

Latimer Trust

Monthly Reading List – Sep 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 |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Matthew Bingham | <i>A Heart Aflame for God: A Reformed Approach to Spiritual Formation</i> | It tackles a very important issue, namely a lack of reliable teaching about spiritual formation in many evangelical churches, and addresses it in a very helpful way. Bingham shows very clearly that the Reformed tradition provides people with all they need to know on this topic if only they know where to look. Equally useful for private study, for sermon preparation and for use in study groups. |
| Kevin DeYoung | <i>The Nicene Creed: What You Need to Know about the Most Important Creed Ever Written</i> | An excellent introduction to the history, teaching and abiding importance of the Nicene Creed. It is based on solid biblical, historical and theological scholarship, but it is written in a style that will make it accessible to ordinary Christian readers. This is a book that both theologians and ordinary Christians in the pews will read with profit. |
| Bobby Jamieson | <i>Everything Is Never Enough: Ecclesiastes' Surprising Path to Resilient Happiness</i> | This is a superb introduction to the message of the book of Ecclesiastes that anyone thinking about preaching on, or writing about Ecclesiastes, will want to consult, that Christians in general will want to read to gain a deeper understanding of what makes for true happiness and that Christians should seriously consider sharing with their non-Christian friends as a user friendly way to open up a conversation about the Christian world-view. Highly recommended. |
| Abraham Kuruvilla | <i>From Glory to Glory: An Unnatural History of Sanctification</i> | Kuruvilla's book is an excellent introduction to the heart of the Christian faith. Many people today, inside as well as outside the Church, simply do not understand what the Christian faith is about. Kuruvilla's book tells them. This book will be a great resource for students beginning the study of theology at university or theological college and for ordinary lay Christians who want to understand the Christian faith more clearly. |
| Ed Shaw | <i>The Intimacy Deficit: Fully Enjoying God, Yourself, Others and Creation</i> | <i>The Intimacy Deficit</i> reminds us that intimacy is not exclusively, or primarily, to do with sexual activity. And it reminds us of the four key relationships we were created by God to enjoy and which we therefore need to cultivate. This is a book that is eminently readable and full of practical wisdom and would make an excellent basis for a sermon/teaching series and for home group study. |

Matthew Bingham, *A Heart Aflame for God: A Reformed Approach to Spiritual Formation*, Crossway, ISBN 978-1-43359-262-1, £23.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Matthew Bingham is vice president of academic affairs and associate professor of church history at Phoenix Seminary in Scottsdale, Arizona in the United States. At the beginning of his new book, *A Heart Aflame for God*, he refers to a recent article about Joel and Stephanie Dunn:

... a married couple who left their Southern Baptist roots to convert to Eastern Orthodoxy. As described in an article in the *Christian Post*, the Dunns were drawn to Orthodoxy because they believed it offered spiritual resources that were absent from the evangelical churches they were familiar with. After Joel came 'face-to-face' with a sense of his own 'depravity,' he arrived at the conclusion that in his Baptist tradition, 'there was nothing ... to help [him] through it other than' advice to 'pray harder and have faith.' Convinced that 'there's got to be more than that,' the Dunns went looking for a church that would provide 'more tools' to help them on their Christian journey. The article's author writes, 'The Orthodox Church had the tools, they soon discovered, and not only were they helpful resources but they helped create saints.'

Bingham comments:

In converting from evangelicalism to Eastern Orthodoxy, the Dunns were not alone. A May 2023 piece in the *Wall Street Journal* reported on a surge of new converts swelling the ranks of Orthodox parishes, many coming from evangelical backgrounds. What is it exactly that draws them? At least in the case of Joel and Stephanie Dunn, it seems that what they were really after was spiritual formation.

