

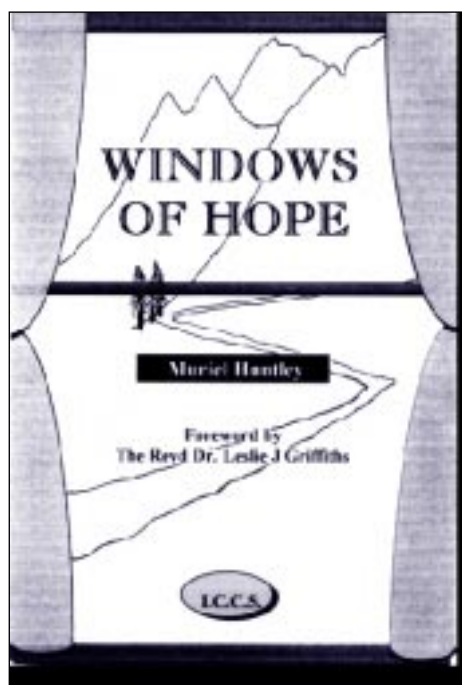
reviews:

Windows of Hope

Muriel Huntley. ICCS, London. 1998. 66pp. £4.99 Pb.

This little book by a Methodist local preacher and counsellor is about hope in the midst of suffering and has an opening message which 'is horrifically clear. There is no hope until we can confront our deadness - the deadness of our lives, the deadness of our society - and let it speak to us.'

The author looks at the stark picture which confronted Ezekiel regarding 'the valley of the dead bones' and wants you to get a mental picture of the human horrors that have happened in the world we live in: emaciated corpses of Nazi Germany; killing fields of Cambodia; parts of Africa and Asia where people starve; or, nearer to home, the Dunblane disaster where so many lives were lost.



She looks at the character of Ezekiel as he is compelled to walk up and down through the desolation of the bones. We ourselves can turn away from the pain of the world, and even from our own pain, in desperation not wanting to deal with the enormity of our situation. Then in the midst of the horror and pain God asks the question 'can these bones live?'

The book opens us up to looking at our pain and bringing the wonderful hope of our Lord Jesus into the situation, if we will let him in. It looks at our personal relationship with the Lord. Do we have the relationship the Lord intended us to have?

The author looks at the biblical character of David and his struggles with Goliath, bringing to mind the human pain and difficulties we read of in the Bible.

I found while reading this book that I felt comforted, encouraged and peaceful. The prayers and poems were pleasing to my spirit. As a counsellor I would best see this book as a help to people in prayer ministry, to be used in conjunction with prayer for the team to have a better understanding of human pain and emotions. For me personally I would not see this as a book to help me gain more understanding of human or biblical suffering.

I agree totally with the comment by Revd Dr Leslie Griffiths that this book 'takes a serious look at human tears and . . . shows how they can be windows of hope'.

Yvonne Shaw
(Counsellor and Trainer with Barnabas Training Consortium, Brentwood)

Why do Christians find it hard to grieve?

Geoff Walters. Paternoster Press, Carlisle. 1997. 203pp. £12.99 Pb.

As doctors and nurses, we are often involved with people who are facing death and with their relatives. As Christians, we have a certainty about resurrection and life everlasting. Or is ours the Platonic view of the immortality of the soul, which we take to be Christian teaching? And does it matter?

Geoff Walters says it matters very much. This is a well-written and readable book which has the academic support of originating as a successful PhD thesis. Rev Dr Walters starts his exploration from the standpoint of a minister listening to bereaved people. Having shown the need for a deeper understanding he searches the Scriptures and the writings of the Church

Fathers to explore the concepts of resurrection and immortality. He applies his findings to the support of bereaved people, and to our own understanding of grief and our practice in the face of bereavement.

What did Paul mean when he wrote 'We do not want you to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope'? and Jesus, when he said 'I am the resurrection and the life'? Is grief consistent with our faith or are we letting the side down? Should the funeral service be a triumph, or is it alright to be real? And is it true that 'Death is nothing at all . . . I have just gone into the next room . . .'??

These questions are addressed by pastor and theologian and are relevant to the practice of most of us. The book is a good read, but it also encourages reality and deepens faith.

The study indirectly changed the life of the book's author, for Geoff Walters has recently moved from a pastoral ministry in a large town-centre church to be the senior chaplain of the Pilgrims' Hospices.

Anthony Smith
(Medical Director, Pilgrims' Hospices of E Kent)

John Wimber: his influence and legacy

Carol Wimber and others, edited by David Pytches. Eagle, Guildford. 1998. 320pp. £5.99 Pb.

