



## Latimer Trust Monthly Reading List - March 2017

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
David L Baker	<i>The Decalogue: Living as the People of God</i>	This is a very helpful commentary on the Ten Commandments. It will be useful for those studying the commandments and also for those in ministry who are called to preach on them. It would also make a good basis for a sermon series and would provide a useful resource for a study of the commandments in a home group setting.
Joanna Collicutt	<i>Thinking of You: A Resource for the Spiritual Care of People with Dementia</i>	This is an accessible book that provides practical resources to help those directly affected by dementia, their immediate family and carers, and those seeking to offer them pastoral care and to encourage their continuing spiritual growth. It will be immensely useful to both clergy and laity alike and deserves to be widely read.
Michelle DeRusha	<i>Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk</i>	This book succeeds magnificently in its aim of painting 'a well-rounded picture of Katharina and Luther's life together as husband and wife.' Anyone who wants to know more about what made Martin Luther tick or to understand how God can use a Christian marriage as a tool for taking forward his purposes in the world should read this book.
Sinclair Ferguson	<i>The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance-Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters</i>	This is not a book for new Christians or those who are unable or unwilling to engage in quite hard theological work. However, for those who are willing and able to engage with the level of theological detail the book has an enormous amount to offer because it takes us to the heart of the gospel message.
Joel B Green and Lee Martin McDonald (eds.)	<i>The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts</i>	This is an academic textbook aimed at students studying the New Testament. It is a very valuable resource which will be ideal for students beginning their study of the New Testament at university or theological college, or for ministers wanting to understand the context of the New Testament in order to understand the biblical text better.
Michael Hanby	<i>No God, No Science: Theology, Cosmology, Biology</i>	Hanby's book is not an easy read. It is a book that you have to work hard at to understand. However, it is a book that is worth the effort. Anyone interested in the relationship between theology and science should consider making the effort to read this book.
Evelyn A Reisacher	<i>Joyful Witness in the Muslim World: Sharing the Gospel in Everyday Encounters</i>	This is an important book that can be recommended for anyone who wants to reflect more deeply on the nature of Christian mission in general and Christian mission among Muslims in particular. It is accessible to the non-scholarly reader and the stories recorded make the theological argument come alive in a very powerful way.
Richard Sudworth	<i>Encountering Islam: Christian-Muslim Relations in the Public Square</i>	This book is an important contribution to the discussion of how Christians should relate to their Muslim neighbours in Britain today. Not everyone will agree with what he says, but anyone who wants to be stimulated to think more deeply about the issues he covers should read this book.
Rankin Wilbourne	<i>Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God</i>	This is an excellent introduction to the truth of our union with Christ. The book is based on solid scholarship, but is written in a way that will make it accessible not only to ministers and students of theology, but to the ordinary lay Christian as well. Strongly recommended.
Christopher J H Wright	<i>Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today's World</i>	This is an excellent set of expositions. It is well up to Wright's normal high standard and will provide a very valuable resource for anyone called to preach or teach on the book of Daniel and its relevance for today.

**David L Baker, *The Decalogue: Living as the People of God*, IVP Academic, ISBN 978-0-83085-169-0, £16.28.**

**Martin's opinion:**

This is a very helpful commentary on the Ten Commandments. It is informed by academic scholarship, but wears its scholarship sufficiently lightly to be accessible to those who are not specialist biblical scholars.

It will be useful for those studying the commandments as part of their preparation for ministry and also for those in ministry who are called to preach on them. It would also make a good basis for a sermon series and would provide a useful resource for a study of the commandments in a home group setting.

**Overview:**

Dr David Baker is a lecturer in biblical studies at All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire.

His new book published by IVP Academic is a study of the Ten Commandments. He writes in his Preface: 'My hope is that this book will be useful for teachers and students, preachers and congregations, and all who are interested in understanding the original meaning and contemporary significance of this historic text.'

His study begins by providing an overall introduction to the Ten Commandments under the heading 'What is the Decalogue?' looking in turn at their shape, form, origin and purpose. He then looks at each of the commandments in turn under the twin headings 'Loving God' and 'Loving neighbor' before finally looking at how the commandments should shape the way that we live now as the people of God under the heading 'The Decalogue today.'

Dr Baker places each of the commandments within the context of ancient Near Eastern law and culture and shows how this helps us to understand its original meaning. He also places each commandment in its biblical context, explaining how it fits within the context of God's covenant with his people. Finally, he looks at the contemporary relevance of each of the commandments, explaining how they cut against the cultural grain and shed light on what it means to live in obedience to God. It is this triple focus on the historical and biblical context of the commandments and their abiding relevance for today that makes this study particularly valuable.

