

Doctors as Patients

Petre Jones

- Radcliffe 2005
- £24.95 Pb 216pp
- ISBN 1 85775 8870

This is a courageous and overdue book written by doctors with mental illness. All look back over their illnesses and describe their experiences with remarkable honesty and clarity. Following diagnosis and treatment, most of them continue to practice, some with knowledge of the cyclical nature of the illness with which they have to contend.

Jones, a major contributor himself, has done an excellent job of making a coherent whole from twenty-four contributors. All are members of the *Doctors Support Network*, a secular self-help group for doctors with mental health problems (www.dsn.org.uk). Thirteen of them have bravely written under their own names and revealed their field of work.

In Part One, they tell their own stories, out of which Part Two 'What It's Like' is culled. Unsurprisingly, the first chapter in this section discusses stigma and discrimination. I suspect it will make uncomfortable reading for those of us prepared to recognise our lingering, deeply ingrained prejudices. The relevant chapters of this section should certainly be read by everyone who comes into contact with, or has to make career and financial decisions affecting, doctors who are also patients. This chapter should be read by every member of the General Medical Council (GMC), especially as its function is under scrutiny for other reasons. The NHS might

improve if managers and politicians also took on board some of the experiences and reflections recounted in this useful book.

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Part Three 'Dealing with It' has practical advice on dealing with sick doctors for doctors as patients, for medical staff treating them, for colleagues, Occupational Health Services, and the GMC. The final chapter on resources is well set out and likely to be useful for sick doctors, and for those helping them in any capacity. An unusual feature of this book is the inclusion of poetry; sometimes nothing else adequately describes the largely indescribable.

The book can be read straight through, for it is well thought out, or parts can be cherry-picked from the contents, index, or the clearly boxed summaries at the end of many chapters. These boxed summaries, which also occur elsewhere, would be a good place to start for those simply wanting an overview of this neglected subject.

Ruth Fowke is a Retired Consultant Psychiatrist



I'm Still Standing

Parenting a child with a life threatening illness
Jan Burn

- Bible Reading Fellowship 2005
- £5.99 Pb 95 pp
- ISBN: 1 84101 3498

This book offers unusual insights into what it means to have a child whose life-threatening illness has abated but has not necessarily gone for good. In this it is an unexpected addition to the many other books available that deal with terminal illness in childhood, or the long term care of a child with congenital disabilities. It is more a book to help in the ongoing haul of coping with the relapses and remissions of disease rather than one to read at the time of onset, although some parents could find that the emotions described are comparable to their own, or be grateful for a little forewarning.

Jan and James Burn, both pastors, have three children. This is the inside story of their painful progress since 1993 when family life became dominated by the management of seven-year-old David's malignant renal tumour. They embarked on a switchback of remission and relapse, relief and dread, plans unfulfilled and side effects unforeseen. Remarks by Christian friends were not always helpful.

As she watched David's suffering, Jan often felt powerless, exhausted and isolated in her own pain. Emotionally drained, it was a struggle to support all three children and to maintain some normality. An abnormal blood count might put a stop to a long anticipated treat. Exhaustion made it easy to skimp time or explanation for the other children, or to excuse the sick child's unacceptable behaviour but not theirs. David's father

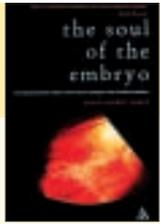
once had to remind him that the doctors had taken his kidney, not his manners, and he needed to apologise - which he did, strangely comforted by familiar rules in a world otherwise out of control. Marriage partners, too, need hard-to-find time to stay tuned, perhaps with differences of attitude to resolve as they support each other.

Jan Burn tells us honestly how awful all this has been. Aware that medical care saved David's life, she also saw his confidence and cooperation rocked when staff failed to treat him respectfully and truthfully. She emphasises the need for attentive listening by all concerned. There are other helpful passages on learning to be flexible, to forgive, to be freed from the guilt of feeling responsible for the illness and coping with all the related uncertainties. One of the hardest things still is to avoid overprotection of all three children, and to overlook their emerging independence in the twelve years since diagnosis.

The shadow remains, as recurrence is still not ruled out, but it is clear that the whole experience has been a journey into deeper faith and trust in God. Strategically placed and highly relevant Bible verses reveal where strength can be found to enable other affected families to stand up to all these stresses.

This little book fills a niche not adequately filled before, and is a must not only for parents in similar circumstances but for their medical and pastoral caregivers.

