



Their name is today:
Reclaiming childhood in a hostile world
Johann Christoph Arnold

- Plough, 2014, £9.24, Pb 189pp, ISBN 9780874866308
- Reviewed by **Sarah Germain**, a former hospital doctor and former CMF Junior Doctors' Committee chairman.

In a world where many pressures seek to deny children a happy and healthy childhood, Arnold aims to write a 'hopeful book about childhood'. He challenges parents and teachers to transform the way society is treating children. He starts by explaining why the world needs children, and challenges our Western society to value them as many other societies do. He then goes on to look at areas where children face pressure and danger.

Arnold's style is warm, yet challenging, drawing on the experience of many parents and educators, with thought-provoking examples. He warns against rigid testing in schools at an early age; pushing children to succeed and achieve; the many

dangers of technology and materialism; and prescribing drugs for 'normal childhood traits'. He goes on to discuss the positive ways we can influence children to be 'what we want the world to be like'.

As a parent, I was struck by many of his suggestions, including ensuring our words and actions are in line with our ideals, valuing time and attention over material things, and encouraging perseverance and pride in achievement. It is a shame more of a Christian worldview wasn't included, apart from the chapter on 'discovering reverence'. His theology of the 'purity and innocence' of children is also problematic. This aside, it is an easy, yet thought-provoking read for any parents, teachers or carers of children.



Growing up to be a child
Peter Sidebotham

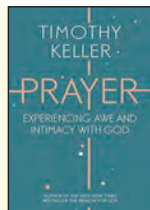
- Westbow Press, 2014, £9.14, Pb 174pp, ISBN 9781490840673
- Reviewed by **Andrew Tomkins**, Emeritus Professor of International Child Health at University College London.

This is a 'must' for all parents! Whereas many Christian authors emphasise the need to engage in thoughtful reading and interpretation of Scripture, Jesus said that 'Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'. Whatever did he mean?

Peter Sidebotham, a widely respected paediatrician with expertise in child development, provides rich insight into the stages of early childhood that all parents will have experienced and probably been puzzled or exasperated by. He shows how appropriate and inappropriate parenting can explain dysfunctional attitudes as adults, including a brief section on physical

punishment. Brave man! He describes the relevance of understanding, attachment, self-awareness, awareness of others, and communication of a child towards a parent and gives new insights into the many scriptures which describe how, and why, we can relate to God as adults.

This book also helps us understand why adults vary with regard to emotion, empathy and enquiry. But the author goes much further by explaining how we can all develop a greater understanding of God's love, power and purpose for us if we come with dependency, affection and wonder – just some of those precious phases of our development which often became displaced by adult arrogance and self-importance.



Prayer: Experiencing awe and intimacy with God
Timothy Keller

- Hodder & Stoughton, 2014, £16.99, Hb 321pp, ISBN 97814444750157. Available as an ebook.
- Reviewed by **John Martin**, CMF Head of Communications.

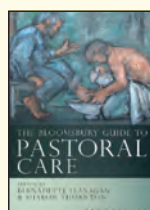
There is a paucity of quality books on prayer. Even good ones rarely strike an adequate balance between the theological, experimental and methodological. Tim Keller has succeeded in striking the needed balance between all three, hence a stand-out work.

Evangelicals often look to Catholic and Orthodox authors for material on prayer. It's one of my beefs that so many seem unaware of the huge and rich body of prayer resources available from our own tradition. Keller garners a huge panoply of Reformed and evangelical wisdom from down the ages. Over 350 references invite the reader to quarry further.

Keller's starting point is the

prayers of the Bible. In the Lord's Prayer, he says, the Christian has all the necessary resources for theology and the practice of prayer; he demonstrates this with a succinct commentary on its two subsections and six clauses.

He moves to the practice of prayer, with a master class from the three 'greatest of the older writers on prayer', Augustine, Luther and Calvin. He draws wisdom on the most common problem we all face with prayer – the seeming silence of God. Finally he offers resources for daily prayer, including explanation of how the Anglican divine Thomas Cranmer pioneered daily prayer for lay people. Buy it to read. Buy a second copy for your minister.



The Bloomsbury guide to pastoral care
Edited by Bernadette Flanagan and Sharon Thornton

- Bloomsbury Continuum, 2014, £35.00, Hb 240pp, ISBN 9781441125170
- Reviewed by **Russ Parker**, director of Acorn Christian Healing Foundation.

This book consists of a collection of essays addressing a wide range of issues affecting the practice of pastoral care in a world of rapidly changing social contexts. The subject matter embraces such diverse issues as asylum seekers, cults and sects, male violence against women and cyberbullying. As such the book offers an insight into disciplines and experiences that may fall outside the remit of many of its readers.

The book is divided into two basic sections covering European trends and themes and their North American equivalents. A most helpful chapter is the one entitled 'pastoral care today' by

Kevin Egan, who helpfully explores the differences to be understood between pastoral care and pastoral counselling. He charts the increasing secularisation within the disciplines of the pastoral world and examines the role still remaining for the traditional care from the church pastor and the boundaries such secularisation now entails.

The book is informative for those encountering new arenas of concern and the extensive book recommendations will enable such readers to grow in their knowledge of their new fields of enquiry. However, as most pastoral carers work within their fields of expertise this book can only serve as a discussion starter.