

# BOOKS

## The Coming of the Rain: The biography of a pioneering missionary in Rwanda

*Katharine Makower*

*Illustrated by Caroline Church*

*Paternoster Press Carlisle 1999*

*£9.99 Pb 128pp*

*ISBN 0-85364-968-5*



This excellent book is a biography of Dr J E ('Joe') Church (Cambridge & St Bartholomew's Hospital), who worked as a missionary in Rwanda and Uganda, and was at the heart of the

East African Revival from its inception in 1929 when he met a Ugandan, Sitneoni Nsibambi. The two of them studied what the Bible had to say about the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. Not charismatic in the contemporary sense, that Revival, which spread all over eastern Africa, closely resembled the great revivals of the past. Countless Christians have been transformed into vibrant and courageous witnesses and evangelists, prepared even to die for their faith in Christ. Africa has one of the fastest growing churches in the world and the Revival, which still continues in many places with undiminished rigour, earns an honoured mention in the Lion Handbook, *The History of Christianity*.

A 'child of the Revival', John Sentainu, Bishop of Stepney, has written the introduction to the book, the style of which is easy and fresh, making you want to read on to find out what happened next. Based on unrivalled documentary material, the author sets Joe in his context amongst the other British missionaries and the Africans involved. Because Joe was not a skilled linguist, local Africans were very important to him in his medical tasks and preaching. He loved working with them as a team of brothers in Christ, and his transparent honesty and genuine valuing of them as people loved by God

earned their enduring respect and warm affection. He was a cheerful encourager of others and great fun to be with, and he enjoyed sports, cars, game trekking and 'messaging about in boats'. He was wont to come up with exciting but impractical projects until the realities were gently pointed out by his doctor wife Decie, nee Decima Tracey (Royal Free Hospital).

The value of this book is further enhanced by its highly topical final chapter on the terrible Rwandan genocide of 1994. The author has some interesting things to say, things which are equally relevant to the church worldwide as it continues to grapple with the age-old challenge of how to apply the fruits of personal salvation to the well-being of society at large.

*John Billingham is a retired neurologist from Kent, formerly medical missionary in the Gambia.*

## Relationships in the NHS - Bridging the Gap



*Geoff Meads and John Ashcroft*

*The Royal Society of  
Medicine Press*

*London 2000*

*£17.50 Pb 139pp*

*ISBN 1 85315 438 5*

Michael Schluter of  
the Relationships

Foundation writes in the foreword to this book: 'Partnership, collaboration, involvement, "joined-up" government: the language of relationships pervades current health policy and practice. The complexity and uniqueness of any relationship means that the reality of this rhetoric must involve more than motherhood and apple pie.'

Cynical commentators may feel that the use by political managers of such buzzwords within the British National Health Service is indeed little more than 'motherhood and apple pie', but if any Christian has hitherto wondered whether the concepts espoused by the

Relationships Foundation qualify for that description too, this book proves them wrong.

Based on relational research conducted in the new NHS between 1995 - 1999, and at a time of an enormous but almost unrecognised shift of power and resources from secondary to primary care, such that the 80%-20% distribution is likely to be reversed, this stimulating book moves lucidly and logically through key concepts. Consecutive chapters cover agenda, policy, resources, strategy, organisation, delivery, development, review, quality, and prospects.

Highlights for me included acknowledgements of 'a widespread disillusionment about the state of relationships in the NHS and their impact on health', that 'relationships are much neglected by the NHS as a resource in both policy and practice' and that 'the new NHS runs the risk of pursuing strategies which outstrip their relationship basis'. In other words, in all the reorganisations and quality initiatives, the NHS is failing to take its million or so staff along with it! The authors also recognise the sense of threat which sadly so often prevails at the moment: 'there are risks to relationships in healthcare arising from the use of quality principles to justify stronger central scrutiny'.

By contrast, at the end of the book there are a couple of paragraphs on 'love' which are explicitly but sensitively Christian. The book is implicitly Christian throughout, but otherwise only explicitly so in that every one of the chapters begins with a quote from Ecclesiastes. The book ends with Ecclesiastes 12:12, 'Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body'. You will be slightly wearied reading this book as it is meaty stuff, but it is study well worthwhile not just for those in British primary care but for Christians and others working anywhere in health services throughout the world.

