

Singing the life

The story of a family in the shadow of cancer
Elizabeth Bryan

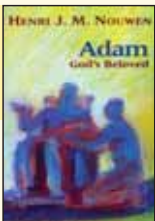
- Vermilion 2007
- £12.99 Hb 306pp
- ISBN 0 09191 7158

Elizabeth Bryan was a much loved paediatrician, acclaimed internationally for establishing the Multiple Births Foundation, and a personal friend. This book tells the story of how the dominant cancer gene BRCA1 has been variably expressed across her extended family, finally and fatally affecting her own pancreas. She advises genetic screening for patients who report 'cancer in the family' – affected relatives need sensitive counselling about surveillance, prophylactic surgery and the controversial issue of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis.

Without self-pity, Elizabeth describes her family's turmoil as

one sister died and another endured bilateral breast cancer. Yet, despite the clouds, her story breathes not gloom but hope. Elizabeth courageously reiterates – and illustrates – her dying sister's conclusion: 'This is all happening so that love may grow'. By echoing Thomas Merton's prayer, we are shown how faith too can grow: 'I will trust you always; though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone'. This is the keynote of *Singing the life*.

Janet Goodall is Emeritus Consultant Paediatrician in Stoke



Adam - God's Beloved

Henri J M Nouwen

- Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd 1997
- £7.95 Pb 128pp
- ISBN 0 23252 2464

While at first it seemed quite obvious who was handicapped and who was not, living together day in and day out made the boundaries less clear.' So writes Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Roman Catholic priest who left academia to live at L'Arche Daybreak, a community centred on core members with disabilities.

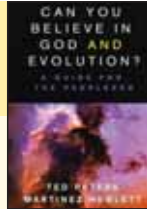
This short book reflects on the life of Adam, a young man who needed help with all his day-to-day activities and could not talk. Nouwen became Adam's carer, reluctantly at first because he saw him as someone 'very different' from himself. Over time, however, the relationship

transformed Henri. Adam became his friend and guide, helping him to see more clearly the face of God and to understand his own limitations.

We are used to a Christian viewpoint that encourages us to speak out on behalf of the vulnerable and to care for the weak. We are less familiar with Nouwen's message that God may be speaking to us through these people, if we are willing to receive the gifts they offer us.

Nouwen intended to write a book about the Apostle's Creed. But Adam died, so prompting him to write this moving account instead. I am glad he did.

Emma Hayward is a GP in Leicester



Can you believe in God and Evolution?

A Guide for the Perplexed
Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett

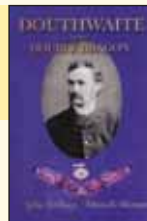
- Abingdon Press 2006
- £6.99 Pb 98pp
- ISBN 0 68733 5515

Darwin's *Origin of Species* caused a sensation on its publication in 1859. The idea that living things gradually evolve through natural selection shocked Victorian society. It called into question the previously unshakeable belief in a Creator. Theologian Ted Peters and molecular biologist Martinez Hewlett write from a genuine concern about the confusion surrounding evolution and religion and from a fear that young Christians might be put off scientific careers.

The book outlines the spectrum of views – scientific creationism, theistic evolution in the centre ground, and atheistic

materialism. The authors believe God built into the Big Bang the possibility of evolution from inanimate matter to life and eventually to conscious life. Unfortunately, there are exaggerations (eg. 'transitional fossils are discovered almost daily') as well as a tendency to attribute all medical successes to the neo-Darwinian paradigm. None of the outstanding biomedical discoveries of the past century depended on guidance from neo-Darwinian evolution. Nevertheless, this book provides a useful synopsis of the various views in the 'Evolution Wars'.

Norman Nevin is retired Professor of Medical Genetics in Belfast



Douthwaite of the Double Dragon

John Owen and Diana Morgan

- Braiswick 2007
- £9.95 Pb 176pp
- ISBN 1 89803 0138

Written by descendants with access to extensive letters, this is an account of the life of one of the China Inland Mission's most distinguished doctors.

Such records provide valuable accounts for those interested in the history of Chinese medical missions. Anyone thinking of going to China should read it to set their own service in a wider context. The life of any successful man or woman has much to teach us all, especially if that life is committed to Christ and the gospel. The courage of Arthur Douthwaite and his two wives (he died aged 50 before he could marry his third bride-to-be) is a challenge to the complacency

that often passes for Christian discipleship today. Arthur's constant grappling with conflicting demands – his heavy clinical load versus his strong sense of calling to preach the gospel – has a contemporary ring. His published research in the *China Medical Missionary Journal* reminds us of the huge contribution medical missionaries have made to the progress of medical science. The Double Dragon? Well, you'll have to read the book to find out. Do so, and be reminded of the shortness of life and the sweetness of heaven.

