

Latimer Trust

Monthly Reading List – Nov 2025

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
Robin Aitken	<i>The Noble Liar: How and Why the BBC Distorts the News to Promote a Liberal Agenda</i>	An important book that gives an insightful account of contemporary British society and the role of the BBC within it. It will help Christians to understand that the BBC supports and promotes a secular worldview that is hostile to orthodox Christian belief and morality. The challenge for Christians is to stand up against this worldview and to promote Christian truth as a better alternative.
Nigel Biggar	<i>Reparations: Slavery and the Tyranny of Imaginary Guilt</i>	Biggar's book is one that deserves to be widely read, both because of its forensic dissection of the arguments put forward, including by the Church of England, for reparations for British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, and because of his salutary closing warning against the dangers of virtue signalling.
Leah Libresco Sargeant	<i>The Dignity of Dependence: A Feminist Manifesto</i>	An important Christian contribution to the current debate in Western society about what truly makes for human flourishing. Its argument that weakness and dependence upon others is not a mark of failure, but an inextricable part of our God-given humanity is one that Christians need to hear, accept, and then pass on to others.
Ed Shaw (ed)	<i>A Better Love</i>	As a collection of different testimonies to this one simple fact, this book is a hugely useful resource that deserves to be read as widely as possible. The world (and the Church) needs to hear the truth that God will provide a good life for all his children, regardless of their sexuality, if only they are willing to trust him to provide all that they need.
Simon Vibert	<i>The Hodder Bible Commentary: Exodus</i>	A very useful mid-level commentary on Exodus that will prove extremely helpful to ministers preaching on Exodus and to ordinary lay Christians in their own private times of Bible study and in preparing material for Bible study groups. A book that will prove a good addition to anyone's collection of Bible commentaries.

Robin Aitken, *The Noble Liar: How and Why the BBC Distorts the News to Promote a Liberal Agenda*, Biteback Publishing, ISBN 978-1-78590-600-8, £9.99 (e and audio editions also available).

Overview:

The issue of the impartiality of BBC journalism has come to the fore recently following the resignation of the BBC's director general and head of news following recent revelations about the misleading editing of a speech by President Trump in a BBC Panorama programme and the leaking of an internal BBC report identifying areas of bias in BBC news coverage. Because of the prominent role the BBC plays in both British and world broadcasting the question of the extent to which its journalism is biased in favour of a particular view of the world is an important one, and Christians who want a helpful introduction to this issue should take time to read Robin Aitken's book *The Noble Liar* which, although it came out in 2020, is still entirely relevant today.

Aitken is a former BBC reporter and journalist who spent twenty-five years working across all levels within the Corporation, from local radio to the *Today* programme. He is also a Christian and his book provides an important Christian perspective on how the BBC has both been shaped by, and helped to shape, the abandonment of traditional Christian beliefs and values in British society in the years since the Second World War.

The title of the book reflects the idea first put forward by the Greek philosopher Plato in his book *The Republic* about how the rulers of an ideal city state should promote a foundation myth justifying the social divisions within the city. The rulers would know that the myth was a lie, but it would be a lie that was justified, a 'noble lie,' because it would ensure social harmony between the members of the different classes in society.

Aitken's argument is that although circumstances have changed since Plato's day it is still necessary for those with political power today to seek to maintain social harmony. The 'dethroning of the old serviceable Christian mores in the name of secularisation' has left an 'ideological vacuum' in British society and the question is what should fill this vacuum and serve as the 'noble lie' forming the basis for social harmony in the present and in the future.

According to Aitken:

The BBC's candidate to fill the ideological vacuum, which it shares to a greater or lesser degree with the rest of the mainstream media comprises four main elements. Firstly, an unquestioning support for economic policies that will generate further prosperity. Both the left and the right divide on how this should be achieved, but not with the central proposition that ever-increasing national wealth is the desired objective. Secondly, a wholehearted endorsement of radical feminism's analysis of society's ills. This makes the supposed patriarchy the villain of the piece, but its principal weakness lies in its divisiveness; there will never be peace between the sexes as long as the feminist agenda is promoted. Thirdly, multiculturalism as a guiding principle in how British society should be organised. The problem with this is that it involves the constant denigration of the indigenous culture and the elevation of incoming cultures to parity of esteem regardless of their faults. And, fourthly, a rigid adherence to the dictates of political correctness. Political correctness can be likened to the camp guards patrolling the perimeter wire to make sure dissidents are dealt with. It is the jack-booted enforcer who kicks dissenters into submission saying, 'You will tolerate what I say must be tolerated and condemn what I say must be condemned, and if you do not you will be branded racist or misogynist or Islamophobe and be shamed off the public stage.'

