

# Latimer Trust

## Monthly Reading List – April 2021

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
Michael Allen	<i>T&amp;T Clark Reader in John Webster</i>	A good introductory volume which will help readers who are new to the work of the important Evangelical theologian, the late Professor John Webster. Useful to anyone interested in contemporary Anglican Evangelical theology.
Craig Carter	<i>Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism</i>	Carter argues for retrieving the classical Christian way of understanding the nature of God, setting out what he calls Reformed Thomism. Not for someone who is new to the subject – but recommended for anyone who wants to think about the merits of trinitarian classical theism and whether relational theism has been unwittingly adopted by English Anglicans.
Stephen Meyer	<i>The Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe</i>	Meyer looks at why the intelligent designer behind the development of life on earth should be seen in terms of the God of the Christian tradition. It shows how what we now know about the universe and life on earth makes the 'God hypothesis' the most plausible theoretical explanation of it. Not for the faint-hearted – but highly recommended for anyone who wants a detailed, comprehensive statement of the case for the 'God hypothesis'.
Rachel Rooney and Jessica Ahlberg	<i>My body is me!</i>	An upbeat, rhyming picture book for 3–6-year-olds, produced by Transgender Trend which aims to draw attention to the danger of transgender ideology. Introduces children to workings of human body and differences between boys and girls. Not a Christian book (and some may not agree with all the content) but it is recommended as there isn't a specifically Christian alternative on the market at the moment.
Rowan Williams	<i>Candles in the Dark: Faith, Hope and Love in a Time of Pandemic</i>	A collection of 26 short meditations on various topics by Archbishop Rowan Williams, intended to provide resources of compassion, trust and energy to share with a society which is burdened. He brings a fresh angle, demonstrating meaning and relevance of Christian faith. Strongly recommended.

Michael Allen, *T&T Clark Reader in John Webster*

T&T Clark, ISBN 9780567687500, £24.99 (hardback and e editions also available)

#### Overview:

The late Professor John Webster (1955–2016) was a Church of England priest and theologian. He began his career as Chaplain and Tutor at St John's College, Durham before going on to teach systematic theology at Wycliffe College, Toronto. From 1996–2003, he was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford, from 2003–13 he held the Chair of Systematic Theology at the University of Aberdeen, and from 2013 until his death he was Professor of Divinity at the University of St Andrews.

Webster was a theologian in the Evangelical Anglican tradition who published a large number of books and articles, as well as being the co-founder of the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. He is probably best known for his writings on the works of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth and the German Lutheran theologian Eberhard Jungel, but he also wrote a number of important works of theology in his own right, including *Word and Church: Essays in Church Dogmatics* (T & T Clark, 2001), *Holiness* (Eerdmans, 2003) and *Holy Scripture: A dogmatic sketch* (CUP, 2003).

Unlike other theologians of his generation, such as Alister McGrath, Oliver O'Donovan or Rowan Williams, Webster was never really appreciated during his lifetime either by the Church of England as a whole, or by those in his own Evangelical tradition, and the importance of his work continues to be overlooked five years after his death. Hopefully, this new reader from T&T Clark will help to redress this unjust neglect.

The reader is edited by Michael Allen who is Professor of Systematic Theology and Academic Dean at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando in the United States.

The reader begins with an essay by Allen entitled 'Reading John Webster: An Introduction'. This contains what is described as a 'biographical, chronological and topical survey of Webster's theological development' which 'notes his shifting conversation partners and his abiding theological principles'.

This essay is then followed by a selection of ten essays by Webster himself which represent the breadth of his work. These essays are:

1. Theological Theology
2. Biblical Reasoning
3. The Immensity and Ubiquity of God
4. Christology. Theology. Economy. The Place of Christology in Systematic Theology
5. Non ex Aequo: God's Relation to Creatures
6. 'It Was the Will of the Lord to Bruise Him': Soteriology and the Doctrine of God
7. Eschatology and Anthropology
8. Christ, Church, and Reconciliation
9. Evangelical Freedom
10. Intellectual Patience

Allen places each of these essays in context by providing each with a short introduction, and by giving footnotes which clarify key terms, historical or exegetical arguments, or polemical emphases.