**Commendations:**

Chris Wright comments:

'I grew up in a generation of children required to memorize and recite the Ten Commandments by heart. They set the shape of accepted Christian ethics. Later, I visited many churches with the Ten Commandments inscribed on the walls but lacking the vital context of the opening affirmation of God's redeeming grace: 'I am the LORD your God who brought you up out of the house of bondage'—law without gospel. David Baker's timely book challenges us to reconsider the foundational place of the Decalogue in Christian personal and public ethics. But he is also careful to note the context—both the biblical context of God's people's obedience as a grateful response to saving grace, and the surrounding context of ancient Near Eastern cultures and laws, for helpful comparison and contrast. The result is a richly rewarding textbook, surveying the field of biblical scholarship comprehensively but with a light touch, drawing together many threads in wider biblical theology, and reflecting on the relevance of the Ten Commandments in contemporary church and society.'

**Joanna Collicutt, *Thinking of You: A Resource for the Spiritual Care of People with Dementia*, Bible Reading Fellowship, ISBN 978-0-85746-491-0, £9.99 (e edition also available).**

### **Martin's opinion:**

*Thinking of You* is a comprehensive introduction to the subject of dementia. It is an accessible book that provides practical resources to help those directly affected by the condition, their immediate family and carers, and those seeking to offer them pastoral care and to encourage their continuing spiritual growth. It will be immensely useful to both clergy and laity alike and deserves to be widely read. Caring for people with dementia is going to be one of the major challenges facing the churches in the years to come. This book will help them rise to this challenge.

### **Overview:**

This new book from Dr Joanna Collicutt, who lectures in psychology and spirituality at Ripon College Cuddesdon and is the Oxford Diocesan Advisor for the Spiritual Care of Older People, is a joint project between the Diocese of Oxford and the Bible Reading Fellowship. It is based on the material that Dr Collicutt has used in providing training on dementia for churches across the diocese in recent years.

As she notes in her introduction to the book, dementia is a condition that is understood in a number of different ways. Most people see it as 'a kind of illness with biological causes.' Some see it as 'a particular form of ageing that involves unusually severe cognitive decline.' They would view it as a sort of 'psychological disability' like autism. Others view dementia as 'something that happens to a social group – to a couple or family, not just to the person who is identified as the 'patient'.' Still others would take a more radical view and see dementia as 'something that societies do to individuals' as part of the way that they 'label, marginalise and even incarcerate individuals who they see as no longer useful, or whose very existence challenges their values' (in this case the value societies attach to the capacity for rational thought).

Her book, she says, 'acknowledges that there are elements of truth in all these views (and also some problems with each of them). In fact, we need them all – the biomedical, psychological and social – to do dementia full justice.'

In addition, she argues, we need to recognise that:

'...any condition that involves the mental faculties is likely to have a deeply *spiritual* impact. Indeed, in our society many people assume that the mind *is* the spirit. That's one reason we feel dementia so acutely: if the mind has gone, has the spirit also flown?'

What the book attempts to do is to bring all these different perspectives on dementia together, 'seeing dementia as something which affects the whole of human life.'

The book is divided into four parts.

Part 1 is called 'Thinking about dementia.' It looks in turn at a medical, a biological and a social approach to dementia.

Part 2 is called 'Thinking about the person with dementia.' This part looks at the issue of the identity and spiritual life of the person with dementia. It challenges the idea that we are defined by our ability to think ('I think therefore I am'), arguing instead that we are defined by God's relationship with us ('God thinks therefore I am').

Part 3 is called 'Thinking of you: the spiritual care of people with dementia.' It looks at 'the principles and effective practice of spiritual care of individuals with dementia.'

Part 4 is called 'Thinking about us: dementia-friendly churches.' It looks at 'how churches can become more 'dementia friendly' by reaching out to, welcoming and valuing all affected by dementia.' This part includes resources for ministry in residential care homes.

**Michelle DeRusha, *Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk*, Baker Academic, ISBN 978-0-80101-910-4, £16.27 (e edition also available).**

**Martin's opinion:**

This book succeeds magnificently in its aim of painting 'a well-rounded picture of Katharina and Luther's life together as husband and wife.' It is based on solid historical scholarship and yet is written in a way that makes the story it tells easily accessible to the non-historian. Anyone who wants to know more about what made Martin Luther tick or to understand how God can use a Christian marriage as a tool for taking forward his purposes in the world should read this book.