In Aitken's view:

In the long run this inchoate philosophy – because of its divisiveness, arbitrariness, unfairness and sheer unnaturalness – will create a powerful coalition of losers (men, indigenous whites and social conservatives among others) who will fight back. It is a set of ideas which runs counter to human nature and in place of a philosophy (Christianity) that is profound and deeply compassionate, substitutes a fashionable melange of modish prejudice. It is supported by only a small minority, but this is the minority that rules the country. But the ideas which unite them will never deliver true social harmony; in the long run their project is doomed to fail.

Aitken's overall conclusion is that the BBC, which was founded to promote Christian beliefs and values, with the prayer still inscribed in the foyer of Broadcasting House 'that all things hostile to peace or purity may be banished from this house and that the people inclining their ear to whatever things are beautiful and honest and of good report may tread the path of wisdom and uprightness,' has morphed into a supporter of 'a culture which promotes individualism and material prosperity as the highest goods.'

The British ruling elite, including those who run the BBC:

... view the current state of affairs as a positive thing; 'We have banished superstition,' they say, rejoicing at the thought; but there remains a sceptical minority who look at the society brought into being by this type of thinking and see little to admire. The liberal hegemony has created an unhappy society which doesn't really know what it believes in. And whether you are a supporter of the current orthodoxy or not, there is one certain thing you can rely on: it is not permanent. The qualities that made Christianity a force to be reckoned with – the truth that wins human hearts and compels belief – have not changed and will go on winning converts to its banner. In the coming years who is to say whether the old beliefs will not triumph again over the arid fictions of our current noble lie.

Martin's opinion:

The Noble Liar is an important book that gives an insightful account of contemporary British society and the role of the BBC within it. Christians need to read it in order to understand the nature of the society in which God has called them to serve and witness. Reading it will help them to understand that the BBC, like other elite institutions in this country, is not ideologically neutral, but supports and promotes a secular worldview that is hostile to orthodox Christian belief and morality. The challenge for Christians is to stand up against this worldview and to promote Christian truth as a better alternative. Aitken's book will help them to appreciate the scale of this challenge but will also remind them that the liberal ideology that is currently dominant in this country will not last for ever. Something will eventually replace the current 'noble lie' and Christians have to work and pray that by God's grace that something will be a return to the acceptance of orthodox Christianity as the foundation for British society.

Commendations:

Clare Fox has written:

Aitken uses the BBC as his main focus, but is skilful in his critique of the national broadcaster, invaluable allowing us to reflect on key contemporary issues: institutional contempt for the values of the millions of people, distortion of media impartiality under the guise of fact-checking and the preachy nature of an ever-narrower news agenda that avoids discussing prickly questions that challenge liberal consensus.

Nigel Biggar, *Reparations: Slavery and the Tyranny of Imaginary Guilt*, Forum, 978-1-80075-559-8, £20.00 (e and audio editions also available).

Overview:

Nigel Biggar is Emeritus Regius Professor of Moral Theology at the University of Oxford and a member of the House of Lords. He is the author a series of important books exploring contemporary moral issues in the light of Christian ethical principles. The latest book in this series looks at the question of whether there is an obligation for Western nations, and Britain in particular, to pay reparations for the harm caused by their historic involvement in the slave trade.

Biggar's conclusion is that while genuine guilt would entail an obligation to make reparation to the person(s) harmed, in the case of the transatlantic slave trade, in reality the guilt of people today is imaginary rather than real and therefore no such obligation exists. He reaches this conclusion by carefully working through the various arguments that have been put forward for the payment of reparations and seeing whether they are persuasive. His argument is that 'the case for the British making reparations for slavery does not add up.' This is for ten reasons.

First, good, humble moral judgement pays close attention to circumstances. So, when judging British involvement in slave trading and slavery over two centuries ago attention should be paid to their contexts, the first of which was the universality of both the trade and the institution.

