reflected in the classical Christian theological tradition.

Commendations:

Matthew Levering writes:

What a magnificent book. The philosophical erudition of this book alone makes it worthwhile—Duby has a mastery of classical and analytic metaphysics. To this mastery, Duby adds a rich set of biblical reflections on his theme, demonstrating an equally sure-handed exegetical gift. And his brilliance in drawing upon the Church Fathers, Thomas Aquinas, and especially the greatest Protestant Scholastics forms yet another major contribution. In clear and penetrating prose, Duby takes up every possible challenge to divine simplicity and answers each one in a fashion that will be difficult, indeed in my view impossible, to refute. In sum, this book is a surpassing theological achievement of the very highest order. I commend it gratefully as required reading for all Christian theologians and philosophers.

Alistair McGrath (ed), *Christian Belief*, Lion Scholar, ISBN 978-1-91255-203-0, £16.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

This handbook to Christian belief, written by a team of Evangelical scholars and edited by Alistair McGrath, was first published in 2006 and has now been re-issued by Lion and made available as an e book.

The book's purpose is explained by Alistair McGrath as follows in his editor's introduction:

This handbook sets out to introduce basic Christian beliefs simply and clearly. It explores what Christians—the world's largest religious community—believe, where these beliefs come from, how they have developed over the centuries, and their place in the contemporary church and world. It is designed to help Christians to deepen their knowledge of their faith, and non-Christians to gain a basic understanding of Christian belief, including some of the important debates over matters of doctrine. Above all, it aims to demonstrate how Christian beliefs are grounded in the Bible.

The book begins with 'A very brief history of Christian belief' written by McGrath himself that covers the New Testament, the Early Church, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, Revival and the Modern World. There then follow six chapters on 'Faith' by John Stackhouse, 'God' by Gerald Bray, 'Jesus' by Peter Walker, 'Salvation' by Graham Tomlin, 'the Church' by Chris Wright and 'Christian Hope' by McGrath.

Each chapter also contains a series of user friendly boxes that look at specific topics related to the chapter's overall subject matter. Thus Walker's chapter on Jesus contains boxes on topics such as 'Jesus and the Religious Movements of His Day,' 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus,' 'Jesus and Women' and 'Jesus in Early Christian thought.'

The book concludes with an anthology of extracts from major Christian writers down the centuries covering the topics looked at in the main text.

Martin's opinion:

This handbook is an excellent resource for anyone wanting an introduction to Christian belief that is user friendly, but also scholarly, up-to-date and orthodox. It is written by a team of first rate scholars who make their knowledge accessible to those who are approaching the study of Christian belief for the first time, or who want an easy to use refresher course. It would be a very good book to use with serious adult enquirers, adult confirmation candidates and students studying RE in the sixth form. It would also make a very good starting point for students at university or theological college who want a basic orientation to the key issues of Christian belief so that they can get their bearings before moving on to more advanced text books. A book to buy, to lend and to give away.

John Lennox, *Can Science Explain Everything?* Good Book Company, ISBN 978-1784984113, £7.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

John Lennox is a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford and a well-known Christian apologist. As he explains in his Preface, his new book has been written to provide an accessible introduction to the 'Science and God debate.'

In his Introduction he notes that the relationship between science and religion can at first appearance seem like an intractable conflict.

On one side there is, he says, the 'science side.' Those on this side:

.... view themselves as the voice of reason. They believe they are working to roll back the tide of ignorance and superstition that has enslaved mankind since we crawled out of the primeval slime. If I can summarise their position, it is this:

Science is an unstoppable force for human development that will deliver answers to our many questions about the universe, and solve many, if not all, of our human problems: disease, energy, pollution, poverty. At some stage in the future, science will be able to explain everything, and answer all our needs.

They may also be assuming that, at some stage in the future, science will provide the answers to at least some of our big questions in life: Where do we come from? What are we here for? What is the meaning of our existence?

On the other extreme there is what he calls the 'God side.' Those on this side:

.... hold that a divine intelligence is behind everything there is and everything we are. They are looking for, and even claim to have found, the answers to the same big questions that scientists ask, but in a very different place. They look to the complexity and wonder of the universe and our astonishingly rich and diverse blue planet, and find it to be self-evident that there is a wonderful mind behind our beautiful and amazing world. They seem surprised that there could be people who do not see things this way.

Given the public conflict between these two sides, it is, he observes:

.... not surprising that many people conclude that *God and science do not mix*; like when you drop metallic sodium or potassium onto water, there is a lot of fizzing and fire and heat ending with a loud bang.

