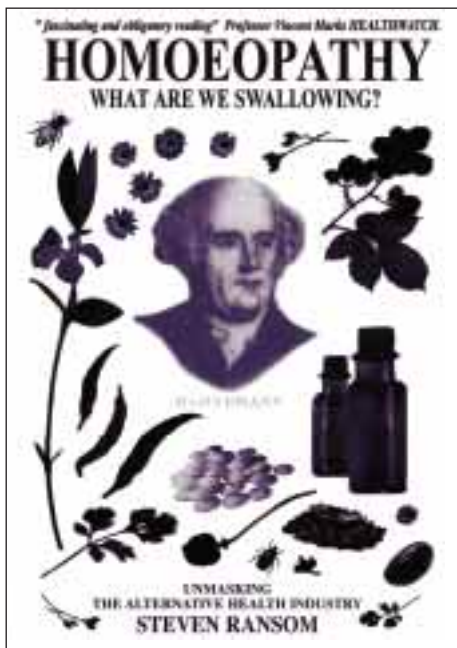


reviews:

Homoeopathy - What Are We Swallowing?

Steven Ransom. Credence Publications, Uckfield. 1999. 124 pp. £6.95 Pb. ISBN 0 9535012 2 1

I get the strong impression that many health professionals are profoundly ignorant about homoeopathy. The popular myth is that this harmless idea believes in the efficacy of weak solutions. Few people seem to realise that the sort of dilutions advocated by homoeopaths would need a volume at least the size of the North Sea, if not the orbit of Venus, to contain a single molecule of the original substance.



Steven Ransom sets out to expose the intrinsic nonsense at the heart of homoeopathy. He starts with the founder, Samuel Hahnemann. He describes his historical context in the 18th century, his childhood, student days, involvement with freemasonry, occultism and blatant quackery. Hahnemann claimed for instance to have a cure for scarlet fever which was causing appalling epidemics among children at that time. For financial gain, he kept selling his remedy but refused to divulge its secrets. It eventually came to light that it consisted of tiny amounts of belladonna dissolved in '2.4 million drops of water'. This useless substance was then administered with

very complicated instructions, which had to be followed precisely for it to be effective. It was therefore always the parents' fault and not his if their child died.

Hahnemann was prosecuted in cities across Europe, before being allowed to settle in Paris. His crackpot theories are described in detail before Steven Ransom reviews the current state of play.

There has been an enormous promotion of homoeopathy in the last 40 years. It is now sold by pharmacists with chain stores such as Boots training their staff in it. As it sweeps all before it (taught in universities, promoted by BUPA, served up in outpatient clinics) it has become politically incorrect to challenge it. However, it remains the case that not a single, well constructed trial of homoeopathy with positive findings has ever been successfully repeated by other workers. Theoretically absurd, it has no sound evidence to show that it works. Hopefully this urgently needed little corrective will open a few blind eyes.

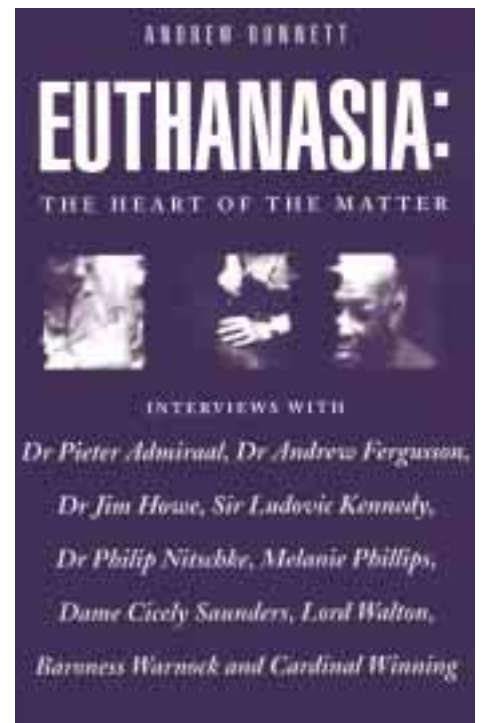
Peter May
(GP, Southampton)