Second, the humiliation and cruelty of British slave trading and slavery over a century and a half was unique neither in kind nor degree. Many, many other peoples did similarly lamentable things, not least Africans and Arabs, and for a much longer period of time. The racially discriminatory fingering of the British is unfair and politically opportunistic.

Third, if, as most economic historians think, Britain's industrial prosperity owed something small or modest to slave trading and slavery, it owed a lot more to a wide range of other factors.

Fourth, involvement of the Church of England's Queen Anne's bounty in slave trading was indirect, brief and unprofitable.

Fifth, the British were among the first peoples in the history of the world to abolish both slave-trading and slavery itself, not least thanks to sustained agitation by Christians, many of them Anglican, some of them black.

Sixth, the British went on to do penance for slavery by spending resources of money, ships and lives in using imperial power to suppress slavery worldwide for a century and a half. Among them were Anglican lobbyists in London, naval officers and ratings at sea, and missionaries abroad.

Seventh, the British Government's decision to pay compensation to slave owners for their loss of property upon emancipation was made in part as a necessary political compromise to enable the passing of emancipatory legislation, and in part to prevent the economic collapse of plantations, upon which many free blacks would continue to depend for wage-earning employment.

Eighth, it is not true that British emancipation made no beneficial difference at all to the lives of any of the former slaves. Nor is it true that British colonial government did nothing to facilitate economic development and education in the West Indies.

Ninth, the current economic woes of some Caribbean states owe much at least to post-colonial mismanagement.

And tenth, Britain today is not systematically racist. Indeed it is one of the least racist countries on earth. And such racism as does persist today cannot be traced back to historic slavery through 'colonialism,' since for the second half of its life the British Empire was committed to anti-slavery on the basis of a fundamental racial equality.

Biggar suggests that it is appropriate for Britain to give aid to its former colonies in the West Indies because Britain has to select which parts of the world to help through its aid budget and:

... since Britain did have responsibility for the welfare of West Indian colonies for several centuries and since it retains cultural, institutional, legal and sometimes constitutional links with post-colonial Caribbean states, it would make sense to target its aid there rather than elsewhere.

However, such targeting of aid would be a matter of appropriateness rather than a matter of obligation to atone for historic wrongdoing.

In an important final chapter Biggar draws on the work of the French philosopher Pascal Bruckner to argue that Western confessions of guilt over colonialism and slavery, of which the call for reparations are a part, are actually a form of problematic 'virtue signalling' fuelled by self-regard rather than genuine humility. In Biggar's words:

In this self-regarding display of virtue, the penitent hogs the stage by erecting lack of love for oneself into a leading principle, we lie to ourselves about ourselves and close ourselves to others... In Western self-hatred the Other has no place. It is a narcissistic relationship in which the African, the Indian and the Arab are brought in as extras.

If this is the malaise, what is the cure? Certainly, less of the existential anxiety that drives mortal human creatures to pretend to immortal divinity by puffing up their saintly virtue. To that end, more religious faith would help, since a great advantage of believing in a God is that the believer is less likely to mistake himself for one. Moreover, those who find the loving eye of God sufficient can cope without the adoring eye of the world. They are content to be the hidden faithful, spiritually free to concentrate on doing good rather than appearing virtuous, of whom George Eliot wrote so memorably: 'the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs.'

Such modest, genuine saints will not waste their time proclaiming their 'anti-racism' in defiance of the historical truth about slavery and the empirical truth about racism today. Rather, they will be intent on diagnosing its actual causes in the light of all the evidence, in order to craft an effective remedy. Because they care more about solving the problem than signalling their virtue.

Martin's opinion:

Biggar's book is one that deserves to be widely read, both because of its forensic dissection of the arguments put forward, including by the Church of England, for reparations for British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and because of his salutary closing warning against the dangers of virtue signalling. It is very easy for Christians to become sucked in by the call for reparations for slavery because prima-facie making reparation can seem so obviously 'the right thing to do.' However, as Biggar argues, appearances can deceive. Christians today are not guilty because of the British slave trade centuries in the past, and it is perverse form of self-regard to think that they are.

