

BOOKS

Anxious Christians. Psychological Problems and The Christian Faith



Kenneth Redgrave
SPCK 2002
£8.99 Pb 192 pp
ISBN 0 2810 550 7

This book consists of case histories about people with a variety of psychological problems and

demonstrates ways of helping them. Subjects include: 'Shyness and lack of confidence', 'Chronic anxiety and difficulty in decision making', 'Sensitive children' and 'Difficulties in being able to forgive a former partner'.

Each case history receives half a dozen pages. The author brings a compassionate viewpoint that demonstrates his wide experiences as a psychotherapist and previously as a Church Social Worker, Deputy Children's Officer and Lecturer in Human Growth and Behaviour. Although not medically qualified, he shows an understanding of how physical and emotional problems are related, eg in the case of 'Sula', who had depression and hypothyroidism.

The author is strong on the psychological and psychiatric perspective and he derives a lot of his thought from the Bible. Much of the bibliography comes from the counselling literature but this is not an academic book. It will be of value to clergy, doctors, students of counselling and pastoral studies, but particularly to Christians who have emotional problems. As the back cover says, 'The reader is encouraged to consider whether the particular problem or worry they have may be a symptom of some deeper malaise or dysfunction - physical, mental or spiritual - and to feel comfortable about seeking the skills and empathy of a trained counsellor or psychotherapist.'

Dominic Beer is Senior Lecturer, Division of Psychological Medicine (Guy's, Kings & St Thomas' Institute of Psychiatry) and Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist in Challenging Behaviour and Intensive Care Psychiatry (Oxleas NHS Trust)

Journeys of Faith. Church-based responses to HIV and AIDS in three southern African countries



Gideon Byamugisha, Lucy Steinitz, Glen Williams and Phumzile Zondi
Strategies for Hope No 16,
2002

£4.50 Pb 109pp
ISBN 0 95430 600 7
Available from TALC, PO Box 49, St Albans, Herts

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Many organisations and individuals in Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and UNAIDS assisted the authors in writing this well presented and illustrated book. While defining 'faith based' as having 'a religious affiliation', the book focuses on the Christian tradition. The introduction states that growing numbers of secular leaders have come to appreciate the unique potential that churches and other faith based organisations have for preventing the spread of HIV. It continues, 'Yet Christians have lacked sufficient urgency' the main reason being 'the association in the collective mind... of HIV/AIDS with immoral sexual behaviour.' This has led to 'judgmental attitudes' reinforcing denial and secrecy on the part of people who believe themselves to be HIV positive.

Christians might accept this apology in a book that is largely practical. It describes how churches have pioneered care of those infected with and affected by the disease. It contains inspired ideas such as encouraging an infected mother to keep a memory box of photos, possessions, a book of memories and other documents that she can leave to her children. There are testimonies of how HIV positive individuals have responded by coming to faith in Christ and intensifying the quality of their care for others.

But not all practical ideas are harmless. There is considerable promotion of condom use, particularly in Roman Catholic projects. While there may be a place for their use by some married couples there is no clear warning of the many harmful knock-on effects of promoting promiscuity, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Much promotion of condom use elsewhere is based on secular humanist teaching that is opposed to biblical teaching and the Christian's good news.

I would only place this book in a library after warning potential, unsuspecting Christian readers of its hidden dangers that emanate mainly from the West. I would at the same time recommend its many excellent ideas and commend the readers to join in communal repentance for our sins of omission and commission that are contributing to this terrible pandemic.

David Clegg is a retired Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology and formerly CMF Overseas Support Secretary

Building the Body: Transforming Relationships in the Local Church



Pamela Evans
Bible Reading Fellowship
2002
£7.99 Pb 192 pp
ISBN 1 84101 193 2

Do you want to grow as a Christian? Do you want to be a more effective witness? This book,

written by an Honorary Lecturer in Epidemiology at the London Hospital, champions the biblical theme of building the body of Christ in the local church. It suggests that God-honouring relationships are an integral part of Gospel living that we have neglected to our detriment.

Paul's doctrinal teaching has been a tremendous resource for the church over the centuries but his teaching on relationships, which is also extensive, has been under-emphasised. This has resulted in an unbalanced and individualistic Christian experience that may make us frustrated with our failure to continue to grow and failure to witness effectively.

Despite years of belonging to church, we are likely to find that the biblical qualities of giving time, listening well, serving practically, offering encouragement, learning by apprenticeship and maintaining our walk with God by mutual accountability are not as evident in our fellowship as they might be. How refreshing it would be if we moved in such an environment!

This book points the way towards developing a Christian community that not only pays lip service to loving out brothers and sisters, but aims to live it out in the confidence of God's love and forgiveness for us all. Shared life actively strengthens sound doctrine but also provides a safe place to express doubt and admit struggle.



The eight chapters of this book may also be used for group studies, for which there are additional notes, and there is a helpful appendix on listening skills. By using many helpful and sometimes humorous stories and illustrations, the writer is not so much speaking out of success, but humbly sharing lessons learnt along the way. I found it often connected with my own experience of church and opened a way to make progress. It could do the same for you or your church.