Euthanasia: the Heart of the Matter

Andrew Dunnett. Hodder & Stoughton, London. 1999. 207pp. £6.99 Pb. ISBN 0 340 69486 6

Another book on euthanasia? Yes, but a different one. The press release describes it as 'a collection of interviews with ten well-known people who are helping to shape the debate surrounding the practice of euthanasia in this country'. There is a wide range from all sides, including Ludovic Kennedy (president of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society), Jim Howe (Tony Bland's doctor), Cicely Saunders (founder of the UK hospice movement) and *Triple Helix* editor Andrew Fergusson.

For those seriously interested in the euthanasia debate this book is quite indispensable. Its biggest strength is that proponents of all views have their say. The reader doesn't have to settle for second-hand tirades against the pro-euthanasia lobby, or vice versa, because all sides are represented first hand. The interviews are



not long and the question-and-answer format means you can flick around quickly to find a certain person's view on a particular issue. Some of the material is not to be found elsewhere (for instance, Jim Howe's first major interview since the Bland case).

There are two caveats worth mentioning. First, it is not a book of 'how Christians should view euthanasia'. Only three contributors appear to hold Christian convictions. For 'the Christian view' there are other books available. This is a source book that gives a bigger picture than just one viewpoint. Information is presented for the reader to evaluate and this is done well.

Secondly, contributors are limited both by space and the interviewer's questions. You will not get their views on all matters relating to euthanasia fully laid out; more an introduction. It is perhaps a pity that little guidance is given for further research. However, there are a few mentions of other published work in the biographical details beginning each interview.

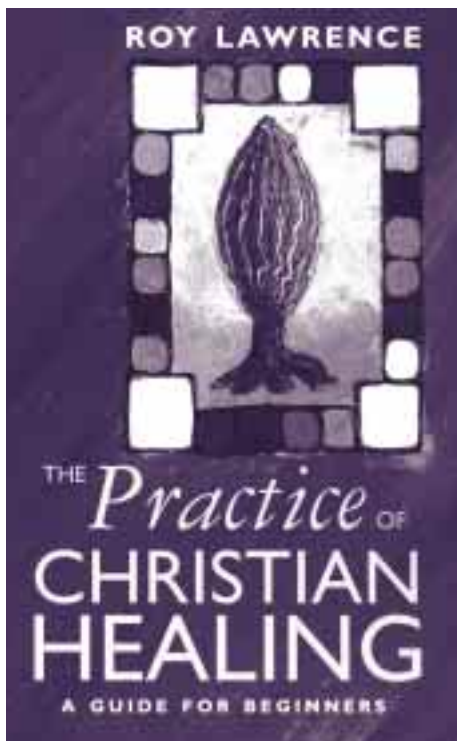
Both these considerations mostly reflect the nature of the book, not any real faults. As long as they are borne in mind it is a unique and vital contribution to the euthanasia debate. I highly recommend it as a valuable means of gaining a more balanced view of this crucial topic.

Mark Pickering
(Medical House Officer, London)

The Practice of Christian Healing

Roy Lawrence. Triangle (SPCK), London. 1998. 117pp. £5.99 Pb. ISBN 0 281 051852

In this book Roy Lawrence sets out to demystify Christian healing. By a combination of 'scripture, logic and experience', he endeavours to make a case for the practice of Christian healing to be the norm within every church congregation and possible for every Christian. Although acknowledging that some may have a special gift in healing, the author is more concerned in encouraging the ministry of Christian healing to grow throughout the Body of Christ.



