

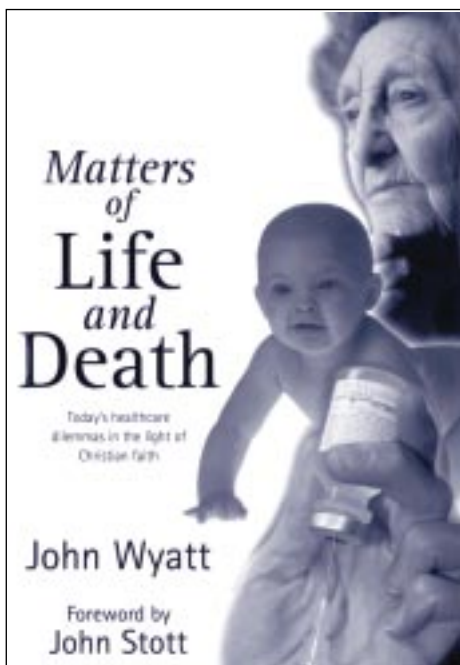
reviews:

Matters of Life and Death

John Wyatt. CMF/IVP, Leicester. 1998. 256pp. £9.99 Pb. ISBN 0 85111 588 8

How do you respond to the woman whose baby is born with severe abnormalities? What should be done with spare embryos following IVF? Is cloning wrong if the embryo is manipulated to generate cells for medical research? These real questions might affect us professionally or personally, but how do we respond as Christians? What does the Bible say? Do we become hardened and desensitised to these issues or paralysed by the enormity and complexity of it all?

The author delves thoroughly and systematically through the current dilemmas in healthcare, guiding us through the developments in science, technology and society which have brought us to this point. He illustrates with poignant test case examples as well as everyday ones, highlighting the complexities and legalities involved, and the human pain behind every ethical dilemma.



From the Christian perspective, he then makes sense of the changed (?warped) humanistic thinking when we remove God from the picture. For example, from the chapter on reproductive technology, one of our biggest problems is our understanding of how to manipulate the construction of our bodies: 'We can improve on the

Mark 1 old-fashioned design' is the belief of those who have a 'Lego Kit view of the human body'.

Our bodies are instead wonderful, original artistic masterpieces which reflect the meticulous design and order imposed by a Creator's will and purpose. The individual has value not because of character or ability to perform everyday activities, but through being made in the image of God. This will affect the way we treat individuals and view suffering and people's supposed 'quality of life'. The author writes with integrity, compassion and biblical insight. He doesn't pretend to have all the answers yet speaks honestly with great experience and understanding. He is an expert in his field of neonatal paediatrics and has grappled with many of the issues described.

This book is not light reading, but I highly recommend it both to healthcare professionals and lay people interested in gaining an up to date, thorough, and faithful analysis of the major life and death issues in healthcare, and who wonder how to respond as Christians. It could also be recommended to colleagues not yet Christians, to help them make sense of the value of life that God has given us.

Jane Grier
(Staff Nurse, King's College Hospital, London)

GP Tomorrow

Eds Jamie Harrison and Tim van Zwanenberg. Radcliffe Medical Press, Abingdon. 1998. 204pp. £17.50 Pb. ISBN 1 85775 203 1

'Family doctors and community nurses in the lead' is a key theme of 'The new NHS - Modern and Dependable'. But what kind of family doctors will they be? Jamie Harrison and Tim van Zwanenberg have brought together a number of authors to seek to answer that question for the benefit of patients, managers and doctors. This is a tall order for readers having such different concerns so they propose different routes through the book: no one is expected to start at chapter 1!

The core of the book is a series of experiments on developing career patterns for future family doctors. How are you going to get people to work in practices under strain? What about pressures in mid-career? Can we support people who are isolated in rural districts? Above all, how



are we going to get people started on a worthwhile career in primary care once they've finished training? These may not sound like new problems, but the authors set the scene by suggesting that changes in training, the organisation of primary care, information technology, the nature of the consultation and, above all, the worldview of people in this post-modern society, give them a new perspective.

Doctors' wants and patients' expectations are discussed at length. Do they conflict? The authors do find ways to reconcile them although it is not always clear how a 'continuing relationship' with a GP can be developed alongside part-time working and portfolio careers. Perhaps it is the needs of the doctors, regaining control of their destinies, rather than the service, which seem the focus of the book? Nurses do not figure as much as they might - especially the idea of nurse-led primary care. It also seemed sad that a professional vocation should be seen as a key and altruism as no more than a defence which may give way under stress. This may be true for post-modern people, but what about the Good Samaritan?

Despite these comments, this is a useful book. It does more than raise questions, it sets an agenda for thinking through answers. All interested in primary health care would benefit from reading it.