Christians should feel guilty and make reparation for the things for which they are actually responsible, and if they feel that it is right to give financial support to those in the Caribbean or elsewhere, they should do so because they think this is a good use of the resources God has given them, not as a response to what someone else did in the past.

Commendations:

Tony Sewell declares:

Reparations is no apology for the reality and brutality of transatlantic slavery, but it exposes the paternalism of a modern guilty conscience that drives the current reparations movement. Biggar is the Bob Marley of Oxford, fighting off the narcissists, who deny the oppressed the agency to see their plight as a creation of modern leaders.

Leah Libresco Sargeant, *The Dignity of Dependence: A Feminist Manifesto*, University of Notre Dame Press, ISBN 978-0-26821-033-5, £21.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Dr Leah Libresco Sargeant is a American academic and journalist. She grew up as a Jewish atheist and converted to Roman Catholicism as a result of deciding to enter into debate 'with the most interesting wrong people she could find at Yale University' who turned out to be orthodox Catholics (including the man who is now her husband).

In an interview on the University of Notre Dame Press website, she describes the genesis of her new book as follows:

I started my substack community, Other Feminisms, in October 2020. I wanted a sustained space for conversations about pro-life feminism and other tensions between mainstream feminism and a feminism that was open to men and women being different. Part of how I sum up my project is that women's equality can't be premised on our interchangeability with men. We are different, with fertility being the most obvious asymmetry. You can try to disguise or destroy the differences, or you can decide what it means to advocate for women as women, not defective men. Eventually, I wanted to develop my arguments into book form.

The book that resulted is described as 'a feminist manifesto,' but those who do not think of themselves as feminists should not be put off from reading as a result. It is actually a wide-ranging reflection on what it means to be human (whether we are male or female).

The basic premise of the book is that post-Enlightenment Western society has created a world which implicitly views the autonomous adult male as the model for what it means to be properly human. Reflecting on the story of Robert Rice, an elderly man who did not want to ask for assistance from his neighbours to clear snow so that he could visit his sick wife because he was embarrassed to admit he needed help from others, she writes:

We take autonomy as the pattern for human life, with childhood a brief slightly embarrassing apprenticeship. Little by little, children graduate from their neediness, and because we expect them to transcend their littleness, we are willing to overlook it and round them up to count as fully human.

This story of autonomy as the marker for full personhood necessarily cuts many people out of the human family. Some children will never 'grow up' to be full autonomous adults because they are marked from birth with genetic conditions that limit their physical or intellectual development. Other children seem like they'll transcend the neediness of childhood, but illness or injury thrust them back into a life of profound need. For those like Robert Rice who are strong for a long time, age can still strip them of their potency whether through profound mental or physical weakness or simply, as Rice discovered, not being equal to everything that is asked of them.

For a man it is easier to make it very far in life with only the brief past period of babyhood as evidence that he does not stand fully alone. For women, the ideal of autonomy is much harder to attain. Even a woman who does not or has not yet borne a child knows that she *may* conceive. That potential may seem like a threat to be warded off, or an opportunity deeply longed for, but in both cases it means a woman is acutely aware that the boundaries of herself are fuzzily drawn.

What she means by the boundaries of the self being 'fuzzily drawn' in the case of women is that by reason of biology they are physically and psychologically linked to children from the point of conception in ways which men simply are not. This link means that women have physical limitations which do not affect men, which is why it is much easier for men, especially non-disabled men, to try to attain to the social ideal of absolute personal autonomy.

Because the autonomous male is the social ideal, we have constructed a world that is in a huge number of ways, including things as diverse as the height of kitchen counters, the design of surgical equipment and the construction of air bags in cars, designed to primarily meet the need of fit adult males. The downside of this is that it makes life more difficult than it needs to be for women, children, the sick and the disabled, and more radically it encourages abortion and euthanasia as 'solutions' to the unwanted dependency of the unborn child and the sick, disabled and elderly.

Lebresco Sargeant's response to this situation is to argue that we need to challenge the prevailing model of personal autonomy in favour of an appreciation of the 'dignity of dependence.'