**Overview:**

Given the mountain of books that are already available about Martin Luther the question might legitimately be raised as to whether there is much new to say about him. However, an area of his life which has been comparatively neglected is his marriage.

As Michelle De Rusha notes in the Preface to her new book about the marriage of Martin and Katharina Luther, when she began her research on Luther she discovered that:

'Most of the scholarship covered his theology, doctrine, politics, and many aspects of his career and life in great detail. Few books, however, offered much more than a cursory glance at his marriage or domestic life.'

Furthermore, she says:

'Even less has been written about Katharina von Bora, the woman who became Martin Luther's wife. She comprised half of what is arguably one of the most famous marriages in Christian history, yet it seems history has largely forgotten her.

Their marriage was radically revolutionary and arguably one of the most scandalous and intriguing in history. Yet five centuries after they said 'I do,' we still know little about Katharina and Martin Luther's life together as husband and wife. That is why there is room on the shelf for this book.'

The book tells the story of how Luther the ex-monk married Katharina the ex-nun and their subsequent life together as a married couple. DeRusha's overall conclusion about their marriage is that on the one hand:

'Luther saved Katharina. He rescued her from the convent, from a life she didn't choose for herself, and offered her security, stability, and a place in society that regarded her very existence with suspicion. Marriage opened up a life of relative freedom to Katharina. As Luther's wife she was allowed a voice and a degree of autonomy unavailable to most women, as well as the opportunity to experience the gist of motherhood and to enjoy the status society offered her in that role. In Luther, Katharina also found the love, connection and companionship she had yearned for since childhood.'

On the other hand, what history has largely failed to acknowledge was that it also worked the other way round.

'...Katharina saved Luther as well. She first came to him as a burden, a woman abandoned and unwelcome in the world. But what was once a burden grew into an unexpected grace that surprised and delighted Luther with the richness of his gifts.

Luther's commitment to Katharina began as a test of his charity and a practical expression of his theology. Not only was Katharina instrumental in helping Luther live out his theology, but in loving her, he came to understand how self-sacrifice, empathy, compassion, and love flowed freely out of his love for God. But even beyond that, Katharina was living proof that Luther's theology and beliefs weren't just intellectual, theoretical exercises, but real, attainable reforms grounded in human respect and love. Luther thrived as a reformer not only because Katharina served as an astute business, financial and household manager, but also because she showed him again and again that a love for others, as much as a love for God, was at the core of his beliefs. The Protestant Reformation would have happened without the marriage of Luther and Katharina. But Luther would not have been the sane Reformer without Katharina.'

**Commendations:**

Christine Hoover has written:

'Michelle DeRusha gives us a fascinating peek into the Luthers' individual lives, their theological wrestlings, and an unexpected partnership that redefined yet another biblical institution--Christian marriage. The Luthers, through DeRusha's masterful portrayal, remind us again and again how the grace of Christ truly affects all of life.'

**Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters*, Crossway Books, ISBN 978-1-43354-800-0, £20.34 (e edition also available).**

**Martin's opinion:**

*The Whole Christ* is not a book for new Christians or those who are unable or unwilling to engage in quite hard theological work. It contains quite a lot of detailed biblical exegesis and discussions of the finer points of Reformed theology illustrated with copious quotations from the works of Reformed theologians. However, for those who are willing and able to engage with the level of theological detail Ferguson provides the book has an enormous amount to offer because, as noted below, it takes us to the heart of the gospel message. Through wrestling with the issues raised by the Marrow Controversy, Ferguson enables us to understand more profoundly what God has done for us in Christ and what it means to bear faithful witness to this.

**Overview:**

This book by Sinclair Ferguson, Professor of systematic theology at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas, Texas takes as its starting point a dispute that took place within the Church of Scotland in the early eighteenth century about a book called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, which had been published in the previous century and which was accused of encouraging antinomianism, the idea that obedience to God's law is no longer important for a Christian believer. As Ferguson acknowledges in his introduction, the dispute over this book, what is known as the Marrow Controversy, might seem a 'recondite topic.' However, as goes on to explain, there are good reasons for being interested in it since what the controversy was really about was the fundamental question of who God is:

'On the surface the Marrow Controversy was about how we preach the gospel; what role, in any, God's law and our obedience play in the Christian life; and what it means to have assurance of salvation. But those issues are always, at bottom, about the gospel itself. While these themes have taken center stage at particular periods in the church's history, that is only the tip of the iceberg. They are perennially relevant because underneath them lies the most fundamental question of all: Who is the God whom we come to know in Jesus Christ (John 17:3)? What is he really like, truly like – deep down, through and through? The atmosphere that characterizes my Christian life will reflect my answer to these questions.'

