

Surgeon or Jack of All Trades?

A Mission Doctor in Tanganyika 1949-1990
Marion Bartlett MB, FRCGS

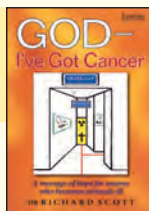
- Self published, 2013, £22.00, Pb 354pp, ISBN 9781909075139 Available from Timothy Fox, 40 Lakebar Avenue, Lancaster LA2 7JN
- Reviewed by **John Martin**, CMF Head of Communications

Marion Bartlett's chronicle of life as a pioneering surgeon is a useful contribution to the social and spiritual history of Tanzania, and an inspiring story of self-sacrifice driven by unswerving, rock-like faith. Missionary autobiographies are unfashionable among commercial publishers, so self-publishing is almost the norm for this genre. Occasional repetitions point to lack of a seasoned editorial hand, but an enjoyable read loses little as a result. Daughter of evangelical CMS missionaries in China, Marion sensed a vivid call to mission aged just four. She initially looked to CMS, spent time at its training college but withdrew and found a spiritual home in high Anglicanism. She found an opening for her skills with the

Universities Mission to Central Africa (later merged to become USPG).

The narrative details ten years preparation: war years at the Royal Free, then various UK posts as the author gleaned needed experience for all-round surgical work. Her four decades in Africa are marked with an ever-present determination to maintain standards and in the great UMCA tradition prioritises training for Africans. Her crowning achievement is the 300-bed Teule Muheza Hospital (with CMF members Richard and Heather Scott getting a mention). In her mature years Marion finds a marriage partner and with Canon David Bartlett forms a formidable training team in God's service.

I'm glad Dr Bartlett, now in her 90s, has recorded her story for posterity.



God - I've got cancer

A message of hope for anyone who becomes seriously ill
Dr Richard Scott

- TerraNova Publications, 2013, £9.00, Pb 192pp, ISBN 9780957047365
- Reviewed by **Liz Croton**, a GP from Birmingham

The back story underpinning this book is Dr Scott's own experience of being diagnosed with rectal cancer in 2011 and his subsequent surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. This book is written for cancer patients and their families, both believers and non-believers. It offers a powerful message of hope that there is something bigger which we can turn to and rely on if the 'Big C' strikes.

To echo one of the reviews on the back cover, Dr Scott is writing from a unique position as someone who has professional and personal knowledge of

cancer coupled with a saving faith. There is a rigorous literature review of the many benefits of faith in facing illness and the chapters mirror some of the tumult of emotions that one must go through when diagnosed with cancer ('It can't be true'; 'Who will pray for me?'). The difficult question of healing is raised - why does God heal some when others do not survive?

This is a buoyant, encouraging read backed up by expository Bible teaching and personal testimony, which ultimately glorifies God, who is the creator and sustainer of all things.



Guinea Pig for Breakfast

A Rich Tapestry of Tragedy, Hope and Love in Ecuador
Andrea Gardiner

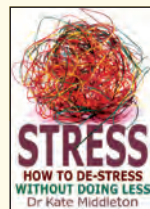
- Grosvenor House, 2012, £8.99, Pb 305pp, ISBN 9781781485804
- Reviewed by **Huw Morgan**, retired GP and medical missionary

This is the story of a young British Christian GP who set up a village clinic and child sponsorship scheme in Ecuador, following a visit there as a teenager when she was moved by the poverty and lack of access to medical facilities of many rural people. She describes first hand her struggles with the local bureaucracy, with cultural adjustment, loneliness and coping with life in a very different climate.

Anyone who has worked in a primary care setting in a resource-poor country will identify with the daily pressure to prescribe antibiotics and vitamin injections inappropriately, as well as the requests to give false sickness

certificates. The author is honest about her struggles, questions and failings, and her patient stories clearly illustrate the suffering resulting from poverty and injustice.

The book is written almost as extracts from a daily diary, and this reviewer found himself asking many questions that are never answered (Was she with a mission agency? Did she have any cross-cultural briefing prior to going? What was her relationship with the local church?). However it is an easy to read and moving account which would be helpful for any doctor planning to work in rural South America, and the author's faith and compassion shine through.



Stress

How to de-stress without doing less
Dr Kate Middleton

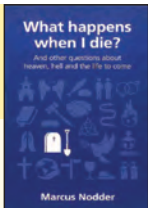
- Lion Books, 2009, £7.99 Pb 192pp, ISBN 9780745953731
- Reviewed by **Paul Vincent**, General Practitioner

This title intrigued me. The usual solution to stress is: do less, delegate, prioritise and learn to say no. Middleton acknowledges the need to step back, but part of the solution is to do more: eg keep an anxiety diary. I am sceptical that this is possible in an acute phase of stress, and it isn't clear whether such tools were for prevention, recovery or analysis, nor whether they are solo activities or require a therapist. The first section describes backgrounds to stress; its accessible style is suitable for lay readership. However, despite occasional reference to literature, opinion tends to be stated as fact and Middleton makes no distinction between stress and its causes. Anxiety and stress seem to

be used synonymously. This imprecision is unwise since the lay understanding of stress is variable, and there are multiple types of anxiety.

The second section is better. Middleton helpfully analyses personality types in relation to stress, and makes a good case for the effect of childhood experiences. The chapter on 'emotional kindling' offers a helpful description of adverse thinking patterns. This part was for me was the strongest and most interesting part of the book.