The book finishes with a list of Webster's works in chronological order for the benefit of those readers who want to read more of his works for themselves.

#### Martin's opinion:

Why should people read this book? First, because despite the neglect from which his work has suffered, Webster is a major Evangelical theologian whose works provide a wide-ranging account of the Christian faith

and the character of the Christian life, based on the Bible, the Fathers, the Reformed writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the works of Barth and Jungel, an account that is both intellectually satisfying and spiritually beneficial. Secondly, because a good introductory volume will help readers who are approaching Webster's work for the first time and Allen's excellent reader provides just such an introduction. To put it simply, people should read Webster, and they should read Allen as a good way into doing so. This is a book that should be read by everyone interested in contemporary Anglican Evangelical theology.

Craig Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: recovering trinitarian classical theism*

Baker Academic, ISBN 9781540963307, £24.99 (hardback and e editions also available)

Overview:

Craig Carter is Professor of Theology at Tyndale University in Toronto and Theologian in Residence at Westney Heights Baptist Church in Ajax, Ontario. In his previous well-regarded book, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition* (Baker Academic, 2018), Carter made the case for retrieving the classical Christian way of reading the Bible. In his new book, he makes the case for retrieving the classical Christian way of understanding the nature of God.

In the prologue, entitled 'How my mind has changed,' Carter explains that at the beginning of his theological career:

I had more or less swallowed a relational view of how God interacts with the world, which sees a two-way influence between God and the world, with both affecting each other. I had also accepted the idea that the relational understanding of God's essence was rooted in the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity as expounded by the Cappadocian Fathers. The idea was that the essence of God is relationality, or love between the members of the godhead, which presupposed a concept of three persons, each with a will and each in a relationship to the other two. Thus social trinitarianism grounded relational theism. I wanted to write a book about how this understanding of God provides a basis for social ethics. For a time, it seemed to me that all this was a profound way of rooting the doctrines of the church and the kingdom of God in the very nature of God himself. But up to this point, I had never thought that doing so meant deviating from Nicene orthodoxy.

However, as he studied further:

Eventually I came to the conclusion that the twentieth-century revisionist theologians who were advocating various forms of relational theism and subjecting classical theism to withering critique were themselves snared in highly questionable modernist philosophical assumptions and were in danger of losing touch with the classical orthodox tradition and the biblical roots of that tradition.

What he came to see was that:

Relational theisms such as process theology and panentheism represent a drift toward pantheism, and the various forms of social trinitarianism and theistic personalism represent a drift toward polytheism. The pressure on Christian theologians to move in these directions is not really coming from the Bible. It is coming from the desire to articulate a doctrine of God that makes sense to a culture in which the concept of divine transcendence has been rejected as unscientific. The choice, it seems to me, is between a Nicene doctrine of God that affirms the transcendence of God and a modern doctrine of God that leaves transcendence behind.

The purpose of his book is to advocate a return to the Nicene doctrine of God in the form which Carter describes as the Reformed Thomism 'exemplified by Reformed scholastics like Francis Turretin, Puritans like John Owen, and in our day the late John Webster.' Reformed Thomism, he explains:

...is a form of Augustinian theology developed during the Protestant Reformation that views the doctrine of God outlined by Thomas Aquinas in the first forty-three questions of the *Summa Theologica* as an exemplary expression of the trinitarian classical theism at the heart of classic Nicene orthodoxy. Reformed Thomism affirms the Reformation *solas* [*sola gratia, sola fide, sola Christus, sola Scriptura* and *soli deo Gloria*] and views them as a needed correction of medieval

errors, especially in soteriology, ecclesiology, and sacramental theology. Reformed Thomism understands the *solas* to be more firmly grounded in the Nicene doctrine of God than were the medieval deviations that the *solas* were designed to oppose. To preserve orthodoxy, Reformed Thomism finds it necessary to grapple with certain metaphysical doctrines, such as *creatio ex nihilo*, as it contemplates the being of God and all things in relation to God. Ultimately, *creatio ex nihilo* is the foundation and source of the great gospel truth “grace alone.” Reformed Thomism embraces mystery and analogical language for God and rejects rationalism and univocal language for God. Reformed Thomism distinguishes conceptually between the immanent and economic Trinity, while affirming that there is only one God in three persons both in eternity and in God’s own self-revelation in history.