In the light of stories like that of the Dunns, the purpose of his book, he explains:

... is to ... explore and commend a distinctively Reformed Protestant vision of Christian growth for twenty-first-century evangelicals. In so doing, I hope to address not only committed evangelicals desiring deeper roots but also those within evangelical circles who are feeling the pull of nonevangelical traditions. Often, as in the case of Joel and Stephanie Dunn, that pull is predicated less on intellectual agreement and more on the perceived allure of the opportunities for spiritual formation that these other communions offer. Alongside such stories of ordinary people questioning evangelicalism, high-profile converts to Roman Catholicism (e.g., Christian Smith) and Eastern Orthodoxy (e.g., Hank Hanegraaff) serve to highlight and further a growing sense of religious discontent among many. Increasing numbers of Christians reared in evangelical churches are disillusioned and frustrated by a religious culture that, at its worst, can seem superficial, shallow, and almost wholly disconnected from the ancient faith that once inspired men and women to bravely go to the lions. They are seeking a deeper, more serious Christian expression, a quest that often leads to methods and techniques beyond the boundaries of Reformation Protestantism.

A chief goal of the present volume is to speak to what Kenneth Stewart has described as an 'evangelical identity crisis' by pointing readers to the rich Reformation heritage that is already theirs. While guarding against an uncharitable 'anti-Catholicism' or an unattractive and pinched parochialism, the book aims to demonstrate to evangelical readers that the spiritual depth and seriousness they rightly long for can be found without having to look to Rome or Constantinople.

Although Bingham's book draws on the Reformed tradition in general, it focuses on the teaching of Puritan writers from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is for four reasons.

- '... for English-speaking Christians looking to retrieve a Reformed Protestant heritage, the Puritans are a logical centre point for the simple reason that they were early modern Reformed Christians who spoke and wrote primarily in English, making their enormous body of theological and pastoral writings much more accessible to English speakers today. If one wants to discover what early modern Reformed Christianity looked like in an English-speaking context, then one is necessarily looking to Puritan authors to do so.'
- '... moving beyond this linguistic continuity, a deeper and more substantive thread connects early modern Protestants with contemporary evangelicals. The eighteenth-century Great Awakening that birthed the

evangelical movement can be credibly interpreted as taking up the theological and spiritual mantle of the Puritan movement that preceded it.'

- '... the Puritans devoted an incredible amount of time and attention to the subject of spiritual formation. 'At its heart,' writes historian Charles Hambrick-Stowe, 'Puritanism was a devotional movement, rooted in religious experience.'
- 'Puritan authors wrote with a biblically grounded spiritual intensity that twenty-first-century evangelicals sorely need. Sinclair Ferguson has observed that 'for those unacquainted with their writings, a first encounter with Puritan literature can be like entering a world where people seem bigger, wiser, and years older.'

Bingham's book is in four parts.

In part 1, 'Foundations,' he seeks to:

... lay the groundwork for all that follows. If our overarching purpose is to set forth a 'Reformed approach' to 'spiritual formation,' consider the two chapters of part 1 as an attempt to un-pack both of those key terms – chapter 1 considering what we mean by spiritual formation and then chapter 2 looking more specifically at how that concept fits with a commitment to Reformed theology.

In part 2, chapters 3–5, he outlines what he calls:

... the 'Reformation triangle,' a nexus of Scripture intake, meditation, and prayer that represents the heart of both Reformed piety and this book.

In part 3, 'Widening Our Scope' (chapters 6–8), he takes: 'the three Reformation triangle disciplines' of Bible study, meditation and prayer and applies them:

... more broadly to three additional means of grace: self-examination, an appreciation of the natural world, and Christian relationships.

Finally in part 4, chapters 9–10 he addresses the 'two challenging topics' of:

... the role of the body in spiritual formation and what to do when our pursuit of spiritual formation doesn't proceed according to plan.

Martin's opinion:

A Heart Aflame for God tackles a very important issue, namely a lack of reliable teaching about spiritual formation in many evangelical churches, and addresses it in a very helpful way. He explains that the Reformed tradition in general, and the Puritan tradition in particular, teaches the necessity of Christians balancing a belief in salvation by grace through faith with a realisation that they have a personal responsibility to grow in holiness and spiritual discipline, and he also shows how they provide a biblically-based pattern of spiritual growth that will help evangelical Christians to achieve this balance in practice. Bingham shows very clearly that evangelicals do not need to look to the Roman Catholic or Orthodox traditions for guidance about how to grow in holiness because the Reformed tradition provides people with all they need to know on this topic if only they know where to look. This is a book that will be equally useful for private study, for sermon preparation and for use in study groups who are willing to consider key issues in some depth. An important resource.

