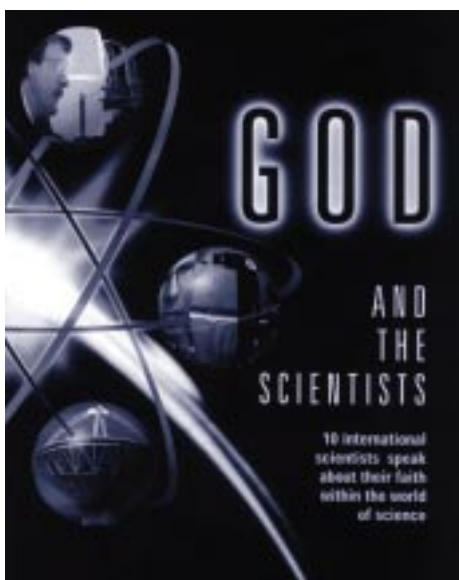


reviews:

God and the Scientists

Mike Poole. CPO, Worthing. 1997. 20pp
A5 booklet. £1.25

'All scientists are atheists - hasn't science disproved religion?' is the issue addressed in *God and the Scientists*. Ten scientists of international renown write about their own experiences in the worlds of science and faith. They were chosen from a wide range of disciplines, from botany and ecology to astrophysics. The only health professionals are anatomist and ethicist Professor Gareth Jones, and respiratory physician Professor Margaret Hodson, incidentally the only woman among the ten. The linking factors are their faith in Christ, and their declaration that scientific knowledge strengthens their faith, rather than weakening it.



As Professor Colin Russell says: 'To portray Christian and scientific doctrines as persistently in conflict is not only historically inaccurate, but actually a caricature so grotesque that what needs to be explained is how it could possibly have achieved any degree of respectability. . .'

The booklet is well presented, colourful, and is written in a very accessible style, so you need be neither scientist nor Christian to enjoy it. There are also some short apologetic sections, dealing briefly with some of the more common objections to our faith. These are, however, quite concise, and not of much use for those wanting to go further into these issues.

In summary, this booklet is the testimony of ten leading scientists who refute the statement 'You can't be a Christian - you're a scientist'. It could be a great evangelistic tool.

Phil Underwood
(Medical student, London)

Pregnancy: A Testing Time

Pete Moore. Lion, Oxford. 160pp. £7.99 Pb.

This book is well-written and balanced in its approach to its complex subject. The author shows an excellent grasp of the problems facing mothers today. The book is fast moving, sometimes a narrative, sometimes a reference text packed with information. I felt that it was written for the well-educated mother especially and might not appeal to those less able to grasp pregnancy screening problems. Certain chapters would be particularly difficult to understand without some knowledge of the subject, but serve well as an excellent reference.

The book gives an honest and open exposé of the ethical issues without being prescriptive. The author takes the view, however, that there are a number of options as to when a baby attains the full status of human being. I personally think the baby cannot be any other than fully human from conception, as he or she is nothing else.

The screening tests with their benefits and hazards are well explained, especially the 'double' and 'triple tests'. There were some errors of obstetric management which were minor, and an error in the risk with regard to amniocentesis which is quoted by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists at a 1 in 100 miscarriage rate, and this certainly varies amongst units.

The chapter on specific genetic disorders was particularly good. A mention earlier in the book of the uncertainty of the meaning of the 'double' and 'triple tests' for people of other ethnic origins would have been helpful because they will have read most of the book before having the opportunity to evaluate properly the advice contained in it. The stories related were both relevant and poignant.

In conclusion this book will be a valuable asset to the antenatal clinic and GP surgery for staff and parents alike.

Sian Kerslake
(Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, London)

Man-Made Man Ethical and Legal Issues in Genetics

Eds Peter Doherty and Agneta Sutton.
Open Air (Four Courts Press), Dublin.
1997. 116pp. £14.95 Pb.

The title of this book is misleading and raised my feminist hackles, but the subtitle describes it, and for anyone wanting information on this topic here is a useful handbook. With its authors coming from a number of European countries, the emphasis throughout is helpfully European rather than British.

For non-geneticists an appendix answers basic questions and there is a chapter giving a full explanation of some of the technical aspects of genetic manipulation. This may well be too detailed for most of those likely to read the book, but it is a reader-friendly account.

Luis Archer, Professor of Molecular Genetics in the University of Lisbon and bioethics consultant to the European Commission, describes the genetic testing currently available and the concerns it should raise and then makes suggestions as to how these should be tackled. His discussion of the pros and cons of germ-line treatment is a model of cool sanity with justice issues stressed.

David King, editor of *GenEthics News*, writes the chapter that is relevant to all. He agrees with the establishment view that eugenic schemes as practised earlier this century are unlikely to be repeated. He accepts the dogma of free parental choice in the matter of genetic screening and prenatal testing, but points out how easily this can lead to what he calls 'laissez-faire eugenics'. Parental choice may appear to be free, but in reality it is usually driven by sociological pressures based on negative attitudes to disability and poor provision of services for the disabled. He argues for the voice of the disabled (or their advocates) to be more prominent in public debate. (Here perhaps is a role for the

churches and Christian health professional organisations.)