Janet Goodall is an Emeritus Paediatrician in Stoke on Trent



The Soul of the Embryo
David Albert Jones

- London: Continuum 2004
- £16.99 256 pb
- ISBN 0 8264 62960

The *Soul of the Embryo* begins by considering the account of creation in the Hebrew Scriptures. It then considers the largely mistaken but nevertheless influential foundations of Western thinking about embryology as laid down by Hippocrates and Aristotle. The widespread and approved practices of abortion and infanticide in ancient Greek and Roman societies are contrasted with their condemnation by rabbinic Judaism.

The book analyses the development of Christian reflection on the nature of the soul. Despite the fact that St Augustine was influenced by Plato and St Thomas Aquinas by Aristotle, both of these Christian thinkers agreed that the soul was naturally related to the body as the principle of life and that in the separated state the soul was incomplete until bodily resurrection. As for the origin of the soul, the dominant view of Catholic Christians from the fifth century has been that the soul is immediately created by God and is infused into the new human being. And as for the timing of ensoulment, although the earliest Christians appeared to have dated it from conception, in the Middle Ages the view that ensoulment took place at formation was dominant.

Two later developments led to a questioning of the belief that the soul was infused by God at formation. The first was the theological revolution of the Reformation, not least its questioning of medieval Aristotelianism. The second was the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century, which reshaped embryology as it did the other natural sciences.

The book proceeds to consider the development of the Catholic casuistical tradition concerning abortion,

which focused on the question whether abortion to save the life of the mother was ethical. A minority opinion that such abortion was justified before ensoulment did not prevail.

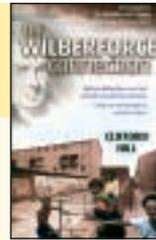
The book later turns to the historical development of the criminal law on abortion. It notes the influence of the notion of delayed ensoulment on the common law's prohibition of abortion only after 'quickening'; of improved embryological knowledge on the tightening of the law in the nineteenth century to protect life from conception; and of the recharacterisation of abortion by many (including some Christians) as an act of compassion for the mother which helped account for the relaxation of the law by the Abortion Act 1967.

The final chapter of the book pulls together conclusions from the various disciplines that inform the book's examination of the status of the embryo: theology, philosophy, ethics, science and law. Jones concludes that the tradition's 'enduring desire to protect the human embryo' has been extraordinarily constant through two millennia of Christian thought and practice.

Archbishop Rowan Williams describes the book as 'a valuable contribution to a most important debate'. Quite so. It is to be highly recommended.

Adapted with permission from a Tablet review by John Keown, Rose Kennedy Professor of Christian Ethics at Georgetown University

David Albert Jones is Senior Lecturer in Bioethics at St Mary's College, Twickenham, and former Director of the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics in London.



The Wilberforce Connection
Clifford Hill

- Lion Hudson 2004
- £9.99 380 pages Pb
- ISBN 1 85424 6712

A culture of gross drunkenness and violence, a civic life with rising crime and corruption, a society marred by social dislocation and sexual immorality, a church confused, divided and ineffectual – this is 21st century Britain – but also a picture of late 18th century Georgian England, where a small group of Christian men and women succeeded in transforming their society.

Hill opens his book with pen pictures of the main characters within an effective, campaigning, Christian community that was to be known as the 'Clapham Sect'. They worked not only to abolish slavery but also in Wilberforce's words 'to make goodness fashionable'. They succeeded in catalysing major social reform and in establishing the modern missionary movement. He outlines how their deep evangelical Christian faith impelled them both to seek the spiritual salvation of their fellow men and to work for their social and physical well-being.

This is a wide-ranging book, which looks at the social, economic, and religious roots of a deeply divided eighteenth century society and details how the Clapham group achieved massive change in the face of considerable political and social opposition. More disturbingly Hill outlines how Britain has frittered away the spiritual and social capital of the last two hundred years to reach our current morally and spiritually destitute society. His chapters on church

history, which help explain the churches' weakness in rising to the challenge of secular humanism in the eighteenth century and to the challenge of post-modernism in the 21st, are particularly enlightening. He pulls no punches – you will be challenged to consider which aspects of your church history and church culture undermine your ability to be salt and light in modern society!

This is a readable, informative and well referenced book which will challenge you to reflect on how your life can make a difference.

The Clapham Saints were a mixture of scientists, businessmen, lawyers, politicians and churchmen who worked together and worshipped together, dedicating their money, time and talents to build the Kingdom of God. Hill's final challenge is to consider how we can do the same in our institutions (such as hospitals and the NHS) and how the church needs to change to equip us to do so. The book cites CMF as an example of how Christians can work together and encourage each other in bringing the Kingdom of God into the institutional workplace. As Rowan Williams concludes in his preface, 'Hill challenges us to take seriously ... how holiness can become compellingly attractive and transforming in a society'.

Buy it, read it, respond to it.

Nick Land is Deputy Medical Director, Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trust