Commendations:

Joel Beeke comments:

In our current historical moment, rife as it is with digital noise, doctrinal shallowness, and irreverent worship, some professing Christians have moved away from the biblical faith in search of ostensibly soul-satisfying alternatives. Turning to denominations like Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy, many crave the stillness, theological intricacy, and spiritual gravitas that are promised by those traditions but that, when weighed in the balances, are found wanting. Matthew Bingham returns to the old paths by examining the sound doctrine and experiential piety of the Reformed tradition, a faith whose theologians of previous centuries – whether

the English Puritans, the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* divines, or the Old Princeton theologians – were masters of the craft of vibrant spiritual formation. Bingham examines how the Reformed tradition promotes spiritual growth through the disciplines of Scripture reading, meditation, and prayer, as well as through self-examination, worship, and Christian fellowship. This is a very helpful exposition and affirmation of Reformed experiential piety.

Kevin DeYoung, *The Nicene Creed: What You Need to Know about the Most Important Creed Ever Written*, Crossway, ISBN 978-1-43355-975-4, £13.99 (e and audio editions also available).

Overview:

Kevin DeYoung is the senior pastor at Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, North Carolina, and assistant professor of systematic theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte. The author of a number of books, his new book is the first book in Crossway's new *Foundational Tools for our Faith* series and marks the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea at which the original version of the Nicene creed was first agreed.

In the Preface to his book, DeYoung begins by explaining why the Nicene Creed is 'the most important creed ever written.' He declares:

After the Bible, the Nicene Creed may be the most important Christian text ever written. Since the fourth century, the Nicene Creed has served as the most influential, most ecumenical, and arguably most widely used statement of faith in the history of the church. True, the Apostles' Creed is probably more familiar to many Christians today, and that doctrinal 'symbol' (the more formal theological name for a creed) is also ancient and immeasurably important. But the Nicene Creed, unlike the Apostles' Creed, was officially adopted at an ecumenical council and declared to be binding on the whole church. The Nicene Creed also differs from the Apostles' in that we know where it came from, when it originated, and why it was written. The two creeds share a similar structure and use some of the same language, but undoubtedly the Nicene Creed is more theologically precise and more doctrinally robust. The Nicene Creed doesn't merely merit the label 'orthodox;' it summarizes and defines orthodoxy itself.

De Young goes on to further declare that because of the Nicene Creed's importance:

Without exaggeration it can be said that every church and every Christian ought to know the Nicene Creed. As we come to the seventeen-hundred-year anniversary of the Council of Nicaea – the ecumenical council that met in 325 and from which the theology of the Nicene Creed originated – now is an opportune time to learn (or relearn) where the Nicene Creed came from, what it means, and why it still matters. Whether you grew up reciting the Nicene Creed, are vaguely familiar with the Nicene creed but don't really understand it, or have never heard of the thing before, you would do well to spend some time travelling to Nicaea.

DeYoung's book is intended to help people to learn or relearn where the Nicene Creed came from, what it means, and why it still matters. To this end the book is in two parts.

The first part is an introductory chapter entitled 'From Nicaea to the Nicene Creed.' In this chapter DeYoung explains how the Council of Nicaea met in AD 325 to address the heretical teaching of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius who 'didn't believe Christ was truly God, or at least not God in the same way that the Father was God.' He then further explains that the Creed of Nicaea, the prototype of the Nicene Creed, was promulgated by this Council to rule out Arius' teaching and that at a further council held at Constantinople in AD 381 the Nicene Creed itself was produced to clarify and augment the teaching of the original creed in the light of subsequent theological controversy.

The second part consists of seven chapters 'each one examining a specific term or phrase in the Nicene creed.' These chapters are:

1. We believe
2. Only Begotten
3. One Substance
4. For Us and For Our Salvation
5. Who Proceeds from the Father and the Son
6. One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church
7. One Baptism for the Remission of Sins

In a short review it is impossible to adequately summarize what DeYoung says in these seven chapters. However, extracts from three of them will give a flavour of the chapters as a whole.