This means, first of all, distinguishing between humility and humiliation:

Humility is a recognition of our smallness as a core part of what makes us human. I am smaller than God. I am (often) smaller than my obligations and fall short of what I ought to be especially if I rely only on my own strength. My recognition of my humility is a reason to reach beyond myself, because I am too *small* to love as deeply and dangerously as I want to. But the experience of humiliation comes from the negative judgement I apply or feel someone else imposes on my smallness. Humiliation is the result of seeing smallness and despising it – offering contempt, not comfort. Admitting insufficiency is seen not as a normal part of being human but as a failure to live up to an imaginary ideal. Humility turns us outward, eager to ask for help. Humiliation turns us inward, ashamed of needing help at all.

When the world starts with a false image of the human person it is difficult to become re-rooted in truth. Unlearning the world's contempt for weakness isn't a simple intellectual shift – it takes sustained lived counter catechesis. We must observe and participate in another way of living.

Secondly, as a result of this counter catechesis we need to recognise the basic truth that:

It is not good for woman or man to be alone. And more than that it is not *possible* for man or woman to be truly alone. To treat each other justly we must be honest about who we are. Men and women are deeply dependent creatures. We cannot build a just society on a false anthropology of independence. We cannot have a feminism that does not begin with recognising and rejoicing the embodied difference between men and women, and women's greater exposure to dependence. A baby is not a failed person for being so *obviously* human and a woman is similarly most herself and most human when her life is shaped by the gift of need and vulnerability.

I grew up prepared to use my strength to advocate for my sisters but the more I grow the more I have found I must offer the testimony of my weakness as well. I want my daughters and my son to see me as more than just myself – composed of my ties to them and the ties to husband, families and friends that allow me to give of myself without always being sure my own body can cover the cost.

When I told my oldest that I needed more gentleness in the last months of pregnancy, that I was fragile, she was sceptical – how could I be weaker when I was so much *bigger*? It is the largeness of our love that exposes us to risk. I count my treasure in my exposure to catastrophe. I measure my humanity in how little my life and my loves can be sustained by my own strength.

Thirdly, what this means for men is the acceptance that:

To flourish men no less than women need a purpose that stirs up both fear and love. The fear is prompted by the demand of real dependence and weakness – if men fail to prepare their strength and offer it stalwartly in times of need there are serious consequences to their absence or failure. The love and tenderness comes from knowing you were made for this even when you are imperfect in your duty, that offering your strength is a way of acknowledging and returning the love that made you. For men just as for women, the world begins with the unasked for and unearned gift of another's body and love. That initial gift cannot be repaid, but it can be joyously reprised.

To use the Americanism, men need to 'step up to the plate' by offering help to others, particularly those in their families, and be willing to ask for and receive help in doing so.

Martin's opinion:

The Dignity of Dependence is an important Christian contribution to the current debate in Western society about what truly makes for human flourishing. Its argument that weakness and dependence upon others is not a mark of failure, but an inextricable part of our God-given humanity is one that Christians need to hear, accept, and then pass on to others. The brokenness of Western society, evidenced by the prevalence of abortion, the collapse of traditional forms

of family life, and current proposals for the legalisation of assisted dying, has its deep roots in the un-Christian model of the autonomous, self-sufficient individual, who does not need others (or God). Libresco Sargeant's manifesto exposes the falsity of this model and points us to something. Christians (including non-feminist men!) need to read this book and pass it on to others.

Commendations:

Yuval Levin declares:

This wise, perceptive book is an essential corrective to the tendency of our society to identify independence with flourishing. As Leah Libresco Sergeant shows, flourishing is only possible if we depend on those we love and if they depend on us. This is essential reading for all who have been shaped towards blindness to this simple truth – and so maybe for men above all.

Ed Shaw (ed), *A Better Love*, Good Book Company, ISBN 9781838309473, £6.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

This new book from the Good Book Company, which is edited by Ed Shaw and has a foreword by David Bennett, is a collection of eighteen true life stories of people who are same-sex attracted (SSA), but who accept and live out the traditional Christian sexual ethic that sexual activity should take place only in a context of marriage between two people of the opposite sex.

As Bennett explains in his foreword:

The stories of LGBTQI+/SSA Christians, who have chosen a historically orthodox path for their lives in response to this love, have often been obscured by both the Church and society, either as a matter of repression – or worse, internalised homophobia. But the deadlock of prejudice against those who, like me, have made such a choice out of love for God is finally breaking. This book is an important contribution to that end....