In *The Whole Christ* Ferguson reflects on the themes raised in the Marrow Controversy about grace, legalism, antinomianism and assurance, and above all about the identity of God. Drawing on the writings of those involved in the Marrow Controversy, as well as a wide range of other theologians from the Reformed tradition, Ferguson uses the issues raised by the Marrow Controversy to take his readers to the heart of the gospel message.

For example, he notes that one of the issues that arises from a study of the controversy is whether there are any conditions attached to God's love for us. Is it right, for example, to say 'God loves you because Christ died for you'? For Ferguson this idea distorts the gospel:

'...if we speak of the cross of Christ as *the cause* of the Love of the Father, we imply that behind the cross and apart from it he may not actually love us at all. He needs to be 'paid' a ransom in order to love us. But if it has required the death of Christ to persuade him to love us ('Father, if I die will you begin to love them?'), how can we ever be sure the Father himself loves us – 'deep down' – with an everlasting love? True, the Father does not love us *because* we are sinners; but he does love us *even though* we are sinners. He loved us *before* Christ died for us. It is *because* he loves us that Christ died for us.

We must not confuse the truth that our sins are forgiven only because of the death and resurrection of Christ with the very different notion that Christ loves us only because of the death and resurrection of Christ. No, 'he loved us from the first of time' and *therefore* sent his Son, who came willingly, to die for us. In this way a right understanding of the work of Christ leads us to a true understanding of the matchless love the Father has for us. There is no dysfunction in the fellowship of the Trinity.'

For another example, another of the issues that arises from a study of the controversy is the place of the law in the life of the Christian. Reflecting on this, Ferguson notes how the work of Christ both parallels and transcends the work of Moses in relation to God's law:

'As Moses ascended Mount Sinai and brought down the Law on tablets of stone, now Christ has ascended into the heavenly Mount, but in contrast to Moses, he has sent down the Spirit who rewrites the law not now merely in tablets of stone, but in our hearts. There is a recalibration to Eden, albeit in the heart of a person formerly enslaved to sin, bearing its marks, and living in a world still under the dominion of sin. Now the empowerment is within, through the indwelling of Christ the obedient one, the law keeper, by the Spirit.

That is now what provides both motivation and empowerment in the Christian. And this empowerment reduplicates in us what was true for the Lord Jesus – the ability to say, ‘Oh how I love your law!’ Grace and law are perfectly correlated to one another.’

**Commendations:**

Michael Horton comments:

‘This book could not come at a better time or from a better source. Sinclair Ferguson brings to life a very important controversy from the past to shed light on contemporary debates. But *The Whole Christ* is more than a deeply informed survey of the Marrow Controversy. It is the highest-quality pastoral wisdom and doctrinal reflection on the most central issue in any age.’

**Joel B Green and Lee Martin McDonald (eds.), *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, Baker Academic, ISBN 978-0-80109-861-1, £29.99 (also available in hardback and e editions).**

### **Martin's opinion:**

This is not a book that anyone will want to sit down and read from cover to cover. It is unashamedly an academic textbook aimed at students studying the New Testament. As such, however, it is a very valuable resource which will be ideal for students beginning their study of the New Testament at university or theological college, or for ministers wanting to understand the context of the New Testament in order to understand the biblical text better. This is a book that anyone who is serious about their study of the New Testament should consider acquiring for their bookshelves.

### **Overview:**

As Joel Green and Lee McDonald explain in the introduction to this book:

‘Although we celebrate the accessibility of the Scriptures in the language of the people, we cannot overlook the basic fact that it is far easier to translate words on a page than it is to capture the deeper sense of those words. Linguists have long been aware that most of what is communicated is not actually expressed in words but is assumed among those involved in the communicative act. The history Paul shared with the Corinthians, the cultural assumptions Luke shared with his audience, those experiences of imperial Rome shared between the author and addressees of the book of Revelation—such shared histories, assumptions, and experiences shape how these authors’ words and phrases might be heard. They thicken the significance of the words of parables or letters or homilies. Precisely because these pools of assumptions could simply be taken for granted by Paul, Luke, and John, they therefore do not sit on top of the pages of our New Testament. This is true whether we are reading the NT in English, in Greek, or in some other language. We need more than the words on the page. We need to be oriented to the background assumed by people in the NT era. We need context.’