Carl Whitehouse
(Professor of Teaching Medicine in the Community, University of Manchester)

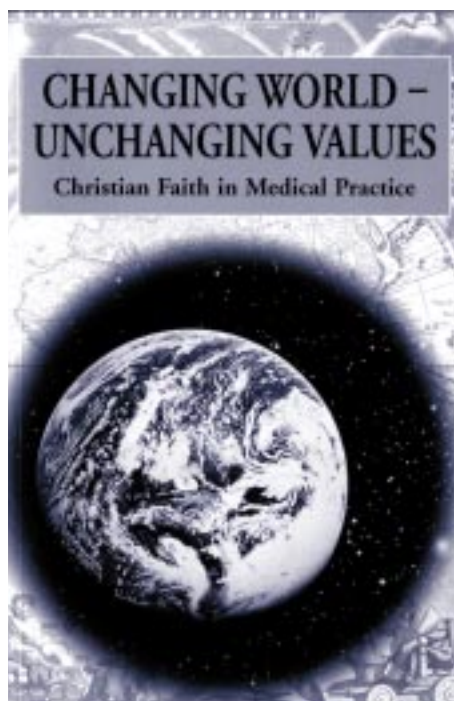
Changing World - Unchanging Values

Eds Janet Goodall and Keith Sanders. International Christian Medical and Dental Association, Cambridge. 1998. 395pp. £7.50 Pb. ISBN 0 9532690 0 0

This important book gives insight into the work of the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA) and its predecessor, the International Congress of Christian Physicians, over the past 35 years. It is a partial record of the ten world congresses and 50 regional conferences held during this time, containing 63 of the Bible addresses and papers given, and some short summaries of papers including such gems as Robert Twycross on euthanasia and Denis Burkitt on 'front line' research. The book's purposes are to affirm the Christian principles that underlie ICMDA's work and to inspire doctors, dentists and students as they consider healthcare into the next millennium.

The book starts by restating the aims, basis and beliefs of ICMDA and then papers are arranged in five sections. It ends with a short subject index and author list. The three papers by Arnold Aldis forming the first section entitled 'The Firm Foundation' set the tone for the book as a whole. As in the Bible, healing is seen as implying spiritual and bodily renewal and the relationship between physical and spiritual health is discussed in several papers. 'Relationships', 'Ethical Principles', 'Christian Practice', and 'Responsibilities' are the further sections. It is perhaps unfortunate that some Bible studies given as series at particular conferences are separated in the text. Inevitably too, themes of separate conferences are lost in the arrangement into five sections.

Nevertheless this is a very useful book which is well worth reading. Some papers are outstanding. I found those by Malcolm Jeeves, Paul Tournier and Hans Gruber particularly thought provoking. A few have less impact in print than they probably had at the conference and all are weakened by the absence of any discussion. However, many provide useful analyses, advice and pointers to further



study and the transcultural and broad healthcare approach inherent in ICMDA is appreciated.

Topics covered include medical, surgical, hospital, community and dental practice; lifestyle issues including family, marriage, sexuality and drug abuse; suffering, disability and dying; education, poverty, affluence, and duty to the state; and reference to the healing ministry in the church. In view of the dates of the conferences, some more recent problems in genetics and infertility receive little attention. No doubt future accounts will correct this deficiency. Again, the wide spread of topics addressed prevents in-depth analysis of any particular area. The star is the internationality of ICMDA, so clearly portrayed. One looks forward to similar publications, hopefully before another 35 years go by!

Finally, the joint editors have been outstandingly successful in drawing the material together retrospectively. The book illustrates how well the aims of ICMDA have been met and should appear in several translations to enhance access to it.

Harold Jones
(Former Professor of Oral Medicine,
University of Manchester)

The Bible and Healing

John Wilkinson. Handsel Press Ltd, Edinburgh - Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1998. 350pp. £14.95 Hb. ISBN 1 871828 39 2

This book is described as 'a medical and theological commentary' on the subject of health and healing. As its author is a graduate in medicine and divinity of the University of Edinburgh he is well placed to tackle such a complex subject. He sets out the dilemmas in his introduction where he seeks to compare and contrast popular and professional understandings of the words 'health' and 'healing'. He underlines the fact that the term 'healing' has a chequered history and today is still virtually disowned both by medicine and theology, identified with charlatanism and quackery. Consequently he sets out to demonstrate that 'healing' is an acceptable description for modern professional health care as well as a biblical perspective of what God wills for mankind in general.

Wilkinson states that 'healing' in its ordinary sense means the restoration to normality of deranged physical functions and in the biblical perspective, the enabling of man to function as a whole in accordance with God's will for him. Following on from this he examines the scriptures to gain a wider understanding of what the Bible teaches about the words 'health' and 'healing' and seeks to understand the diseases and healings in the Bible in the light of modern medicine. What he achieves is to build a bridge of respect between medicine and healing whilst at the same time drawing boundaries between the disciplines of professional care and the Christian healing ministry, both of which are to serve the common aim of restoring the individual to wholeness and healthiness of life.

Where he is weakest is in the final chapter on the practice of the healing ministry today. This could well be expanded to include material on the need for a balanced style of ministry and some teaching on the subject of people who are not healed.

Russ Parker
(Director, Acorn Christian Healing
Trust)