Each journey of how an LGBTQI+/SSA person comes to respond faithfully to God's salvation and grace in Jesus Christ is a refined and costly gift, like the stones that will decorate the future City to come ... (Revelation 21 v 9–20).

This book contains such precious stones. Each story of loving God first will be honoured in the future City where God and humanity will finally be one, and our restless hearts will finally find eternal rest. May you, the reader, find your thirst for such a reality sparked and refreshed in the pages of this book.

It is impossible in a short review to summarise the eighteen testimonies contained in this book, but the following extracts from the first two of the eighteen testimonies will give a flavour of the collection as a whole.

The first testimony is by Rob Wood and is entitled 'True, Good and Beautiful.' In it he explains:

Despite the clash between the desire to follow Jesus' teaching and my desire to live differently, it was my experience of Jesus' greater love that formed and shaped my life and response to sexuality. I had trusted Jesus to bring forgiveness and a relationship with God. Now, it was time to trust him to provide what I needed to follow him. Of course, a life of potential singleness seemed daunting. However, to my surprise, not being in same-sex relationships did not limit my experience of love – far from it. The loving intimacy within friendships that I experienced with other Christians had more depth than I had ever experienced before.

I was encouraged by the truth that knowing Jesus is more precious and valuable than anything else this world can offer. Yes, there is a cost to responding to Jesus' love. But to say that cost is worth it would be an understatement. No one else died on the cross and rose again to bring me forgiveness and a joy-filled abundant life. No one else gives a more precious and secure identity, or a more immense and unrelenting love.

Experiencing same-sex attraction never disqualified me from receiving God's love. I hope I learn more and more what I have been privileged to experience in part: the good news of Jesus is what is true, good, and beautiful.

The second is by Laura Oliver and is entitled 'The life I never expected.' In it she writes:

It was a little while after this decision to follow Jesus that I realised another reason I had felt so confused about my lack of enjoyment of relationships or desire for a boyfriend. I realised that actually I like women. The 'I just don't get this' became 'Oh, I really get this – I want a girlfriend!' Suddenly, my 'future ideal' that I had struggled to fit a man into had a same-sex partner in it, not a husband.

Having already had the time to work out that Jesus is the one that provides true satisfaction and contentment, I knew that what I desired in a relationship with a woman wouldn't provide what I was looking for, and in fact was full of empty promises. This doesn't mean that the desires have gone away, or that I don't sometimes

(often) wish I had a girlfriend, but it does mean that I trust that God knows better than I do and that he loves me more than a woman ever could.

God has proven himself to me time and time again over the years, and his Word, the Bible, is full of all the promises that he has kept. He isn't a mean God who withholds things from us – he is a God who is 'gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness' (Exodus 34 v 6). He is so much better than a girlfriend ever could be.

What these two extracts, and the book as a whole, remind us is that we should not believe the lie that we are constantly told by the world and by those promoting a liberal sexual agenda in the Church, namely that if you are same-sex attracted and seek to live according to traditional Christian teaching about sexual ethics then the result will inevitably be a life marked by depression, hypocrisy, guilt and possibly even suicide. The stories of Rob Wood, Laura Oliver and others testify that this is simply not true.

God is faithful, and if we walk in his way, whether that is in the path of marriage or singleness, he will give us the resources we need to live a life of personal fulfilment in this world, plus the gift of a perfect life with him for ever in the world to come.

Martin's opinion:

As a collection of different testimonies to this one simple fact, this book is a hugely useful resource that deserves to be read as widely as possible. Buy it, read it, and share it with others. The world (and the Church) needs to hear the truth that God will provide a good life for all his children, regardless of their sexuality, if only they are willing to trust him to provide all that they need. Highly recommended.

Simon Vibert, *The Hodder Bible Commentary: Exodus*, Hodder and Stoughton, ISBN 978-1-47369-498-9, £22.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Dr Simon Vibert is currently Vicar of Christ Church, Virginia Water, and has previously been Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.

His new book is a commentary on Exodus in the Hodder Bible Commentary series edited by Lee Gatiss, a series which seeks to:

... provide the contemporary church with fresh and readable expositions of Scripture which are doctrinally sensitive and globally aware, accessible for all adult readers but particularly useful to those who preach, teach and lead Bible studies in churches and small groups.