In the main body of his book Carter sets out the case for Reformed Thomism’s view of God, showing how it is grounded in a right interpretation of Scripture.

The main body the book is in three parts:

Part 1 – ‘Defining Trinitarian Classical Theism’ – looks at classical Orthodoxy and the rise of Relational Theism, and then explores the question ‘What Is Trinitarian Classical Theism?’

Part 2 – ‘The Biblical Roots of Trinitarian Classical Theism’ – considers how best to interpret Isaiah 40–48 theologically and then looks in turn at ‘God as the Transcendent Creator’ (Isaiah 40), ‘God as the Sovereign Lord of History’ (Isaiah 41–48) and ‘God as the One Who Alone Is to Be Worshiped’ (Isaiah 41–48)

Part 3 – ‘Trinitarian Classical Theism in History’ – explores ‘The Biblical Character of Pro-Nicene Theology’ and ‘*Creatio ex nihilo* and the Rejection of Mythology’ before finishing with the provocative question ‘Do We Worship the God of the Bible?’

These three parts are then followed by an Epilogue, ‘Why the Church does not change its mind’ and an Appendix, ‘Twenty-Five Theses on Trinitarian Classical Theism’.

Martin’s opinion:

As the quotations from Carter which I have given above indicate, this is not a book for the average lay Christian in the pew, or indeed for those who are just beginning their theological studies. The book assumes that its readers will already possess a good working knowledge of the Bible and the Christian tradition and those who do not possess such knowledge will rapidly become lost. However, those who do have such knowledge will benefit from reading what Carter has to say. Those who are already Reformed Thomists will benefit by being helped to achieve a deeper understanding of their own tradition and its roots in what Scripture teaches us about God. Those who are not will be challenged to think about what they believe and why, and whether relational theism can be maintained in the face of the evidence for an alternative viewpoint which Carter puts forward. It is especially important that those in the Church of England read this book since relational theism seems to have become the assumed view of God among most English Anglicans (regardless of churchmanship) and their attention needs to be drawn to the fact that this is not the only (nor necessarily the best) way of thinking about who God is. Strongly recommended.

Commendations:

Christopher Holmes has written:

‘We have lots to learn from Carter’s wonderful description and celebration of the biblical and theological merits of trinitarian classical theism. Carter writes with eloquence and humility, leading the reader toward an astonished inhabitation of the universal church’s confession of the transcendent and sovereign Lord. Few books lead one to worship as overtly as Carter’s, calling us to abandon shallow relational portraits of God in favor of delighting in the extraordinary grandeur of God.’

Stephen Meyer, *The Return of the God Hypothesis: three scientific discoveries that reveal the mind behind the universe*

HarperOne, ISBN 9780062071507, £21.61 (e and audio editions also available)

Overview:

Stephen Meyer is an American scientist and writer and is the Director of the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute in Seattle in the United States, 'an institutional hub for scientists, educators, and inquiring minds who think that nature supplies compelling evidence of intelligent design.'

In his two previous best-selling books *Signature in the Cell* (HarperOne, 2010) and *Darwin's Doubt* (Bravo Ltd, 2014), Meyer argues that the evidence we have for the development of life on earth points to this development being the result of the activity of an intelligent designer rather than being the result of the blind activity of irrational natural forces. However, in these books he does not speculate about the identity of this designer. In his words: 'I did not attempt to identify the designing intelligence responsible for the origin of the information present in living organisms or to prove the existence of God.'

In his new book he takes the further step of looking at why the intelligent designer behind the development of life on earth should be seen in terms of the God of the Christian tradition. In Meyer's view there are three 'key scientific discoveries' that support a belief in God:

(1) evidence from cosmology suggesting that the material universe had a beginning; (2) evidence from physics showing that *from the beginning* the universe has been 'finely tuned' to allow for the existence of life; and (3) evidence from biology establishing that *since the beginning* large amounts of new functional genetic information have arisen in our biosphere to make new forms of life possible – implying as I had argued before, the activity of a designing intelligence.

As the title of his new book indicates, in it he gives a detailed explanation of the significance of each of these three discoveries.