The purpose of this book, which was originally published in 2013, but is now available in a paperback edition for the first time, is to provide context. It is a series of forty seven articles written by a series of world-renowned scholars such as Nicholas Perrin, James D. G. Dunn, and Ben Witherington III, which give an introduction to a range of key issues that are essential to understand in order to have a grasp of the context out of which the New Testament writings arose and which they address.

The book is divided into five main parts.

Part 1 is called ‘Setting the Context: Exile and the Jewish Heritage.’ It includes articles on ‘New Testament Chronology,’ ‘The Herodian Dynasty’ and ‘The Scriptures and Scriptural Interpretation.’

Part 2 is called ‘Setting the Context: Roman Hellenism.’ It includes articles on ‘Greek Religion,’ ‘Greco-Roman Philosophical Schools’ and ‘Women, Children, and Families in the Greco-Roman World.’

Part 3 is called ‘The Jewish People in the Context of Roman Hellenism.’ It includes articles on ‘Temple and Priesthood,’ ‘Apocalypticism’ and ‘Jews in the Diaspora.’

Part 4 is called ‘The Literary Context of Early Christianity.’ It includes articles on ‘Literary forms in the New Testament,’ ‘Homer and the New Testament’ and ‘Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament’

Part 5 is called ‘The Geographical Context of the New Testament.’ It includes articles on ‘Jesus Research and Archaeology,’ ‘Palestine’ and ‘The Province and Cities of Asia.’

A section called ‘Additional Resources’ has articles on ‘Money in the New Testament Era’ and ‘Measurements in the New Testament Era.’

Each article has an annotated bibliography to enable the reader to continue their research in greater depth. The book also includes seventy-five photographs, fifteen maps and numerous tables, charts and illustrations.

### **Commendations:**

Susan Eastman writes:

‘The depth and breadth of *The World of the New Testament* will make it a standard work for libraries and the bookshelves of both pastors and scholars across a wide range of traditions. Here, in one judiciously edited volume, readers will find ready access to information about Hellenistic philosophy, Jewish history, Jewish and Greco-Roman customs, and much more. The abundance of illustrations, maps, and diagrams brings the material to life. This will prove to be an invaluable resource for years to come.’

**Michael Hanby, *No God, No Science: Theology, Cosmology, Biology*, Wiley-Blackwell, ISBN 978-1-11923-087-8, £29.99 (Hardback and e editions also available).**

### **Martin's opinion:**

As the quotations below indicate, Hanby's book is not an easy read. It is a dense, often fairly technical, consideration of the Christian doctrine of creation and its relation to the truth claims offered by the natural sciences in general and evolutionary biology in particular. It is a book that you have to work hard at to understand. However, it is a book that is worth the effort because of the way that it shows in detail that science is not intellectually self-supporting, but actually requires the doctrine of creation in order for what it says about the world to make sense. Anyone interested in the relationship between theology and science should consider making the effort to read this book.

### **Overview:**

Michael Hanby is Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy of Science at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family Studies at the Catholic University of America. His new book is an essay in philosophical theology that looks at the relationship between natural science and the Christian doctrine of creation.

In his words, the 'overarching purpose' of his book is:

'...to retrieve the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* from the distortions imposed upon it by the totalizing claims of positivist science and especially by that most theological of sciences, evolutionary biology. These distortions are not simply a function of science's astonishing experimental, predictive and technological success – this I regard as mostly *unassailable* – and so my resistance to them should not be taken as a denial of scientific truth or a compromise of its legitimate autonomy. To the contrary, I want to *protect* the autonomy and integrity of science in its distinction from metaphysics and theology and to *deepen* its scientific character. These distortions, rather, are a function of the way that science transforms the meaning and nature of reason and its objects, truth, being, and nature *a priori*, thereby distorting in advance the meaning of creation and the nature of *both* scientific *and* theological questions. Renegotiating these fundamental terms is essential to any real dialogue, much less *rapprochement*, between science and religion as well as to a well-ordered science.'

Hanby's overall argument is:

'...not only that science is compatible with creation, but also that science needs creation in order finally to be science and to avoid falsifying itself and its objects. This is because theology performs a service for the sciences which they cannot perform for themselves. Theology 'saves the appearances' for science by saving the being that is the condition of possibility for the truth of appearance. We will argue therefore that the doctrine of creation is rationally superior to Darwinian evolution, not because they are strict rivals but because creation can accommodate not only the truth of Darwinian evolution but the possibility of Darwinian theory, whereas Darwinism can finally accommodate neither. Accepting this, however, means not only embracing a more comprehensive conception of reason, it means opening ourselves to the claim of reason, and thus the desire for truth, which 400 years of mechanistic science and a century and a half of Darwinian pragmatism have all but extinguished.'