Kevin Vaughan is a General Practitioner in Birmingham and immediate past Chairman of CMF

Culture of Life – Culture of Death



The Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics, London 2002
 Ed: Luke Gormally
 £17.95 Pb 352 pp
 ISBN 0 90656 124 8

This book consists of 22 papers by historians, legal and political

theorists, medical practitioners, pastors, philosophers and theologians, delivered at the International Conference on 'The Great Jubilee and the Culture of Life' held at Queen's College, Cambridge in July 2000. This was organised for Roman Catholics with an active interest in healthcare ethics in response to Pope John Paul II's invitation to celebrate the year 2000.

Luke Gormally, Director of the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics, a Catholic think-tank, explains that this book deals with the 'Clash of orthodoxies' – contemporary liberal secularism versus Judaeo-Christian moral tradition, two cultures with deeply opposed understandings of human life. The cover picture, Gernt van Honthorst's *Christ before the High Priest*, symbolises the confrontation between the culture of death and the culture of life. It was Caiaphas, the High Priest, who uttered the prototypical consequentialist judgement, 'You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish.' (John 11:50). Willingness to sacrifice the innocent for 'the greater good' is central to the philosophy of the culture of death. However there was prophetic truth in Caiaphas' words beyond their intended meaning. Christ's redeeming death brought a

message of life and hope to the world. The ultimate source of the culture of life is our Lord Jesus in his life, death and resurrection.

Cardinal Winning's opening address identifies characteristic manifestations of the culture of death: abortion, embryo experimentation and imperialist imposition of contraception and abortion policies on developing countries. The root of this culture is 'the eclipse of the sense of God and man'. Among four chapters on the culture of death, is a fascinating one about the de-Christianising of England. This one traces the evolution of secular philosophy that has profoundly influenced contemporary medical ethics eg from key thinkers such as JS Mill. In her report on Human Fertilisation and Embryology in 1984, Baroness Warnock appeals to Mill for her justification of relativism. Chapters on the culture of life deal with its theology, promotion, politics and medicine in the developing world. Examples of Christian initiatives bringing hope to destitute mothers, combating the spread of AIDS and caring for AIDS victims are eloquently described. Supplementary papers deal with eugenic genetic engineering, stem cell research, contraception and 'quality of life' ethics.

This Roman Catholic publication inevitably refers to classic papal encyclicals and traditional Roman doctrines without scriptural foundation such as the ban on 'artificial' contraception, the celibacy of priests, the 'sacrifice' of the Mass and human suffering sharing in the redemption accomplished by Christ. Some of these will appear to evangelicals to detract from the glory and uniqueness of Christ's atoning work. Nevertheless, read with discernment, there is much here that is valuable, thought provoking and consistent with a true biblical medical ethic, to interest, stimulate and challenge the Christian doctor.

Stephen Browne is a GP Principal in Birmingham

Doctors and Patients: an anthology



Ed: Cecil Helman
 Radcliffe Medical Press
 2002
 £19.95 Pb 176pp
 ISBN 1 85775 993 1

Analysis of the current trend in narrative-based medicine reveals, as the writer of Ecclesiastes

indicated, that there is nothing new under the sun. The increasing number of books and articles on the role of narrative and the use of the arts in medicine is rooted in history and not in post modernity. It is part of this heritage that this book explores. Edited by Cecil Helman, General Practitioner, Medical Anthropologist and creator of Helman's folk model used in consultation skills, this anthology brings together a selection of narratives from the perspective of doctors and patients, as well as from the clinical encounter itself. Some of these stories are fictional, some true but all are rooted in an experience of health and illness. Contributors include world famous authors like Franz Kafka and A J Cronin, who wrote Dr Finlay's Casebook, and more modern, less well-known writers.

The collected narratives relate many key issues that doctors and patients meet in day-to-day life. The reader is drawn into the story and comes to understand the value of experiential learning, the difficulties in telling and hearing the truth, the problems of managing uncertainty and of the hurts caused by dysfunctional communication. The reader experiences an emotional roller coaster, moving from laughter to tears in a few short sentences in the world of terminal and chronic illness.

The anthology also acknowledges the time spent in health care by people who are worried but well, people who attend frequently and people who have problems with addiction. Their stories encourage empathy and challenge the reader's prejudices and preconceptions. Overall, the book encourages reflection on the whole person – physical, emotional and spiritual.

To quote Oliver Sacks, neurologist and author of 'The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat', from his contribution to the book about a young lady called Rebecca: 'A child follows the Bible before he follows Euclid. Not because the Bible is simpler (the reverse might be said) but because it is cast in a symbolic and narrative mode.' This book, being full of stories, is simple to read but within it lie many challenges to us both as doctors and Christians. With the increasing secular medical interest in narrative, it is worth reading to increase awareness of current trends in the medical world. I would also recommend this book for those involved in teaching communication skills or in medical education generally.

Rhona Knight is a General Practitioner in Hampshire