The book is in five parts.

Part I – 'The rise and fall of the God hypothesis' – looks at how modern science arose on the basis of the Judeo-Christian belief in a creator God, and how and why the 'God hypothesis' has nevertheless come to be largely rejected within modern science as a result of the growing influence of the philosophical position known as 'scientific materialism.'

Part II – 'The return of the God hypothesis' – looks at how the three discoveries listed above point to the existence of an intelligent designer behind the existence of the universe and of life on earth.

Part III – 'Inference to the best metaphysical explanation' – looks at how to assess a metaphysical hypothesis, and why the evidence we have points to the 'God hypothesis' being the best explanation for the beginning of the universe, the design of the universe and the design of life.

Part IV – 'Conjectures and refutations' – considers alternative explanations of the evidence and explains why they are less satisfactory than the 'God hypothesis'.

Part V – 'Conclusions' – looks at the criticism that the sort of argument that Meyer puts forward is a 'God-of-the-gaps' argument that uses the 'God hypothesis' to fill in the current gaps in our knowledge, gaps that better knowledge would fill. In response Meyer declares that:

Though the argument here does concern events that confront materialistic explanations of the origin of the universe and life with causal discontinuities or explanatory gaps, it does not affirm the existence or activity of God solely on the basis of those gaps. Instead, it uses straightforward

considerations of causal parsimony and other theoretical virtues to assess the explanatory power of competing metaphysical hypotheses and to present theism as an inference to the best explanation, not an argument from ignorance.

This part also sets out Meyer's own journey to the acceptance of theism and concludes with the observation:

Not only does theism solve a lot of philosophical problems, but empirical evidence from the material world points powerfully to the reality of a great mind behind the universe. Our beautiful, expanding, and finely tuned universe, and the exquisite, integrated and informational complexity of living organisms bear witness to the reality of a transcendent intelligence – a personal God.

Martin's opinion:

This book is a detailed and finely argued restatement of the argument for the existence of God from the existence and nature of the natural world. It shows how what we now know about the universe and life on earth makes the 'God hypothesis' the most plausible theoretical explanation of why all things are as they are. Of course, this book does not, nor does it attempt to, prove the existence of the Triune biblical God, but what it does do is clear the way to belief in the biblical God by showing the inadequacy of the arguments for an atheist view of the universe. Because of its length and detail, this is not a book for the faint-hearted, but for anyone who really wants to understand the scientific case for the existence of God should definitely read it. This is now the standard up-to-date statement of the case for the 'God hypothesis' and as many as people should study it, learn from it, and commend it to others.

Commendations:

John Walton writes :

'Meyer's book is a masterclass, lucidly exploring every alternative from multiple points of view, while persuasively showing that the God Hypothesis is the best explanation of our finely-tuned, information-rich universe. It does irreparable damage to atheist rhetoric.'

Rachel Rooney and Jessica Ahlberg, *My body is me!*  
Transgender Trend, ISBN 9781527251540, £6.99

One of the major issues we are facing in society at the moment is the growth in the number of children and young people who are identifying themselves, or being identified by others, as being transgender. There are two elements to what is happening. First, the idea is being put forward that there can be a difference between children's bodies and who they truly are (so there is talk about a little boy inside a little girl's body and vice versa). Secondly, young children are being identified as transgender because they like to engage in activities typically associated with members of the opposite sex, such as little boys who want to dress up as ballerinas, or little girls who want to be cowboys.

From a Christian perspective, these ideas are simply untrue since children's identity as boys or girls is determined by the type of body God has given them and cannot be determined by the kind of activities children want to engage in. A little boy who wants to dress as a ballerina is simply that.

The problem is that children are now being exposed to these misleading ideas from a very early age, through the media, through the education system, and through their peer groups and there are a very few child friendly resources to help counter them.

#### Overview:

Fortunately, the campaign group Transgender Trend, which exists to draw attention to the dangers of transgender ideology, has stepped into the breach by producing *My Body is Me!*

This is an upbeat, rhyming picture book, aimed at 3–6-year-olds, which is written by Rachel Rooney, who is an award-winning poet and children's author and is illustrated by the well-known children's illustrator Jessica Ahlberg (see the text and pictures below). It introduces children to the workings of the human body, and the biological differences between boys and girls. It celebrates similarities and differences between them while challenging stereotypes about how little boys and girls should behave. It also aims to give children a positive self-image and to foster self-care skills. The text is also inclusive for children with physical or sensory disabilities making the point that bodies come in all sorts of shapes and sizes.