The book is simply written in 13 short chapters. It takes the reader through many different practices of Christian healing in a down-to-earth, practical manner, rather than in an in-depth theological exposition on the subject. Each chapter is referenced to scripture as well as the writer's own experience. The book is full of anecdotes from his own ministry which makes the narrative live. At one point I was concerned that the picture given was too rosy and simple, but chapters 12 and 13 do look briefly at the question of suffering, as well as problems, difficulties and failures (although even the failures turn into ultimate blessings).

Roy Lawrence devotes one chapter to what Christian healing isn't, and goes on to define it as 'quite simply the difference Jesus Christ makes in body, mind, spirit and lifestyle for those who take Him seriously'. But what is the place of the health professional in this ministry, as distinct from just happening to be involved in the healing ministry of their own church? The proposition of doctor/clergy groups to enable cross referrals and a working together is touched upon, and the example of where clergy have been an equal part of the interdisciplinary team in complex cases gives an indication of the way forward.

If you are wanting to be more involved in the ministry of Christian healing and want to find ways of bringing that ministry into your practice, then this book is a good starting point.

Paul Worthley

(Senior Physician, Burrswood Christian Centre for Healthcare & Ministry)

The Journey - a road to post-abortion recovery

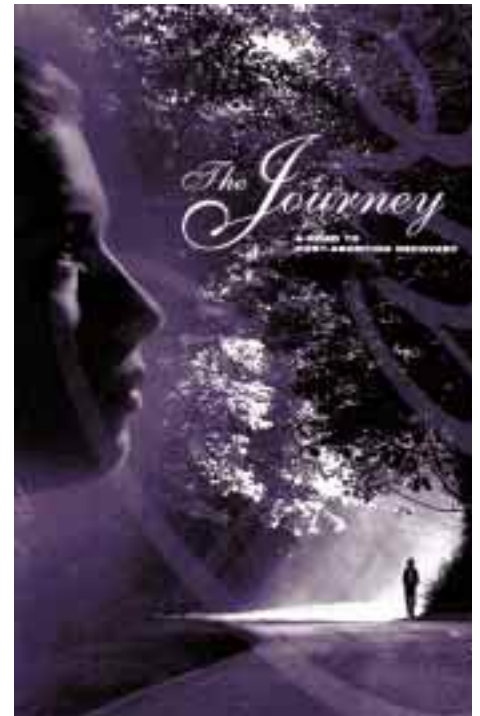
CARE for Life. CARE, London. 1998. 220pp A4 Manual. Available from CARE, 53 Romney Street, London SW1P 3RF for £30 plus a donation for p&p invited. No ISBN given

'Can you keep a secret? Years ago I had an abortion and never recovered.' *The Journey* states it takes at least ten years to move out of denial and seek help after choosing abortion. The effects of post-abortion syndrome (PAS) are devastating but in this manual from CARE for Life we have a training package to treat it.

The heart of the manual is a ten step 'journey' from first seeking help (step 1) through anger and grief to the way ahead (step 10). It is bound in an A4 clip file and well laid out with simple headings and diagrams.

The first section covers underlying principles such as the consequences of the 1967 Abortion Act, the pressures women undergo and the psychological effects that follow. Helping men and helping Muslims is covered well, but sadly not the other faiths.

The ethos is distinctly Christian but the cross cultural bridges into post-modern thought are made brilliantly while facing the hard issues step by step. I would feel comfortable to refer anyone to seek help from a counsellor using *The Journey*. The goal is to help women recover from abortion and while salvation will come to some during the programme, this is not the main aim. A catchphrase throughout is 'We cannot change the past, we do not know the future, but we can change the way we think'.



Here is a great toolkit for those in contact with PAS - counsellors, churches, GPs, pregnancy crisis centres - who want in-depth training. However, the price of £30 is going to put some off, and foreign markets like Africa will be excluded. A compact edition could be an idea so as to have the maximum sales for a growing problem. I would love to see this manual equip those called to a costly but crucial ministry.

Mark Houghton

(GP, Sheffield)