The purpose of his book is to suggest that there is 'another way of looking at this whole business' one in which science and faith are seen as complimentary rather than antagonistic ways of looking at the world. In his words:

I want to suggest that the popular idea that science and God do not mix is simply not true, and that it is relatively easy to establish that. In this short book, I want to examine many of the misconceptions people have, not just about faith and belief in God but about science itself. In doing so, I want to show that there is a different way of looking at things that is more rational, more sensible, and more wholesome than the all too familiar alleged conflict between science and religion.

I want to suggest that a different kind of cosmic chemistry is possible: that there is a different kind of reaction between science and religion that is truer to the spirit and essence of both, and more fruitful than the tired and entrenched debate that we see played out all around us.

Hydrogen and oxygen, like potassium and water, also form an explosive mixture, but the end result could not be more different—refreshing, life-giving water.

In the ten chapters of his book Lennox fulfils this brief by explaining the history of the relationship between science and Christianity from Isaac Newton to Stephen Hawking and deconstructing the myths about science and Christian faith that lead to the belief that there is a conflict between them. He also looks at the issues of the reliability of the

Bible, miracles, and the problem of suffering, and suggests that in Christianity as in science the search for truth has to be based on personal self-involvement and a willingness to test the truth by trying the experiment for oneself.

Martin's opinion:

This is a fine (and very accessible) introduction to the issue of the relationship between Christianity and science. It is lucid, well-informed and covers all the key issues. It can be strongly recommended as a book to give away to anyone who wants to begin to think about the issues it covers. Churches should get it for their bookstalls and have a stock to give away to enquirers.

Commendations:

Sir Brian Heap comments:

Of course the answer to the question is 'no!' but this fresh look will engage the most ardent of protagonists. Professor Lennox brings the logic of the mathematician to show that science and religion do not belong to a war zone as some would have us believe. His highly accessible account is interlaced with colourful humour and personal experiences that relate to the excitement of rational, sensible and wholesome insights from the best attested manuscripts of the ancient world. Myths are dispatched; miracles, evil and suffering are confronted; the Standard Model of physics, the Big Bang and the open Universe are richly explored, and much more. Finally, case studies tell what can happen upon entering the laboratory where truths are tested, but beware, particularly if you are coming from some sceptical distance, it's a book that could make a difference in worldviews and even lives.

Ryan McGraw, *Reformed Scholasticism: Recovering the Tools of Reformed Theology*, T&T Clark, ISBN 978-0-56767-972-7, £85.00 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Reformed scholasticism may be defined as the form of academic theology practiced by Reformed theologians using the scholastic method during the period of Protestant orthodoxy from about 1560–1790. The starting point for the new handbook to the study of Reformed Scholasticism by Professor Ryan McGraw is his observation that:

...while many students have a growing passion for classic Reformed theology and its methods, most of them have little introduction to the research methodology specifically needed to study this subject effectively nor do theological students have a guide directing them to what to do with their academic studies once they finish them.

The purpose of McGraw's handbook is to meet this need. As McGraw puts it:

...students of Reformed theology need to study the scholastic roots of the Reformed orthodox tradition to understand and to build a constructive Reformed theology. The author aims to introduce the tools needed to study Reformed Scholasticism with an ultimate view to the potential benefits that such studies can offer the church today.

In order to achieve this goal:

This book invites students into the subject through learning how to engage with primary source reading, to do research, and to write, while emphasizing the importance of Latin works of classic Reformed didactic (systematic) theology.

The material seeks to introduce students to the study of Reformed scholasticism using proper historiography, to express themselves well in writing on this topic, to become competent scholars, and to apply what they learn to contemporary theology and to pastoral ministry.

Following an introductory chapter on the purpose and nature of the book, the book is divided into four main parts.

Part 1, 'Research Methodology,' looks at the primary and secondary sources for the study of Reformed Scholasticism and how one should go about researching and writing on this topic.

Part 2, 'The Nature of Reformed Scholasticism: Method and Trajectories,' provides an introduction to the history of Reformed Scholasticism and its theological terminology. It also explains that it was rooted in a university setting, that it was a form of theology in conversation with the entire Catholic theological tradition, and that it was marked by both continuities and discontinuities.

Part 3, 'The Character of Reformed Scholasticism: International Catholicity and Piety,' looks at how Reformed Scholasticism was an international movement which was concerned not simply with growth in knowledge, but more importantly with growth in piety.

Part 4, 'Contemporary Appropriations of Reformed Scholasticism,' considers how the study of Reformed Scholasticism helps to enable personal growth, theological reflection and service to the Church.

Martin's opinion:

There is a growing interest in Reformed Orthodoxy among Evangelical students in this country. This handbook will help them to understand better how to undertake responsible study in this area and how such study can better help them to serve God and the Church. Theological colleges should buy copies of this book for their libraries and those who know students with an interest in this field should alert them to its existence.