Peter and Audrey Pattison are retired medical missionaries now living in Brockenhurst



The Busy Christian's Guide to Busyness Tim Chester

- IVP 2006
- £7.99 Pb 160pp
- ISBN 1 84474 1249

There can't be many Christian doctors who don't struggle with busyness. But what can we do about it? Tim Chester's book could easily be subtitled, 'tough on busyness, tough on the causes of busyness'. Sure, there is some good advice on how to pack more into our busy days by being more organised, but the main focus is not on *doing more*, but on making clear decisions about *what* we're spending time on, and *why*. Chester urges us to move away from focusing merely on our 'to do' lists – 'Instead of measuring our lives in terms of tasks done and left undone, we should evaluate them in terms of time well spent or not well

spent'. The second half looks at specific ways that busyness can reflect spiritual pathology – needing to prove ourselves, fear of people's expectations, needing to be in control, preferring pressure, funding extravagant lifestyles and being enslaved by 'living life to the max'. None of these topics made me shout out 'That's totally me!' However, I certainly recognised several tendencies in my life, and each of these chapters has helpful advice and biblical reflection. This short, helpful book really could help you sort out your life.

Mark Pickering is CMF Head of Student Ministries and a GP in London



The Traveller's Good Health Guide Dr Ted Lankester

- Sheldon Press 2006
- £10.99 Pb 320pp
- ISBN 0 85969 9914

This is no ordinary travel health guide. It's a personal one with medical advice for sending organisations, support for stress and burnout on the field, and a short textbook of tropical diseases thrown in for good measure. Simple enough for non-health professionals without patronising professionals, this excellent book caters for the longer-term vocational concerns of a missionary audience while not overlooking the different values and risks of travellers with different worldviews. For example, although the importance of sexual abstinence or mutual monogamy is emphasised, condom use is also promoted vigorously. A further

one-tenth of the book is devoted to malaria, the primary tropical health problem for British travellers. Increasingly, travellers are not the fit, healthy young sorts without pre-existing medical conditions. Obtaining appropriate advice for travellers with health issues – such as asthma, diabetes and pregnancy – can be bewildering. This book dispenses much wisdom on these conditions. Equally valuable are the chapters on managing stress and reverse culture shock. Perhaps the chapter on security is a little too brief, but otherwise it is hard to fault such a comprehensive book.

David Pitches is a consultant in public health in the Congo



Approaching the End A theological exploration of death and dying David Albert Jones

- Oxford University Press 2007
- £55.00 Hb 242pp
- ISBN 0 19928 7155

This scholarly work by a professor of bioethics looks at two questions: 'How can we live well in the face of death?' and 'When is it ethically permissible to deliberately end human life?' It examines the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and the twentieth century theologian Karl Rahner. It covers New Testament and some Old Testament teaching along the way, as the scriptural index shows. It also touches on such unlikely subjects as virginity, marriage and angels!

The teaching of Ambrose is summarised as seeing physical death as a good thing. Augustine saw physical death as 'good for the good, bad for the bad' (in contrast to the 'second death'

which is not good for anyone). Aquinas considers death to be natural in one way (because we are animals) but unnatural in another, as we have a soul 'which is of itself immortal...so that immortality is more natural to human beings than to other animals'. Rahner views death as both something suffered and to be achieved. Though primarily a theologian's book, *Approaching the End* will interest CMF members for its discussion of practical issues such as suicide, assisted suicide, euthanasia, withholding and withdrawing treatment and sustaining unconscious patients.

Trevor Stammers is a GP and lecturer at St Mary's College in Twickenham



The Shepherd is my Lord A doctor reflects on the twenty-third psalm Janet Goodall

- CMF 2007
- £8.00 + p&p Pb 140pp
- ISBN 978 0906 747377

Janet and I met 50 years ago, at medical school in Sheffield, and I have always admired her Christian walk. Her book on Psalm 23 certainly exalts the Shepherd in refreshing and challenging ways.

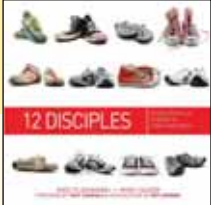
She approaches this subject as a gifted paediatrician but also as a person with a profound knowledge of sheep and shepherds. I like her reference to a favourite saying of shepherds – a sheep's worst enemy is another sheep!

Love of her Shepherd has been Janet's life-long inspiration. This is demonstrated in her love and esteem for children and her dedication in research and work

for these 'whole persons'. In this book, she looks afresh at her favourite psalm and, along the way, shares stories about Christian friends and colleagues. Time and again, she focuses on their humility, which reflects the character of the Shepherd. She also draws rich personal applications from her personal walk with the Shepherd.

While this devotional and reflective work will be of natural interest to medics, *The Shepherd is my Lord* has broader appeal. It really is worth reading just one more book on Psalm 23!