Vibert begins his commentary with a five-part introduction to Exodus. In this he gives an overview of the contents of Exodus, and a brief account of the importance of Moses. He then surveys the various approaches to the historicity, dating and authorship of Exodus, arguing that it gives a historical account of actual events which took place in the thirteenth century BC and that it contains 'written and oral memories and recollections of Moses' which were subsequently edited to form Exodus as we now have it. Finally, he discusses the 'contemporary Christian relevance of Exodus,' declaring that:

God unfolds his plans throughout history. While Exodus does contain legal texts (such as the Book of the Covenant) and psalms of praise (e.g. Exodus 15), it is primarily a narrative of God's dealing with his people. The entire Bible is the story of God creating all things for his glory and subsequently redeeming all things for his glory. But particularly in Exodus, as mentioned above, we have a working paradigm, yet to be fully consummated in God's redemption plan manifested in the cross, but seen in embryo in God's rescue of his people out of slavery in Exodus.

In the bulk of the book, Vibert then provides a section-by-section commentary on the text of Exodus, working with the NIV as the base English text, although referring to other versions as appropriate. References to the original Hebrew are transliterated and Vibert includes the comments of other scholars within his own commentary.

Vibert's comments on the naming of Moses in Exodus 2:10 give a flavour of the contents of the commentary as a whole.

This passage presents us with a puzzle. Moses is a Hebrew name (*moseh* which sounds like 'drew him out of water'). But the name is given to him by an Egyptian woman. Stewart helps resolve this conundrum in the following comment:

A relatively common name, meaning 'son' or 'to beget a son' is chosen as appropriate because it sounds something like *moseh*, the active participle of the verb *masah*, 'draw out' of the water. Through this name, the princess both consciously honours the Hebrew origins of her son and also makes him legitimately Egyptian with the name in her own language that emphasises that she is adopting a son.

Clearly the author of Exodus intends that Moses is viewed as something of a prototype of how Yahweh will deal with his own people. Moses faced certain death at the hand of Pharaoh; he was saved from the waters, given new life and called to identify with the people of God.

Similarly, we note that the people of Israel are very vulnerable to Pharaoh's threat, for he will do his utmost to drive them harder and with further brutality. Even though Pharaoh will finally capitulate after all the plagues, he will still pursue them (see comments on Exodus 14:5–31). The final plague will force him to let God's people go, but his relentless pursuit of them as they cross through the waters will result in Pharaoh's army being drowned in the Reed Sea (see commentary on 14:21–31). Moses and his people are spared again and again and God overthrows all his enemies. Continually, it is from and through water that the people are rescued.

There is a complex web of circumstances that God brings together to prepare Moses for this role. He was born to a Hebrew lady, brought up in the court of the Egyptians and nursed by his own Hebrew mother. This will be reflected in his early life. Moses will straddle two worlds. He will have one foot in Pharaoh's household but will have a heart for God's people. Moses is being prepared for a mighty future through his birth, through God's rescue, through God's provision of maternal care and through his naming.

Through this one man, God is also preparing for the rescue of his people by watching over his chosen one. There are lots of anticipations and associations with the birth of Jesus. God's salvation plan begins with a pregnancy and an extraordinary baby. Jesus had to fly Egypt in order to escape Herod's murderous intention to kill every baby boy (Matthew 2:13–18); God will then call his son out of Egypt in order to rescue his people (Matthew 2:19–23; note the quote from Hosea 11:1 in verse 15). The rescue that God will bring about through Moses is but an anticipation of the full and final rescue by Jesus.

What we see in this extract is that although Vibert is aware of, and makes good use of, scholarly commentary by others, he does not provide the sort of heavy-weight technical commentary that speculates about how and why the text reached its present form and explores all the various possible interpretations of the text that other commentators have put forward.

Vibert takes the text as it is and seeks to explain in a straightforward manner its original meaning and how this meaning relates to the teaching of the Bible as a whole about the fulfilment of God's good purposes through his son Jesus Christ.

Martin's opinion:

This is a very useful mid-level commentary on Exodus that will prove extremely helpful to ministers preaching on Exodus and to ordinary lay Christians in their own private times of Bible study and in preparing material for Bible study groups. This is a book that will prove a good addition to anyone's collection of Bible commentaries.