In chapter 1 DeYoung notes:

The Nicene Creed starts with 'We believe' for a reason. Jaroslav Pelikan has observed that one of the most persistent features of all Christian creeds and confessions – a feature so obvious it is easy to overlook, especially on the other side of liberal theology – is the utter seriousness with which they treat the issues of Christian doctrine as, quite literally, a matter of life and death, both here in time and hereafter in eternity. To be sure, the apostolic message exhorted people to live godly lives but only in conjunction with a robust message about sin, salvation, incarnation, resurrection, atonement, reconciliation, and eternal life. Any gospel that denies these essentials or ignores them or skips over them to get to something else or leads people to doubt them or does not deal straightforwardly with them is, in effect, a different gospel. The Christian faith is *more* than a doctrine to be believed, but it is never less.

In chapter 4 De Young writes that:

... some Christians fail to appreciate that the incarnation is perpetual. The Christ who sits on the right hand of the Father is a *human* (and divine) Christ. To use *Lord of the Rings* terminology, there is a man to sit on the throne of Gondor once more. Upon completing his earthly mission, Christ did not revert to some imagined purer state of being. He continues to live and reign as the God-man, Christ Jesus.

With this in mind, the Nicene Creed affirms that the 'kingdom shall have no end.' And whose kingdom is that? The Lord Jesus Christ, very God of very God, of one substance with the Father, who came down from heaven and was made man – that Christ has a kingdom that never ends. By extension, then, that Christ will also never end. As Cyril of Jerusalem stated, in opposition to Marcellus, 'If ever you hear anyone saying that there is an end to the kingship of Christ, hate the heresy. It is another head of the dragon which has sprouted latterly in the region of Galatia.' The reign of Christ lasts forever and so does the incarnate Christ who reigns over this glorious and perpetual Kingdom.

In chapter 6 DeYoung observes that the four attributes of the Church affirmed in the Nicene Creed ('One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic'):

... depend on each other. If any one adjective in the Nicene creed is lost, the other three will be in jeopardy. But as important as all four words are, we are right to think that the last word is the one without which the other three cannot exist. Without a commitment to the apostles' teaching, the unity of the church will be a sham. Unless the church is anchored in the apostolic gospel, holiness will not be possible. And apart from defending and defining the truth of the Bible that the apostles preached and the canonical Scriptures that they wrote, there can be no true catholicity.

De Young finishes the book with six summary statements which together sum up what 'we can learn from this seventeen-hundred-year-old confession of faith. These summary statements are:

1. 'The Nicene Creed stresses the importance of believing the right thing.'
2. 'The history of the Nicene Creed teaches that new statements (and modified statements) are often necessary to combat new errors.'
3. 'The Nicene Creed models for us the central importance of the Trinity.'
4. 'The Nicene Creed underscores the importance of religion for Christian life and worship.' By 'religion' he means a faith with 'doctrinal boundaries, sacred rites, and the institution of the Church with its authority structure and obligations.'
5. 'The Nicene Creed is not embarrassed to view Christianity with a soteriological focus. At the heart of the creed's confession is the good news that the Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven 'for us and for our salvation'.'
6. 'The Nicene Creed points us to the future... the Nicene Creed deliberately ends on a note of expectation and hope.'

Martin's opinion:

The Nicene Creed: What You Need to Know about the Most Important Creed Ever Written is an excellent introduction to the history, teaching and abiding importance of the Nicene Creed. It is based on solid biblical, historical and theological scholarship, but it is written in a style that will make it accessible to ordinary Christian readers. De Young is right to say that Christians today, like generations of Christians before them, need to understand the Nicene Creed, and his book is an excellent aid for enabling this to happen. This is a book that both theologians and ordinary Christians in the pews will read with profit. A great piece of work.

Commendations:

Fred Sanders declares:

Kevin DeYoung's introduction to the Nicene Creed really puts the creed into our hands as something every believer can make intelligent use of – truly a foundational tool for our faith. Just the right length and in just the right tone, this is just the right introduction to the creed.