#### Martin's opinion:

This is not a Christian book, and Christian parents may feel uncomfortable with the depiction of a same-sex couple as parents, but overall this is an important resource which Christian parents and other Christian working with small children should buy and use, particularly as there does not appear to be any specifically Christian alternative on the market at the moment.

Copies of the book can be ordered from the Transgender Trend website at <https://www.transgendertrend.com> where you can also buy worksheets to go with the book and see a video of Rooney reading the book.

#### Commendations:

A review on the Good Reads website declares:

'This is a delightful book which all three of my granddaughters have loved. They enjoy the rhyme and the funny illustrations. I really like the message that our bodies – whatever they look like – are amazing, strong, useful, funny and valuable... just like each and every one of us! Children and young people are surrounded by messages about 'perfecting' the way they look and conforming to limiting stereotypes, with all the associated impact this has on their emotional and psychological well-being. This joyful little book reminds children to accept and celebrate themselves and each other just as they are. What's even better is that Rachel Rooney has done so without sounding 'preachy' or making children feel an adult is lecturing them. Her lovely light touch is beautifully complemented by the lively illustrations. I'd recommend it highly for small children to share with parents, grandparents and older siblings.'

Rowan Williams, *Candles in the Dark: Faith, Hope and Love in a Time of Pandemic*  
SPCK, ISBN 9780281085965, £6.99 (e and audio editions also available)

#### Overview:

It can be persuasively argued that there are two versions of Archbishop Rowan Williams. There is Williams the author of big tomes of academic theology whose work is for those who already have knowledge of the fields they cover and demands concentrated attention if it is to be properly understood. There is also Williams the preacher and popular writer whose work provides a wonderfully simple, lucid, yet profound introduction to Christian belief and what it means to live rightly in the light of that belief.

In *Candles in the Dark* we encounter the second Williams – Williams the lucid and compelling preacher of the Christian faith.

The book consists of a collection twenty-six short meditations on various topics written for the congregation at St Clement's church, Cambridge, from 26 March to 17 September last year. As Williams explains in his preface to the collection:

...these meditations – brief and scrappy as they may be – are offered in the hope that our Christian communities will continue to find resources of compassion, trust and energy to share with a society and a world struggling with what seem unmanageable burdens and impossibly complex decisions.

The fact that the book is a collection of originally separate pieces written for specific occasions means that it is impossible to say what *the* argument of the book is, and it is impossible in a short review like this to attempt to summarise what Williams says in each of the meditations. What I shall do instead is to give extracts from three of the meditations to give a flavour of the whole.

The first meditation in the collection – 'A change has begun' – dates from 26 March 2020. In it Williams considers the story of the Annunciation, 'the real beginning of the human life of Jesus, that microscopic change in the physiology of a young woman in Nazareth on which the history of the world turns.'

Williams comments that the setting for this on the Annunciation is a season of Lent in the midst of a pandemic, in which he and his readers are:

...looking around for signs of a transfigured world; looking around what seems a wasteland, with no timetable to reassure us that things will be back to normal anytime soon. We can't do what we'd do normally to show our devotion; we can't gather in celebration and share the food and drink of God's Kingdom in the atmosphere of joy and beauty that we take for granted in worship. We can't even sing together.

Nevertheless, he says:

...the story that began in Mary's body, that began even further back in God's call to Adam and Abraham and Moses, is a story that has begun in us. We have been brought into that new reality, whether or not we feel it stirring, whether or not we see the signs of its presence in the ways we've got used to. The sacramental life of Christ's body is alive in us; even if all we can do is associate ourselves with the celebration of the Eucharist somewhere else, through some sort of remote electronic contact, the life is there, the connexion is there.

And as we contemplate the coming months, not knowing when we can breathe again, it's worth thinking about how already the foundations have been laid for whatever new opportunities God has for us on the far side of his crisis. The small actions we take to protect one another, to keep opening the channels of love and gift, volunteering, if we're able, to support someone less mobile or less safe, finding new ways of communicating, even simply meditating on how our society might become

more just and secure – all this can be the hidden beginning of something fuller and more honest for us all in the future.