Christian Byk, Professor of Legal Studies in Poitiers University and a member of The Human Genome Organisation, gives an account of law and regulation in Europe. This is a useful source of information and is up-to-date enough to include the response to Dolly the cloned sheep. Emy Lucassen from Greenwich is rightly concerned about the validity of informed consent of those undergoing pre-natal screening, but finds the law of little help in rectifying this.

Although the authors may well all be Christians and adopt a thoroughly Christian attitude in their chapters, there is no overt Christian input to the book. There is also hardly any of the paranoia which so often clouds discussion of genetic technology. It is difficult to know quite which readers of this review would value the book but it is a useful resource for any who want information on the legal aspects of medical genetic developments.

Caroline Berry
(Clinical Geneticist, Kent)

Cohabitation or Marriage? **A report examines the evidence**

Declan Flanagan and Dr Ted Williams. Belmont House Publishing, Sutton. 1997. 28pp A4 booklet. £2.99

While the Health of the Nation targets include reducing teenage pregnancies alongside reduction of smoking-related illness, advising abstinence from sex is much less 'politically correct' than abstinence from cigarettes. However, we have a responsibility to be aware of current trends and the social and health consequences of individual choices. This report, by a Baptist pastor and a public health doctor, provides a resource for those who have long suspected that cohabitation is not a reliable way to assess the likelihood of a successful marriage.

Some of the damages and negative consequences of cohabitation are highlighted and backed up by numbers, charts and references. These include increased divorce rates compared with those who did not cohabit, higher rates of smoking and infant mortality, higher abortion rates and a lesser commitment to faithfulness to the partner when compared with married couples.

The authors set out God's plan for marriage and extend an invitation to a 'better way', urging those who cohabit to 're-examine their relationship in the light of Biblical truth'. The information should help us to commend marriage to those around us. The report ends with the reminder of forgiveness and a note of hope, and has certainly given me food for thought.

Liz Walker
(GP, Southall)

The Healing Promise - is it always God's will to heal?

Richard Mayhue. Christian Focus Publications (Mentor Imprint), Tain, Ross-shire. 1997. 288pp. £9.99 Pb.

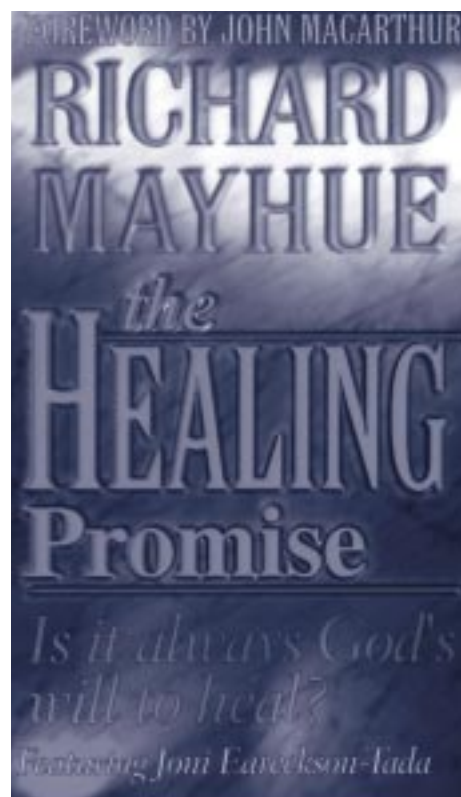
Even good books on healing tend to be unbalanced and incomplete. Theologians rarely understand the medical issues, while doctors usually tread lightly over the biblical material. Few authors engage adequately with the pastoral agonies, and there are very few books I would give to a Christian with an incurable illness.

I therefore picked up this offering from an American Bible teacher with reluctance, but quickly found I was breathing in fresh air. The first two sections present a devastating critique of the current healing movement, written with clarity, charity and accuracy. He hits the nail on the head.

I was pleased to see James Randi given the credit he is due and to find a whole chapter is written by illusionist André Kole. Steve Martin's film *Leap of Faith* is acknowledged as being an accurate expose of the techniques used by miracle healers today. Special attention is given to Benny Hinn to illustrate the thesis. An account of what is actually going on medically with those claiming to be healed fully accords with my own enquiries.

The third part of the book covers the biblical material. The key passages are tackled in a compelling and interesting way. He is not afraid to argue a fresh viewpoint - eg on James Chapter 5. He disagrees with other writers, including Dr Lloyd-Jones, for believing that Christians can be demonised - the idea, Mayhue asserts, is a contradiction in terms. He writes helpfully about the 'healing in the atonement' debate.

The final section faces the pastoral issues. One chapter records an interview with quadriplegic Joni Eareckson-Tada. Another looks at the place of prayer and medicine for sick Christians. There is lots of sound, Christian, common sense here.



Criticisms? Well, the book contains the best definition of a miracle I have seen but without an index you will be hard put to find it! If you want to know whether the work of Lourdes is tackled, or Verna Wright quoted, you will have to search without an index. This lack of an index adds a whole new dimension to debate about the 'unforgivable sin'! It is so unnecessary in a book which should be such a valuable reference work. Also, there are some Americanisms to endure. Every surgeon is 'world renowned' etc! We even have a few 'unto-s' to digest.

I can only hope this book is widely read, not least by those with incurable sicknesses. Certainly, it should be compulsory reading for anyone wanting to understand the nature of any distinctively Christian ministry of healing.

Peter May
(GP, Southampton)