Bobby Jamieson, *Everything Is Never Enough: Ecclesiastes' Surprising Path to Resilient Happiness*, Waterbrook, ISBN 978-0593601310, £15.99 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Bobby Jamieson is a pastor, a theologian and an award winning author. Having taught Greek and the New Testament at Cambridge University and been an associate pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., he is now a church planter in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

His new book, *Everything is Never Enough* is a study of the message of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes and what it tells us about the issue of happiness. In Jamieson's words:

This book wrestles with the biblical book of Ecclesiastes, an ancient work of philosophy written by someone who relentlessly sought to observe, understand, and especially experience everything that could possibly lead to lasting happiness. Ecclesiastes tells the story of someone who saw it all, got it all, experienced it all, and in the end found fault with it all. Like Bono, despite all 'alls,' the author of Ecclesiastes still didn't find what he was looking for. In fact he found that having it all won't make you happy. He found that everything is never enough.

Ecclesiastes is surprisingly unreligious – even irreligious. Much of Ecclesiastes observes and evaluates life: success and failure, fulfilment and disappointment, desire met and unmet. God is nowhere to be found throughout much of Ecclesiastes, and he hardly shows up in the first part of this book. Anyone with eyes can agree with what the author of Ecclesiastes sees in his survey of life under the sun. Much of what he sees are problems that have no easy or obvious solutions. Yet he does turn, frequently, from happiness's problems to its solutions, from its lack to its ever flowing sources. My hope is that, regardless of your stance on religion or God or the Bible, you'll find the author's diagnoses of this world's problems, and your problems, so compelling that you'll approach his answers with an open mind.

The key image Jamieson uses to understand the message of Ecclesiastes is that of a three storey building. The Hebrew word for the author of the book is *Qohelet* or 'teacher,' and Jamieson writes:

You and Qohelet enter the building on the ground floor. This is where he stays for most of the book. Looking out from a floor to ceiling window, Qohelet's far seeing eyes taking the whole of human life from its own level. He weighs the merits of work, sex, food and drink, wealth, power, and many other possible sources of meaning and satisfaction. He finds them all wanting and pronounces them all absurd – *hevel* is the Hebrew keyword (it rhymes with level). Qohelet sounds embittered and defeated, even depressed. At one point he tells us that he hates his life and that he gave his heart up to despair.

But at several points in the book – seven, to be precise – Qohelet climbs up a set of set of stairs to the second storey. From up here, he surveys the same territory considering many of the same subjects – work, wealth, food and drink – and he pronounces them good. He sees rich opportunities for enjoyment and tells us to get busy enjoying them with statements such as 'There is nothing better,' 'What I have seen to be good and fitting', 'And I commend joy,' 'Go, eat your bread with joy,' and, 'So if a person lives many years let him rejoice in them all.' In these seven passages Qohelet surveys the same territory but sees something astonishingly different. He sees the same subject yet comes to the opposite conclusion. Here on the second floor he says that everything is a gift. What accounts for the radical difference between the view from the first floor and the view from the second? We'll get to that. But first we need to go with Qohelet to the third floor. He comes here only a few times, gives no warning before he does, and never stays long. To get to the third floor, we enter an elevator. Qohelet pushes a button and the elevator rises fast and long. When you emerge and approach the window, the view is striking and strikingly different. Qohelet only stays long enough to point out two crucial reference points: one, fear God because, two, he is going to judge all that you do and all that everyone ever does.

Jamieson's book is divided into three main parts. The first part, chapters 1–11 considers the view from the ground floor. The second part, chapters 12–19, considers the view from the middle floor. The third part, chapters 20–21, considers the view from the top floor.

In a final chapter, 'Conclusion,' Jamieson draws together what he has learned in his exploration of the three floors. In this conclusion Jamieson declares:

Each level of Ecclesiastes' three storey building reveals a crucial part of the path to happiness. On the ground floor, as we discovered in the first part of this book, Qohelet bangs his head on the immanent [this worldly] frame. He finds and laments the limits of everything that promises happiness here below. Only by realising that every earthly good is finite and fleeting can you begin to enjoy any of them rightly. Only by refusing to grasp for gain can you begin to receive each good as a gift. Don't wrap your heart as tight as you can around your most cherished good, or you'll break both. Don't try to satisfy your soul with work or knowledge or pleasure or money or power, or each one will leave you emptier. Happiness comes not from storing gain (you can't) or wishing time would freeze (it won't) but from renouncing control. Happiness dawns in the faint glow of the absurd.