John Davies is a retired GP living in London



12 Disciples
Young People's Stories of Crisis and Faith
Andy Flannagan and Ann Calver

- Monarch Publications 2007
- £7.99 Pb 256pp
- ISBN 1 85424 8014

Have you ever thought, 'If only God would *do* something?' Here is a book about young people – often in a mess – and the God who really does act.

Andy Flannagan, CMF member and one-time editor of *Nucleus*, and Anne Calver have pulled together twelve amazing life stories from their myriad experiences, including those at Youth For Christ – tales of teenage pregnancy, self-doubt, Caesarean section, drugs, and even death.

Also, the two authors have woven in another astonishing story, that of the stumbling disciple Peter being guided skilfully by Jesus. I frequently

found myself, getting up from a read, being prompted to *do something*. As an example: Peter did get wet when he tried to walk on water...but at least he *did* it, before getting back into the boat. Let's remember that and give a kind word to that gutsy person who tried hard but had that sinking feeling. I have turned to *12 Disciples* for inspiration and encouragement and for guidance from the Lord. On one occasion, God spoke through it to me on *three* levels – about me, my family and my youth work – all at once! Forget the dull cover. Read and be inspired!

Mark Houghton is a GP in Sheffield



Suffering and Healing in America
An American doctor's view from outside
Raymond Downing

- Radcliffe Publishing 2006
- £24.95 Pb 144pp
- ISBN 1 84619 1300

This elegant collection of 16 essays is much more than a critique of the failings of healthcare in the USA. It suggests solutions and its strength is that it is written by an experienced primary care physician. The 'view from outside' comes from his years of working in Africa and in particularly poverty stricken parts of the USA. He uses fascinating metaphors from Greek mythology and frequent quotes and stories for illustration. Later in the book he uses the Bible explicitly, and his perspective is always implicitly Christian, but people of different faiths and none could read this book cover to cover with great profit and no offence.

There are both evidence based and anecdotal assessments of 'medicalisation' in the US and the message is summed up by Professor Pust in the Foreword: 'America's societal willingness to invest in these medical treatments ultimately reflects the American culture. America has money and science; but we may have abandoned the spiritual and social context of our lives, and deaths.' As the UK moves towards the inappropriate US approach, we here need the message of this excellent book, which is packed with that increasingly rare commodity: common sense.

Andrew Fergusson is CMF Head of Communications



Caring for Dying People of Different Faiths
Linda Emmanuel and Julia Neuberger

- Radcliffe Publishing Ltd (third edition) 2004
- £19.95 Pb 104pp
- ISBN 1 85775 9451

This useful volume is written in a straightforward style intended for healthcare professionals. It aims to address the paradox quoted: 'dying well means living well – that also says that we are all different and yet all the same'.

As people come close to death, many will need to focus on significant aspects of life. Julia Neuberger recognises that all who prepare for this final event share a position of vulnerability, but not necessarily the same concerns. The preferred mode of dying and care of the body after death depend on a host of religious and cultural factors. At this difficult time the ignorance of healthcare professionals may be most marked, and can inadver-

tently cause offence when dealing with unfamiliar beliefs.

This overview conveys a 'sense of the rightness of dying well' and avoids simplistic generalisations, by focusing on the journey of the individual. Practical advice is offered for those dealing with representatives of all major religions and none. Considering the subject matter, this is not gloomy, but provides a surprisingly light and uplifting read. Perhaps it is time to rediscover a theology of death and dying, so that we can understand what John Wesley meant when he said 'my people die well'.

Paul Dakin is a GP Trainer in north London



Infertility: The silent and unseen issue
Rosemary and Barry Jubraj

- Roper Penberthy Publishing Ltd 2007
- £6.99 Pb 64pp
- ISBN 978 1903905 31 9

Infertility is often a hidden issue. Unfortunately, many couples suffer in silence, blaming themselves, each other, even God. Rosemary and Barry Jubraj open up this painful and heartbreaking subject with wisdom and sincerity. Their personal experiences of infertility provide a valuable first-hand account. This book presents the issues from both male and female perspectives, giving insight into how Rosemary and Barry dealt with their infertility, together as a couple but also as individuals.

They do not claim to have all the answers. Indeed, their openness and honesty, apparent from the first page, includes

discussion of where they feel they went wrong, how they learned from their mistakes, and how they are still striving to learn more. They encourage couples to think and talk openly and honestly with each other and also with God. Importantly, this book seeks to place infertility within the context of a biblical worldview. It also looks at infertility's potential to affect a Christian's relationship with the Lord. This book could be an invaluable aid for infertile couples, their friends and church leaders.

Aarthi Campbell is a specialist registrar in obstetrics and gynaecology in London