Does the book do what it says on the cover? Although a reasonable introduction it is best not considered as a self-help guide since the recommended exercises are only briefly sketched out.



What happens when I die?

And other questions about heaven, hell and the life to come
Marcus Nodder

- Good Book Company, 2013, £3.99, Pb 96pp, ISBN 9781908762337
- Reviewed by **Julian Churcher**, CMF London Staffworker

Take a complex and emotive subject that eludes description except by analogy and simile, and lies beyond shared human experience. Let it be one that so affects every person that the firm convictions of Christians are liable to cause offence in those looking to take it. Now write a short, engaging and helpful book on it. That is what the author – senior pastor of a water-borne London church – has bravely attempted.

This title – in the series ‘Questions Christians ask’ – is aimed at sustaining and encouraging the believer in their future hope, and challenging the seeker. Hell is briefly alluded to, and the author addresses sensitively the concerns of the bereaved. Practical related questions such as ‘Are

ghosts for real?’ and ‘Cremation or burial?’ are addressed in turn at the end of each chapter, and plentiful quotes from diverse sources make the whole very readable.

The promise of a renewed physical creation is described, correcting any caricatured ‘clouds and harps’ preconceptions. The historicity and ramifications of Jesus’ resurrection are central.

There is a right emphasis on the need to focus on our future hope to sustain us, but I would have welcomed more on the Holy Spirit’s ministry as the ‘deposit guaranteeing our inheritance’ without whom this would be a losing battle of imaginative effort. Overall this is a useful primer, especially suitable for new believers.



On Eagles' Wings

Models in mentoring
David Cranston

- Regnum Books International, 2014, £9.99, Pb 105pp, ISBN 9781908355461
- Review by **Chris Lavy**, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon

Failing his finals at the end of medical school was, in retrospect, God’s opportunity for David Cranston to live with and be mentored by Dr Monty Barker in Bristol, and to spend time at Trinity Theological College with Dr Jim Packer and Rev Alec Motyer. Writing with forty years of reflection he says the rewards of that period and the influence on his Christian life of those mentors were profound.

In the NHS we talk a lot about mentorship. In my Trust we look at the best ways of transferring knowledge and experience from senior surgeons to trainees and new consultants. A large part of this comes in the close relationship of mentoring.

Like David Cranston, many of us can point to great men and women whose influence and mentoring has shaped us. In this short book David gives his understanding of mentoring, using examples from history, royalty, the Bible, and his own life. These are woven throughout the book and illustrate God’s mentorship of him during his life as a surgeon and a Christian. The book is full of quotations. One of my favourites is spoken by the Queen Mother mentoring the newly crowned Elizabeth II. At lunch when the young queen is offered a second glass of wine her mother says: ‘Are you sure you should have another my dear? Remember you have to reign this afternoon.’



Beyond Human?

Science and the Changing Face of Humanity
John Bryant

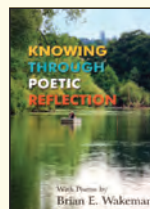
- Lion Hudson, 2013, £9.99, Pb 253pp, ISBN 9780745953960
- Reviewed by **Peter May**, retired General Practitioner

The author is Professor Emeritus of Cell and Molecular Biology at the University of Exeter. He is also an accomplished writer. His detailed research interests have not narrowed his vision or his wide interests in contemporary affairs. He opens this book with three chapters scanning the history of humanity. I suspect that younger readers, who learned little history at school, will find these chapters particularly informative. This overview sets the context for evaluating the benefits and challenges of medical science today.

A short chapter on moral philosophy leads into a longer review of genetics and human disease. Having always found

grasping the complexity of genetics something of an uphill struggle, this treatment was for me informative, clear and readable. Written with the layman in mind, the book is an excellent primer for medical students, and its detailed index makes it a valuable reference work for professionals of various sorts, who find it difficult to keep up with these current and challenging developments.

The big question is whether they are transforming humanity. The interface of biology with technology is fascinating and Bryant offers shrewd comments on media speculations and moral values. For me, this book became all the more rewarding as it progressed.



Knowing through poetic reflection

Brian Wakeman

- Penn Press, 2013, £7.99, Pb 280pp, ISBN 9781780036175
- Reviewed by **John Martin**, CMF Head of Communications

Quite a few books of poems cross the *Triple Helix* editor’s desk. Most are simply random collections. Here is something different, a poet who supplies notes alongside his offerings, to assist preachers and speakers to use the poems to inform and educate as well as to entertain. There are questions for reflection at the end of each chapter and substantial references and bibliographies. In the final chapters the author shares his methodology for deriving teaching from poems. Useful stuff indeed for speakers/preachers looking for models that will help them use poetry.

The author, who has links with Oxford Centre for Mission

Studies, makes a serious case for rehabilitating poetry as tool for teaching. The art of using poetry for mission and communication of the faith is somewhat lost in our times.

Another cogent factor that makes this volume credible is the quality of the poems themselves. I love, for example, the author’s tongue in cheek take on The Capable Woman (Proverbs 31). She is energetic, capable, a completer-finisher, relational, gives time to her offspring, holding down a demanding job. The sting in the tail, however, is that as she climbs exhausted between the sheets at the end of the day, she remembers: she’s forgotten her quiet time.