But happiness doesn't stop there. Every good in your life is tinged with the absurd, but these absurd goods are still gifts. As we saw in the book's second part, the view from Ecclesiastes' second storey shows that life itself is a gift, and so is every good thing in it.

Gift implies giver. Already from the second floor, Qohelet sees through the immanent frame. He sees that every good thing inside this immanent frame comes from beyond it. Gifts don't simply appear; they're given. Each lawful delight – food and drink and work and marriage, the slow joys of nurture, everything that makes the wire between your heart and the world hum – is sent into your life by the same gleeful giver who gave you life. Every source of happiness in your life is a comet, training celestial glory that discloses an origin beyond all you can see. A gift is undeserved and undemandable. You can't summon a gift by scheduling it, purchasing it, or earning it. All you can do with a gift is receive and enjoy it. And the better you know the giver, the more of him you'll see in each gift and the better you'll receive each gift. God is happy, and he created the world so that creatures could share his joy. God created the world not from a deficit of happiness but from an abundance. Happiness comes from receiving the gift and recognising the giver.

The view from Ecclesiastes' third storey looks clear past the immanent frame. Up there Qohelet directs your gaze up and away from the limits of this world and your life. Because God alone is the transcendent framer, you should revere him and live for him. Because God alone gave you life, he is the final authority on what it meant means to live well.

Happiness comes from knowing God, submitting to God, and living for God. One day, for all who trust in Jesus, happiness will come from living not just for God but with God in a world perfectly remade by God.

Martin's opinion:

Everything is Never Enough is a superb introduction to the message of the book of Ecclesiastes and a superb explanation of the relevance of this message for people today. It is book that is based upon good biblical scholarship and draws on the work of a wide range of thinkers, Christian and non-Christian, ancient and modern. It is also a book that is very readable, engaging and up to date in the matters it discusses and the examples that it gives. This a book that anyone thinking about preaching on, or writing about Ecclesiastes, will want to consult, that Christians in general will want to read to gain a deeper understanding of what makes for true happiness and that Christians should seriously consider sharing with their non-Christian friends as a user friendly way to open up a conversation about the Christian world-view. Highly recommended.

Commendations:

Andrew Wilson writes:

Few books in history have examined the subject of happiness more insightfully and honestly than Ecclesiastes. In this thoughtful and often sparkling introduction, Bobby Jamieson shows us why its ancient wisdom is exactly what we need today and how we might live in ways that benefit from it.

Abraham Kuruvilla, *From Glory to Glory: An Unnatural History of Sanctification*, Apollos, ISBN 978-1-78974-450-7, £30.00 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Abraham Kuruvilla is Professor of Christian Preaching at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the United States. His new book from Apollos is a study of the 'unnatural history' of what God has done about, and is doing about, the deadly disease called sin with which all human beings are afflicted.

In his Introduction Kuruvilla explains that:

'Natural History,' relating to diseases, is a medical term denoting 'the uninterrupted progression in an individual of the development of disease' – those 'processes and outcomes from the moment of exposure to the disease and which lead to either resolution, disability, or death.'

The starting point of Kuruvilla's book is that: 'All humans have been afflicted with a lethal disease, sin against the holy God, and that by nature, thereby negating their ability to bring glory to God.' From this starting point Kuruvilla goes on to explain the 'unnatural' (i.e. supernatural) history of how God has intervened to interrupt the progression of this deadly disease.

His book is divided in four chapters

Chapter 1, 'Sin: the disease,' sets out the:

... deadly malaise of humanity. Created to rebound to the glory of the Creator (Design) the fall of man and woman (Deviance) infected the entire species, rendering them incapable of glorifying God. And there is only one inexorable end for sinners: death, physical and eternal. In other words, the natural history of this disease is doom forever... if the affliction is allowed to run its course uninterrupted.

Chapter 2, 'Salvation: the cure,' then describes:

... the intervention of God to accomplish the remission of this deadly disease of sin. The redemption that took place because of the atoning work of God incarnate, Jesus Christ, in his life, death and resurrection, accomplished the liberation of humankind (Deliverance) as he united believers to himself – baptised to him and bound to him. Thus was restored their capacity to bring glory to God by their new lives as they manifested good works of godly dispositions, deeds and discourses (Destiny). The course of *natural history* was changed into that of an *unnatural history*.