Commendations:

J V Fesko declares:

Ryan McGraw provides a helpful guide for students of Reformed scholastic theology. There are practical tips on reading, researching, and writing about this interesting and instructive period in the Reformed tradition. And while one need not agree with every conclusion, readers can nevertheless benefit from his insights and profit from this book.

J P Moreland, *Scientism and Secularism: Learning to Respond to a Dangerous Ideology*, Crossway Books, ISBN 978-143355-690-6, £11.99 (e and MP3 editions also available).

Overview:

J. P. Moreland is distinguished professor of philosophy at Biola University. In his new book he looks at how what he calls 'scientism' has become linked to secularism, why this a bad thing, and what Christians should do about it.

Moreland defines scientism as

... the view that the hard sciences—like chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy—provide the only genuine knowledge of reality. At the very least, this scientific knowledge is vastly superior to what we can know from any other discipline. Ethics and religion may be acceptable, but only if they are understood to be inherently subjective and regarded as private matters of opinion. According to scientism, the claim that ethical and religious conclusions can be just as factual as science, and therefore ought to be affirmed like scientific truths, may be a sign of bigotry and intolerance.

Scientism leads to secularism, the undermining of Christian belief and practice, because, he says :

It puts Christian claims outside of the 'plausibility structure' (what people generally consider reasonable and rational), which has led to a number of shifts in how our culture processes reality. One of the effects of scientism, then, is making the ridicule of Christianity's truth claims more common and acceptable (which is one of scientism's goals). Even within the church, it has harmed our efforts to produce mature disciples of Christ among both children and adults.

According to Moreland, what Christians need to understand is that:

.... scientism is not a doctrine of science; rather, it is a doctrine of philosophy. More specifically, scientism is actually a doctrine of epistemology (the branch of philosophy that studies what knowledge is and how we obtain it).

Furthermore, he argues, in spite of claiming to have a basis in science, scientism actually 'distorts science.' This is because 'By its very nature, science cannot claim to be the only way to know reality.' The very claim that only the natural sciences can explain reality is self-defeating because those who espouse it cannot show why on their premises we should believe that what science tells us is true.

In his book Moreland explains what scientism is and why it is dangerous to the Christian faith. He also explains why scientism is a flawed philosophy and why theism actually provides a better account of reality than science alone.

For example, science on its own cannot explain the origin of the universe, the origin of the fundamental laws of nature, the fine-tuning of the universe to produce sentient life, the origin of consciousness, or why we see certain things or ways of behaving as better, or more valuable, or more beautiful than others. Christian theism, however, can explain all these things and its view of the world as the product of a rational creator actually provides a better philosophical foundation for science than scientism does.

Moreland concludes his book with a plea to Christians to take the fight against scientism but for genuine science seriously and offers a practical proposal for the integration of faith and science.

Martin's opinion:

This is a very helpful popular guide to understanding and responding to the dangers of scientism. Those who have read Alister McGrath's works on the relationship of faith and science will probably learn nothing new here, but Moreland offers a more readable and accessible resource for the average Christian in our churches. The fifteen chapters in the book are all quite brief and they contain real life stories which illustrate the points Moreland is making. In addition, there are numerous illustrations and tables which provide additional explanations of what Moreland is saying.

This book would make an excellent basis for a study of Christianity and scientism in a home group setting or for a teaching series on this topic.

Commendations:

John Frame comments:

Science is a wonderfully useful discipline, but in recent times it has been distorted into *scientism*, the view that science is the ultimate path to truth in any area of reality. Based on that false adulation of science, many have denied the value of religion and philosophy, and many have rejected the claims of divine revelation in the Bible. J. P. Moreland is a respected Christian thinker who has studied both science and the Scriptures in considerable depth. He clearly demonstrates the fallacies of the arguments for scientism. He shows how Christians can defend their faith against scientific objections, while affirming genuine science as a gift from God.

T F Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, T & T Clark, ISBN 978-0-56768-217-8, £21.99 (hardback and e editions also available).

Overview:

The late T F Torrance, who was for many years Professor of *Christian Dogmatics* at the University of Edinburgh, is widely regarded as having been one of the greatest British theologians of the twentieth century. Not only did he play a major role in making the works of Karl Barth available to an English speaking readership, but he also published prolifically in his own right in the fields of biblical studies, Church history, Christian doctrine and the interrelationship between Christian theology and the philosophy of science.

A particular emphasis in all his work was that God has made himself accessible to our knowledge by both entering into and transforming our space and time through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is also the major theme of his book *Space, Time and Resurrection*, which was first published in 1976, but which has now been re-issued by T&T Clark in its 'Cornerstones' series with a new introduction by the American theologian Paul Molnar.