*Andrew Fergusson is Head of Policy at the  
Centre for Bioethics and Public Policy*

## BOOKS CONTINUED

### Cancer's a Word, not a Sentence

Fiona Castle

Hodder & Stoughton, London 1999

£6.99 Pb 130pp

ISBN 0 340 74565 7



This is an excellent book to have handy in the surgery to give out when appropriate. Its strength is that it is written sensitively by someone who really understands the cancer

journey, who can lift the mystery of medical jargon and help reduce the level of fear experienced by those affected by cancer. It is comprehensive, realistic and yet full of hope and sound, well-informed advice.

The author's experiences as she shared her late husband Roy's journey with cancer from the day of his diagnosis to his death, are common to so many. Yet, the understanding she brings to the feelings of loss, guilt and anxiety all help to give a sense of control in a world that feels out of control.

Fiona Castle's Christian faith is woven beautifully into the text, without ever intruding or threatening the non-believer. I was surprised that there was little critical comment, from a Christian perspective, on the range of complementary and alternative therapies described. But then, that is not what this book is about and would probably fill another volume anyway.

The best is kept until last. The final section, 'A difficult path' is compulsory reading for all who are ready to face up to their mortality. Why do we always leave this so long and then find we are sharing our uncertainties as we attempt to be alongside the one who is sick?

Don't just buy one copy of this book - invest in several and have some ready to give away!

*Gareth Tuckwell is Macmillan Cancer Relief Director for London, Anglia and South East England*

### Six Modern Myths

Philip J Sampson

IVP, Leicester 2000

£8.99 Pb 182pp

ISBN 0 85111 659 0



This is a very important book. The author cogently argues that behind the six most common areas where Christians are criticised, there has been much misinformation,

some of which has been deliberate.

It has been popularly said that the church in the middle ages was anti-science and suppressed the research of Galileo. Such stories have been spread by the writings of men like the rationalist eighteenth century historian William Lecky, the atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell, George Bernard Shaw and Bertolt Brecht's plays. They all had their reasons to show the church in a bad light and were happy to be very selective about what they said. The author is very persuasive in his review of the evidence and shows that these writers did not present 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'.

The presentation of the story of Darwin is even more disturbing. We have all heard of the debate between Thomas Huxley for the Darwinians and Bishop 'Soapy Sam' Wilberforce for the church at the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1860. The Bishop is often presented as a buffoon whereas the truth is that he was a very learned scientist who was vice president of that association. Far from being ignorant, he had already reviewed Darwin's 'Origin of Species' and there is no evidence that the Bishop was flattened by Huxley's erudition. The bias used in the presentation of much of the evidence in favour of neo-Darwinism is exposed.

This chapter then discusses the way that this theory has been the basis of some horrendous practices, based on 'eugenics'. If human life is simply the product of chance evolutionary forces, then the

elimination of 'low grade stocks' of human beings, even if for political ends, can be rationalised, and then practised. The other myths investigated are:

- The environment – is the Bible at the root of global exploitation?
- The missionaries – was Christian mission a vehicle of colonial oppression?
- The human body – is Christianity essentially repressive and 'anti-body'?
- The witches – how true was the witch-hunt as an example of the subjugation of women?

When there is so much adverse publicity today, depicting as irrational those who still believe in a personal creator God who is concerned about how his world runs, it is very good to have such a scholarly paperback that gives clear replies. The book argues that it is not the Christian who is turning a blind eye to the evidence for and the consequences of such modern teaching. It also strongly suggested that there are some that want to alter people's understanding of what is true by presenting very biased evidence and perceptions.

It is written in a 'thesis' mode and subsequently can be a little 'bitty' in its flow, with references everywhere, but I am very grateful to have read it and will use many of the arguments put forward and the quotes used, in future discussions.

*Bernard Palmer is a General Surgeon in Stevenage*

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