Chapter 3, 'Spirit: the healer,' goes on to explain:

... the ministry of the Third Person of the Godhead, the Lord and Giver of Life, the work of the divine physician that enables and effectuates this consequential and momentous alteration of the cause of the disease. Though believers have been united to Jesus Christ, they still bear the 'flesh, that immoral agent serving the evil authority of 'sin' (the personified entity controlling humanity, likely demonic). But these delivered ones are now also indwelt by the Holy Spirit, thus raising the spectre of a struggle that roils them – their still-present sinful tendency to follow the flesh vs their newly-granted inclination to submit to the Spirit (Discord). Attempting to subdue the flesh on their own contrivances and with their own exertions is an endeavour bound to fail: following the flesh produces sins (as opposed to following the Spirit and producing righteousness). But, in the grace of God, what they could not do themselves – obey God and his law, his 'righteous requirement' (Rom 8:4) – the Holy Spirit does (Doctor), empowering the people of God to fulfil that 'righteous requirement' of the law, as he overcomes their weakness and incapacity, and enables them to 'overwhelmingly conquer' (8:37) thus pleasing their Father God as his adopted children.

Finally, chapter 4, 'Scripture: the prescription,':

... introduces the word of God as the agent that reveals how the people of God should live ... i.e. what God's righteous requirement is (Demand), for divine glory to be regained, so to speak. God's word, pericope by pericope, outlines the responsibility of these in relationship with God to obey their creator and glorify (Duty).

Since the righteous requirement of God was perfectly fulfilled only by the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, each pericope of scripture is a depiction of a pixel of the image of Jesus Christ to which humans are to be aligned. After all, that is God's goal for his people – to be conformed to the image of his son (Rom 8:29). Thus is God glorified!

Martin's opinion:

Kuruvilla's book is an excellent introduction to the heart of the Christian faith. Many people today, inside as well as outside the Church, simply do not understand what the Christian faith is about. Kuruvilla's book tells them. His striking image of sin as an inherited and inescapable disease which, if unchecked, progresses inexorably towards temporal death in this world and eternal death in the world to come, and which can only be cured through an 'unnatural' intervention helps make sense of the central Christian doctrines of original sin and salvation through the work of God the Son for us and God the Holy Spirit in us. Furthermore his account of Scripture as the prescription that states what the cure is and what it means to accept it, helpfully explains what Christian theology means when it talks about the authority of Scripture, and why it is the height of folly to disregard what Scripture says. This book will be a great resource for students beginning the study of theology at university or theological college and for ordinary lay Christians who want to understand the Christian faith more clearly. A book to read, to ponder, and lend to others.

Commendations:

Gregg Allison comments

Reflecting Kuruvilla's homiletical and hermeneutical expertise, *From Glory to Glory* traces the biblical story line, wonderfully framed from Sin to Salvation to Spirit to Scripture. It contains expected emphases on, for example, Scripture, which the author both brilliantly exegetes and clearly communicates through helpful visuals, but also less anticipated yet greatly appreciated treatments on, for example, the Holy Spirit as the necessary doctor-director of our sanctification. This book is readily accessible to church members, and its depth of insight will additionally attract the attention of pastors and Christian educators. Highly recommended!

Ed Shaw, *The Intimacy Deficit: Fully Enjoying God, Yourself, Others and Creation*, IVP, ISBN 978-1-78359-948-6, £11.97 (e edition also available).

Overview:

Ed Shaw is a lay Anglian minister and writer. He is Pastor of Emmanuel City Centre Church, Bristol, UK and Ministry Director at Living Out, an organisation that exists to '... encourage Christians, equip churches, and engage the world with God's plan for sexuality and identity.' Shaw is best known for his highly regarded books and articles on the relationship between Christian discipleship and sexuality, but as Shaw explains at the beginning of the Introduction, his new book is not:

... a book about sexuality and/or sex. That might be a relief: they might have scarred you, or they might just bore you. If that's a disappointment, the good news is that I've already written two books on those subjects. Instead, this book is more important and perhaps more controversial than anything to do with sex: its main point is that your greatest need in life is intimacy, a sense of oneness and connectedness both outside of yourself and with yourself, but *not* of the sexual kind. As psychologist Eric Fromm argues above this is true of you whoever you are, wherever you come from. We all have what I'm calling an 'intimacy deficit.' If you want to enjoy your life on this planet (and beyond) you should read on and find out how it can be filled.