This book had its origins in Torrance's lectures to his students in a course on Christology and Soteriology. It consists of eight chapters which look in turn at:

- The Biblical Concept of Resurrection;
- The Resurrection and the Person of Christ;
- The Resurrection and the Atoning Work of Christ;
- The Nature of the Resurrection Event;
- The Ascension of Christ;
- The Nature of the Ascension Event;
- The Ascension and the Parousia of Christ;
- The Lord of Space and Time.

The central thesis of the book is set out in the chapter on 'The Resurrection and the Atoning Work of Christ' in which he argues that what separates Man and God, and therefore prevents God from being rightly known, is not that God is the infinite creator and we are finite creatures. Rather it is the alienation of God and Man through sin and it is this alienation that has been overcome through Christ's incarnation and atonement and revealed by his bodily resurrection:

The creaturely distance of man from the Creator and the separation of man from God due to his sinful rebellion and self-imprisonment in guilt, are fully overcome in the incarnation and the atonement. That is what is revealed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which is itself the final establishment of the bridge between God and man on both sides of the chasm that divides them. The resurrection reveals that the disjunction between God and man is that which has been created by sin and guilt, a disjunction so great that it could be overcome only by God himself stepping into the breach and bridging the chasm through his own Being in the staggering act of incarnation and atonement. But as such the resurrection reveals that what divides man from God is not the discrepancy between the finite and infinite, since God is not limited by man's incapacities and weaknesses, although that discrepancy does become a real disjunction for us when it is infected by sin and guilt and enmity. The resurrection demonstrates not only that all division has been removed in atoning reconciliation, but that atoning reconciliation has achieved its end in the new creation in which God and man are brought into such communion with one another that the relations of man with God in being and knowing are healed and fully established. Thus the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead sets us in a situation where knowing the truth about God and doing the truth in human existence can be and are valid, for in Jesus Christ a genuine congruence has been established between created truth and the uncreated Truth of God.

Martin's opinion:

The book as whole is an expansion and detailed justification of the claims made in this quotation. Like the works of his mentor Karl Barth, Torrance's work makes little concession to the intellectual frailties of his readers. You often

have to read what he says a second or even third time to really grasp what he is saying. Nevertheless, such intellectual effort is worthwhile because there are very few books that hold together so successfully the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ or which show so clearly how the ascension and the *Parousia* follow on from all three. This is a must buy for all serious students of Christian doctrine and for ministers who want their preaching and teaching to be informed by a deeper understanding of how God has brought his finite and sinful creatures back into a right relationship with himself through entering into the brokenness of creation and transforming it from the inside.

Christopher J H Wright, *Knowing God Through the Old Testament: Three Volumes in One*, IVP Academic, ISBN 978-0830852437, £34.75.

Overview:

Christopher Wright is an Old Testament scholar and missiologist who taught the Old Testament in India and was for many years the Principal of All Nations Christian College. He is now is now the international director of the Langham Partnership International.

This book from IVP Academic combines three books that have previously been published separately. Together they show how God is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the pages of the Old Testament.

In *Knowing God the Father Through the Old Testament* Wright looks at how images of God as Father pervade the narratives, psalms, and prophetic texts of the Old Testament. In these texts God is acknowledged as tender yet terrifying, challenging to the nations, and yet intimately personal, offering loving care, provision, discipline, and forgiveness. This is the God whom Jesus knew, and whom we can know, as Father.

In *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* Wright shows how Jesus' self-understanding as 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God' had its roots in the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. As Wright explains how Jesus as Son of Man and Son of God fulfilled the mission given by God to Israel, we see that the better we understand the Old Testament, the better we understand who Jesus is and what he came to do.

In *Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament* Wright traces the Holy Spirit through the pages of the Old Testament. He shows how we see the work of the third Person of the Trinity in the decrees of prophets and psalmists, in the actions of judges and craftspeople, in the anointing of kings, and in the promise of a new creation. For Wright, the whole of Scripture, Old and New Testament alike, witnesses to the Holy Spirit empowering the people of God, and sustaining and renewing the face of the earth.

Martin's opinion:

IVP academic have done us a great service by bringing these three volumes together in one. This is now the 'go to' resource for anyone who wants to understand the Old Testament roots of the New Testament's affirmation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This one volume set is the perfect antidote to anyone who suggests that the Trinity is only found in the New Testament or, worse still, was an invention of the Early Church. All serious students who want to get to grips with how the Old and New Testament testify to the same God should now turn to this book.

Commendations:

Craig Bartholomew writes:

Chris Wright is simply one of our best biblical scholars and expositors. He combines rigorous scholarship with a wonderful way of enabling us to hear God's address today through Scripture. A pastoral, missional heart breathes through his work, and I am delighted to see these three books by him gathered into one volume. As the titles indicate, Chris calls us to read Scripture so as to know God as he is revealed in the whole of Scripture, and not least the Old Testament, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to be drawn into deep fellowship with him. This is an invaluable trilogy that will be of great blessing to God's people.