The God who begins the story of his world-shattering life in the midst of creation, with that tiny imperceptible change in the body of Mary, is still a God who works with tiny and hidden changes. In each of us, body and spirit, that same God is working now, so that Christmas and Good Friday and Easter will come alive in us, in ways we can't begin to imagine.

A later meditation, dating from 9 July 2020, is entitled 'Power to be free'. In it Williams considers why the liturgical calendar of the Church of England commemorates Thomas More and John Fisher – 'two people who you might say died in order to stop the Church of England coming into existence.'

'Why exactly,' asks Williams:

...should we celebrate them, alongside those who died under Henry's daughter Mary for their refusal to accept the authority of the Pope? Surely, they wouldn't thank us for it! Are we just reducing these figures to examples of generic bravery in witnessing to their faith – never mind what that faith was?

Williams' answer is that the reason why these figures are worth celebrating is because as Christians:

We long for freedom from constraint so that there will be more space for active love. And we resist arbitrary power because it stifles that love.

More, Fisher, Cranmer, Tyndale, all the martyrs on both sides of the Reformation, died because they felt compelled to resist the claims of naked power, and believed with all their hearts that the power they denied was an enemy to the free love of God and to the transforming grace that would re-create us in God's image. Celebrating Christians who died on opposing sides of a great and tragic controversy may look odd – or perhaps just a bit of typical Anglican hedging our bets. But what we celebrate is the intensity of a faith that makes it clear what you must deny: which is all kinds of power that are too fearful and (in the long run) too *weak* to face challenge.

The truest human power is – as Russell Hoban puts it in his extraordinary novel about post-nuclear Britain, *Riddley Walker* – the freedom to 'get out of the way,' so that the healing and releasing act of God can come through. And in some way every true martyr's death is about that. Even the austere Thomas More on the scaffold prayed that he and his killers might yet 'merrily meet in heaven;' he died with the hope of healing in his eyes.

A third meditation – entitled 'At home in the world' – dated 23 July 2020, considers how we can change the behaviour of human beings so that they act in appropriate ways. Williams observes that as human beings 'we act because we want' and then comments:

Our Christian faith doesn't tell us that we should not want or long for anything, that desire is evil. It does tell us, though, that any kind of wanting that is at odds with the grain of what's actually there, whether in the material world, or in the lives of other human beings, is doomed – and finally self-destructive. We have to learn that underneath what we feel about all the things on which we sometimes get fixated, there lies a basic human longing to be 'at home' with what truly is – with one another, with our Maker, with the raw stuff of the world. In the terms used by many early Christian theologians, we have to learn about the logos that unites us – the eternal energy of God in sharing life and making harmony. It is an everlasting reality in God's life, and it is also what God shares with creation (as the beginning of St John's Gospel makes clear).

And it is what comes fully to life in the world in Jesus. What he does in the cross and the resurrection and the giving of the Spirit is to open our eyes and transform our hearts so that we can see just a bit of what it might be to see our own longings as bound up with the joy and fulfilment of every other

part of creation. When our eyes are open like that, we can understand better what sort of work we are called to do and what sort of tools we need – work that grows out of the patience to search for a vision that all can recognise as life-giving, tools that fit into a human hand and know how to find their way to the place where they have the simplest and best leverage.

#### Martin's opinion:

What these extracts show is Williams' ability to approach topics from a fresh angle and thereby enable his readers to appreciate the meaning and relevance of the Christian faith in a new and unexpected way. Many of Williams' readers will not share the exact Eastern Orthodox influenced version of Anglo-Catholic Anglicanism that shapes his thinking, but all Christians, Evangelicals included, will find many things in this collection that will help them to deepen their faith and widen their vision. This is an excellent collection of meditations that would be well worth fitting into a daily pattern of prayer and Bible reading. Strongly recommended.

#### Commendations:

##### Nicky Gumbel comments:

'Rowan Williams is one of the great theologians of our time. He is also an inspiring teacher whose godly wisdom helps us understand profound truths.'