As he goes on to say:

This book seeks to rescue intimacy from just the bedroom and show how it can and should be experienced by all of us, all over the place, in a range of non-sexual and yet beautifully intimate relationships with God, with yourself, with others and with creation. This is so important because, as we'll discover, we were created to need intimacy in each of these four key areas. Without enjoying it in each of them, we are going to struggle to enjoy the life of fullness that we were created for.

The book consists of four pairs of chapters, each of which covers one of the four forms of intimacy noted by Shaw in his introduction, intimacy with God, ourselves, others and creation as a whole.

In the pair of chapters on intimacy with God (chapters 1 and 2), Shaw first explores intimacy with God in the light of the three key biblical images of God as father, friend and fiancé. He then looks at how suffering, happiness and sin act as 'blockers to intimacy with God' and how the study of the Psalms can act as a catalyst for renewed intimacy with God (providing his own study of Psalm 23 as a worked example).

In the pair of chapters on intimacy with ourselves (chapters 3 and 4), Shaw describes intimacy with ourselves in terms of delighting in the people we are, delighting in the fact that we are God's creatures, and delighting in the truth that we are saved from sin, united to Christ and filled with his Spirit. As in the previous pair of chapters, he goes on to note 'blockers to intimacy with yourself,' identifying these as false promises about who we can be and what we can achieve, and false humility about ourselves and our gifts. Finally, he suggests a series of 'catalysts for intimacy with yourself', namely, speaking the truth about ourselves, listening to feedback from others, noting our main passions, sharing our weakness and pain and remembering that we are God's 'divinely imagined creature, united to his perfect Son and gifted by his Holy Spirit.'

In the pair of chapters about intimacy with others (chapters 5 and 6), Shaw focusses on our need for close friendships (because this is something that is open to all of us), and looks in turn at the importance of same-sex friendships, opposite-sex friendships, friendships between people of different generations, and friendships with people who are unlike ourselves. He suggests that Christian ministry 'is about encouraging friendships' and that 'those without friends shouldn't be Christian ministers' ('If the people we are considering for church leadership don't have friends – people they deeply connect to in life-giving positive ways – we should be wary of appointing them').

Shaw identifies the 'blockers' to close friendships as fear, pride, distorted ideas of masculinity, falsely romantic views of what relationships involve, perfectionism, constantly moving where we live, and undue busyness, and suggests as catalysts for the development of close friendships intentionality and vulnerability.

In the pair of chapters on intimacy with creation (chapters 7 and 8), Shaw writes about the importance of appreciating the beauty of the world, recalling that it is God's creation, and obeying the 'creation mandate' in Genesis 1:28 by 'making people' through physical and spiritual parenting and 'making things' that develop creation in different ways and by so doing bring into being new forms of beauty. He identifies the 'blockers to intimacy with creation' as ugliness, idolatry, failing to value the world that God has made, and not making time to appreciate its beauty. He notes that intimacy with creation 'is actually one of the best things we can do to increase our intimacy with God, the most important relationship of them all,' and explains that he is trying to walk more and enjoy poetry as his personal catalysts for further developing his intimacy with creation.

In his concluding chapter Shaw reiterates the fact '...that we have been created to enjoy intimacy, a sense of unity and oneness through connection with God, ourselves, others and creation' and provides an 'intimacy audit' consisting of a series of questions that challenge us to think about where we have a deficit in these key relationships and how we could enjoy them more.

Martin's opinion:

Commendations:

Ruth Bushyager has written:

In an age of chronic disconnection, Ed carefully pastors the reader through a journey that is refreshingly honest, grounded and hopeful. His insights help us discern the intimacy gaps in our own lives and equip us with practical steps towards truly living life in all its fullness.