### **Commendations:**

David Depew has written:

'Michael Hanby charts the long decline since the High–Middle Ages in the meaning of God, contingency, and creation. This conceptual weakening resulted in the philosophically and theologically simplistic opposition between Paley's natural theology and Darwinism. Helping us retrace our steps, Hanby leads us from a natural theology based on a misplaced analogy between artifacts and organisms to a theology of nature based on respect for life's wonders, including the creativity of natural selection.'

**Evelyn A Reisacher, *Joyful Witness in the Muslim World: Sharing the Gospel in Everyday Encounters*, Baker Academic, ISBN 978-0-80103-084-0, £14.99 (e edition also available).**

### **Martin's opinion:**

This is an important book that can be recommended for anyone who wants to reflect more deeply on the nature of Christian mission in general and Christian mission among Muslims in particular. Although written by a scholar, it is accessible to the non-scholarly reader and the stories recorded in chapters 3-8 make the theological argument Reisacher puts forward come alive in a very powerful way.

### **Overview:**

This book from Baker Academic is the first of new series edited by Scott Sunquist and Amos Yong with the overall title of 'Mission in Global Community.' This series is:

'...designed to reach college students and those interested in learning more about responsible mission involvement. Written by faculty and graduates from Fuller Theological Seminary, the series is designed as a global conversation with stories and perspectives from around the world.'

The author of this first book in the series, Dr Evelyn Reisacher, is a missiologist who has had long experience of working with Muslims in Europe and elsewhere and who is currently associate professor of Islamic studies and intercultural relations in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller.

As she explains in her introduction, she wrote the book:

'...for those who are looking for mission motivations that do not involve fear, belligerence, or despair in interactions with Muslims. I refuse to add to the long list of essays on fear- or hate-mongering. Without neglecting to address these emotions, I find it more important to focus on what might be called joy-centric mission.'

She sees joy as 'an important and neglected aspect of God's mission' and the purpose of her book is to try to make joy central to our thinking about to witness to our Muslim friends and neighbours. As she puts it:

'I find that the theme of 'joy' rarely appears in mission discourse on Muslim-Christian relations. While anecdotal research shows joyful witness among Muslims, it is often not systematically reported. I wrote this book to begin to change this trend and make room for joy in our encounters with Muslims – a theme that is much more true to the biblical witness and our theological commitments.'

The book consists of eight main chapters. Chapter 1 looks at 'joyful witness from a missiological perspective,' explaining why theologically joy ought to be central to Christian mission. Chapter 2 then considers 'joyful relations from a human attachment perspective,' arguing that joy is also important because it is central to the formation of healthy relationships between human beings. Chapters 3-8 then describe six contexts in which joyful Christian witness to Muslims is currently taking place around the world – 'social media, art, caring for the earth, caring for the needy, urban life and theologising together.' A concluding chapter then pulls her overall argument together.

Throughout the book there are sidebars containing material from mission scholar and practitioners from around the world who share 'their experiences and reflections on joy-centric mission.' This feature of the book reflects the idea that the book and the series of which it is a part are designed to reflect and encourage a global conversation about mission.

If the book has one big point to make, it is that joyful mission among Muslims is no big deal. There is a perception around that witnessing among Muslims is something that is really difficult and should be approached with trepidation. Reisacher, by contrast, highlights the way in which joyful encounters with Muslims in the course of normal everyday life can create perfectly natural opportunities to share Christian witness.

### **Commendations:**

Mark Hausfeld has written:

'Evelyn Reisacher writes as a scholar-practitioner whose passion is to reach Muslims with the gospel. She thoroughly examines the important venues that the church has readily available to share the gospel with Muslims next door and around the world. After reading this book, I was filled with joy and anticipation to continue to share the good news with Muslims with whom I am in regular contact. I gladly recommend this book for people in the church desiring to witness to Muslims and those in university and seminary classrooms preparing themselves for missional engagement.'