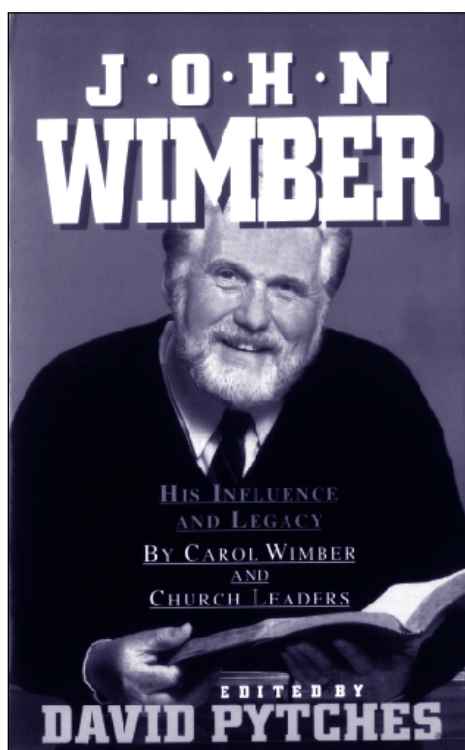
Before his death last year, John Wimber had arguably more influence on the evangelical church in Britain than any other American this century, with the exception of Billy Graham. This tribute to him by his wife and dozens of well-known Christian leaders right across the denominational spectrum is likely therefore to be the first of many books about the founder of the Vineyard Churches and pioneer of what he called 'power evangelism and healing'.

The various chapters portray Wimber as a musician, family man, friend, father figure, leader, businessman, and intellectual (this chapter by Jim Packer). However, it is probably Wimber's practice of healing that will most interest *Triple Helix* readers:

‘Everybody he touched at the Bible study got healed. I mean Gigi’s leg grew one inch and a half, or something and when she went home that night she had to lengthen the leg of all her Levi’s.’

‘We could see his infected glands shrinking as we prayed.’

This kind of anecdote side by side with accounts of John Wimber’s own suffering with heart disease, stroke and cancer makes fascinating reading. Considerable sense is made of it all by Nigel Wright’s masterly analysis of the weaknesses of Wimber’s healing thesis. The book is worth buying for this chapter alone.



However, even if one is cautious about accepting the validity of most claims of ‘power healing’ (as this reviewer has good reason to be!) John Wimber’s life as celebrated in this book still has much to teach and inspire healers. He was undoubtedly a deeply compassionate man who gave his time and love unreservedly to those he sought to help and serve. He was humble and generous to a fault. His humour was highly therapeutic and he was a brilliant communicator who knew how to get his message across with a punchy catchphrase. There are many examples in the book. Jargon-laden health professionals could learn a thing or two here.

A controversial figure, John Wimber was subjected to severe and unrelenting criticism to which he never responded in kind. Those who judge him harshly would do well to remember Moody’s rebuke to one who criticised his evangelistic methods: ‘I must tell you, sir, I prefer the way I do it to the way you don’t do it!’

Trevor Stammers
(GP Tutor, London)

Advance Directives or Living Wills

The Guild of Catholic Doctors. St Pauls, London. 1998. 32pp A5 booklet. £2.50

Obtainable from St Pauls Bookshop (by Westminster Cathedral), Morpeth Terrace, London SW1P 1EP. Tel. 0171-828 5582

Advance directives are statements made while a person is competent and able to express their wishes, and are about what they would like done to them and what they would not like done to them in terms of receiving healthcare, to become operative in the event of their becoming incompetent and unable to express their wishes.

Are they useful extensions of genuine patient autonomy which Christians should support or are they a backdoor to euthanasia? Are they helpful guides for health professionals or do they force doctors and nurses to practise with one hand tied behind their backs? Do they already have the force of law? Should they have the further force of statute law?

Because of questions like these, the whole subject of advance directives has been one of the subplots in the euthanasia debate of the 1990s. This little booklet provides a lot of help in understanding the strands of this subplot and is recommended. It draws a distinction between ‘medical treatment’ and ‘ordinary care’. The first can be refused; and of the second - ‘ordinary care is almost always owed to patients: to deny it when it could be provided is contrary to the basic respect due to any human life’.

After a good review of such general issues, specific issues which might affect Catholic hospitals and nursing homes, and Catholic doctors and nurses are discussed.

These will be of interest to members of other Christian traditions.

ADVANCE DIRECTIVES or LIVING WILLS



The Guild of Catholic Doctors

Bound in at the end of the booklet is a ‘Christian Advance Declaration for the management of serious illness’. After the hitherto lukewarm recognition of advance directives, this may at first appear paradoxical, but the authors acknowledge this in the advice given in this Appendix, where after a further warning they state: ‘If, however, you feel that you ought to sign such a document (or if it should come to be expected of you) we strongly advise that you discuss the matter first with your doctor and with your priest, or for a non-Catholic, your minister’. The Declaration then sums up sensibly and clearly the approach taken in the booklet, with strong support for the practice of ordinary care.

All in all, a worthwhile read. The highlight for me was a soundbite to counter those who would use Advance Directives with inappropriate legal force in order to try to bring in euthanasia by the back door. Some wordings do not constitute ‘a refusal of treatment’ but ‘a refusal of life’. There’s a big difference!

Andrew Fergusson
(Editor)