**Richard Sudworth, *Encountering Islam: Christian-Muslim Relations in the Public Square*, SCM, ISBN 978-0-33405-518-1, £25.00.**

#### **Martin's opinion:**

This book is an important contribution to the discussion of how Christians in general, and Anglicans in particular, should relate to their Muslim neighbours in Britain today. Sudworth brings together an extensive knowledge of the history of encounters between Christianity and Islam with the lived experience of ministering as a Church of England priest in Muslim majority parish and draws on both to offer constructive suggestions about what Anglican-Muslim relations should look like today. Not everyone will agree with what he says, but anyone who wants to be stimulated to think more deeply about the issues he covers should read this book. Christians need to think hard about what it means to engage constructively with Muslims in this country in the twenty first century and this book will aid that thinking.

#### **Overview:**

The United Kingdom is not now, if it ever was, a purely Christian country. In particular, there is now a substantial Muslim presence in this country. The 2011 census recorded 2,786,635 Muslims living in the United Kingdom (4.4% of the total population), and in some parts of London and other urban areas in the Midlands and the North the majority of the population is Muslim.

The fact that Britain is now a country containing both Christians and Muslims raises the issue of how the Christian and Muslim communities should relate to one another within what is increasingly a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. In his new book *Encountering Islam*, Dr Richard Sudworth, who is a part time tutor in Anglican Theology at the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, as well as being parish priest in a Muslim majority area of the city, addresses these issues with a particular focus on relations between Anglicanism and Islam.

His book is in two main parts,

The first main part is entitled 'Contexts and Backgrounds.' This part provides a general introduction to the history of Christian encounters with Islam since the foundation of Islam in the seventh century. It concludes with survey of 'contemporary issues in Christian-Muslim encounter.'

The second main part is entitled 'Anglican encounters.' This part looks in turn at Anglican encounters with Islam pre and post 1998 and at the contributions to thinking about Anglican-Muslim relations made by Bishop Kenneth Cragg and Archbishop Rowan Williams. It then concludes with a chapter looking at 'The Church of England, Islam and theologies for the public square.' As its title suggests, this chapter considers what sort of public theology would be appropriate for the Church of England in the context of its developing relationships with the Muslim community.

A final chapter, entitled 'Final thoughts' then summarises the argument of the book as a whole.

Each of the chapters in the book concludes with an 'Anecdotes from the Field' section, which sets themes from the chapter in the context of Richard Sudworth's own ministry within a Muslim majority parish

#### **Commendations:**

Bishop Toby Howarth has written:

'As the debate around the place of Islam in Europe and America continues to heat up, often stoked by fear and misinformation, here is a nuanced and insightful study of what it means for Christians to live alongside Muslims in a shared political space. With such a charged context, it is hard to do justice to the complex reality of religious faith worked out in neighbourhoods and nations. Richard Sudworth, however, offers academic theology which mines the rich depths of Anglican thinking as well as the lived experience of a priest in a Muslim majority parish in Birmingham. He shows an understanding of Anglican and Muslim struggles, for example, with territory, and embraces engagement rooted in a worshipping Christian community. Here is practical wisdom and the kind of challenge that the church will increasingly need if it is to retain its integrity.'

**Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God*, David C Cook, ISBN 978-1-43470-938-7, £16.27 (e edition also available).**

### **Martin's opinion:**

This is an excellent introduction to the truth of our union with Christ. As John Ortberg comments in his foreword, Wilbourne 'does a masterful job of articulating what union with Christ consists of, how central it was to the writers of Scripture and to great thinkers through the centuries, why it has been lost in our day, and most importantly how to pursue it as a concrete reality in the daily life of ordinary people.' The book is based on solid scholarship, but is written in a way that will make it accessible not only to ministers and students of theology, but to the ordinary lay Christian as well. Strongly recommended.

### **Overview:**

Rankin Wilbourne is the pastor of Pacific Crossroads Church in Los Angeles. The starting point for his book is the observation that 'union with Christ was once considered to be at the very heart of why the gospel is good news.' However, for many Christians today:

'...union with Christ might feel vague and shadowy, not central or basic. This has very real consequences for our everyday life with God. As our understanding and appreciation of union with Christ has diminished, so too has our sense of what salvation means. We may know what God has saved us *from*, but have we lost sight of what God has saved us *for*?'

In Wilbourne's view, becoming a Christian:

'...is not simply coming to believe certain things about a God who remains outside of you. And being a Christian is not simply about what you do or don't do. Christianity is a life of *faith*, but it's a *life* of faith. You have been grafted into God's own life, invited to participate in the fellowship of God. 'God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ (1 Cor.1:9).'

Could anything about the Christian life be more precious than this? This is what God has saved you for – communion, relationship and intimacy with himself. This is what Christ suffered for, 'that he might bring us to God' (1 Pet.3:18).'

He goes on to say:

'Of all the good news the gospel brings, the greatest – and the door to all the rest – is that you can be united to Christ. It's really possible. Union with Christ is not abstract idea. It is a powerful reality. And if Jesus has joined his life to yours, then you have been given everything you need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). But unless you are united to him, all that he has done for you remains useless and of no value to you.'

Wilbourne's account of the nature and significance of union with Christ is divided into four parts.

Part I introduces the topic by looking at 'Union with Christ what is it and why do we need it?'

Part II explores 'Union with Christ: where did it come from and where did it go?' This part explains why it is that although union with Christ is central to the teaching of the Bible and the Christian theological tradition it is a truth that is unknown to many Christians today.

Part III, 'Union with Christ: what problems does it solve?' argues that the concept of union with Christ answers four fundamental questions. Who am I? Where am I bound? How will I get there? What can I hope for? Union with Christ, says Wilbourne, 'gives you a new identity, a new purpose, a new destiny and renewed hope along the way.'

Part IV, 'Union with Christ: Day by Day,' considers some of possibilities resulting from a recovery of the truth of union with Christ and specifically 'how it can help us hold together things that often seem divergent: grace and obedience, cross and kingdom, mercy and justice, the personal Christ and the cosmic Christ.'

### **Commendations:**

Tim Keller writes:

'Everyone seems to agree that union with Christ is a biblical teaching crucial to understanding and communicating the gospel, but preachers today do not give it the same emphasis that the New Testament does. One reason is that, unlike the new birth, justification, and adoption, it requires multiple metaphors to draw out its rich meaning. Rankin does so clearly and compellingly. This is simply the best book for laypeople on this subject. It is grounded in exegesis and theology and yet is lucid and supremely practical. While not unaware of the recent controversies about union and justification, which are briefly sketched in the endnotes, Rankin's whole concern is to make the biblical teaching accessible and applicable to the reader. He does this with excellence.'

**Christopher J H Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today's World*, Zondervan, ISBN 978-0-31028-464-2, £11.99 (e edition also available).**

**Martin's opinion:**

This is an excellent set of expositions. It is well up to Wright's normal high standard and will provide a very valuable resource for anyone called to preach or teach on the book of Daniel and its relevance for today.

**Overview:**

Dr Christopher Wright is currently International Director of the Langham Partnership International having previously been the Principal of All Nations Christian College. His new book is a series of expositions of the Book of Daniel, which updates and expands material first published by Scripture Union in 1993. The first nine chapters cover the first nine chapters of Daniel and the tenth chapter covers Daniel ten to twelve.

As Wright explains in his Preface, this book is not a commentary on Daniel. It aims instead 'as expository preaching should do, to be faithful to the thrust and purpose and purpose of the text, to explain what needs to be explained (and omit what doesn't – always a subjective judgement), and to explore what response to the text is appropriate for us in our own historical and cultural context.'

The key question which Wright focuses on in the course of his expositions is:

'... how can the believer witness to his or her faith (or preserve it at all) in the midst of an alien and non-Christian culture, whether that means the culture of some other religion (e.g. in Islamic countries) or the culture of the secular, increasingly pagan West? Especially, how can the believer do this if it involves a high cost in misunderstanding, suffering, threat, or even death?'

The book of Daniel, he says:

'...tackles the problem head on, both in the stories of Daniel and his friends and the visions he received. A major theme of the book is how people who worship the one, true, living God – the God of Israel – can live and work and survive in the midst of a nation, a culture, and a government that are hostile and sometimes life-threatening. And that will be the focus in this book. What does it mean to live as a believer in the midst of a non-Christian state and culture? How can we live 'in the world' and yet not let the world own us and squeeze us into the shape of its own fallen values and assumptions?'

**Commendations:**

As a reviewer on Amazon.Com has helpfully written:

'*Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today's World* is quintessential Christopher J. H. Wright. It is readable, reliable, and sensitive to what matters in the Christian life. Wright sets out to strengthen and offer encouragement for those facing hostility and persecution and does so with an eye upon the grace and mercy of God. Wright demonstrates the relevance of the book of Daniel with little effort and captures the reader's hearts in the process. This is a book that will stir your heart with confidence for God and his lovingkindness for his people. If you're preaching or teaching through Daniel, then *Hearing the Message of Daniel* is an essential read. It comes highly recommended!'