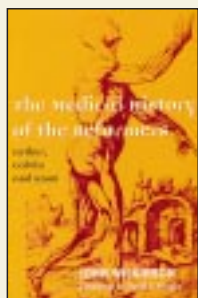


BOOKS

The Medical History of the Reformers: Luther, Calvin and Knox



John Wilkinson
Handsel Press Limited
2001
£9.95 Pb 117 pp
ISBN 1 871828 60 0

This book will interest all CMF members. Our CMF statement of faith

declares many of the biblical truths which the subjects of this book laboured diligently and fearlessly to proclaim and for which they suffered poverty, persecution, abuse and exile. Many of the freedoms we enjoy today are the fruit of their work.

It is a lively book giving vivid cameos of Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox, their family background and contemporaries, with fascinating accounts of the diagnostic and therapeutic methods of sixteenth century medicine. John Wilkinson's painstaking research, sifting of evidence, clear documentation, refutation of fallacious popular opinions and well-reasoned conclusions, his spiritual insight and sympathy with his subjects make it a pleasure to read.

Martin Luther, 'a prodigious man in a prodigious age, a hero in a time of heroes', suffered gout, renal calculi, urinary retention with acute renal failure, hypertension, ischaemic heart disease, chronic suppurative otitis media, chronic venous ulceration and many febrile episodes.

John Calvin, though slandered as a cold detached individual, is shown through his letters 'as a deep fountain of tenderness and affection'. He suffered gout, renal calculi, anaemia, malaria and pulmonary tuberculosis from which he died.

John Knox while a galley slave for 19 months, 'a form of life which for unutterable horror is perhaps without parallel in the history of humanity', suffered 'galley fever' (possible louse-borne typhus or bubonic plague), dehydration, malnutrition and renal colic. He later suffered a mild cerebral

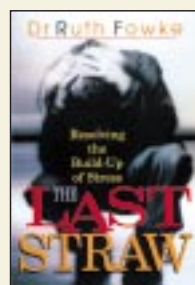
thrombosis with left hemiparesis and finally died with acute bronchopneumonia.

Despite their physical and mental suffering they achieved a monumental volume of work including Bible commentaries, theological treatises, and copious correspondence in the midst of daily preaching, teaching and pastoral work and responsibilities as Reformation leaders. Their motivation was their deep strong faith and experience of the saving grace of God in Christ. John Knox, for example was 'a great Christian leader and statesman who exhausted himself in his battle for the political social and above all the religious freedom of his people...He left a national and religious heritage...(whose) influence can still be seen in the character, literature and institutions of Scotland today'.

This book is an inspiration and challenge from the lives of great Christian leaders.

Stephen Browne is a General Practitioner in Birmingham

The Last Straw



Ruth Fowke
Eagle 2000
£6.99 Pb 158pp
ISBN 086347 363 6

Hands up those who've got stress sorted! If you haven't got your hand up,

there is probably something in this excellent little book for you. Aided by some delightfully humorous personal illustrations, Ruth Fowke provides an opportunity for all of us to take a little time out to examine how we allow stress to build up in our lives and to see whether something can be done about it.

Most of us recognise that in addition to individual burn out, stress is also damaging to relationships. The author helps us to see how factors such as different personality type, poor communication, delay in decision making and 'baggage from the past' can be recognised and better handled.

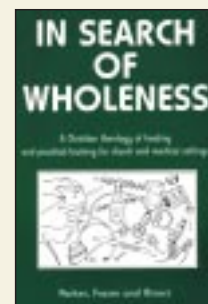
The book is easily readable and parts of

it can be appreciated at a level of straightforward common sense or basic psychological insight. However, all the writing is under-girded with biblical truth and recognises the fundamental importance of our ongoing relationship with Christ. Coping with change is often a struggle, but 'if the shifting sands of change reveal that our foundation is also insubstantial', we may recognise an opportunity to do some fundamental repair work to our spiritual life.

Whether we consider ourselves to be orthodox Christians or not, the book unpacks how a false half-image of God can lodge unrecognised within us and do untold damage. Many doctors find themselves driven by work and lose any sense of identity outside the workplace. However, in the Bible, work and leisure are two sides of the same coin so one without the other is meaningless. Ruth Fowke encourages us to beware of reducing life to the merely utilitarian but instead to rediscover the astonishing truth of 1 Timothy 6:17: 'God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.'

Kevin Vaughan is a General Practitioner in Birmingham

In search of wholeness: a Christian theology of healing and practical training for church and medical settings



R Parker, D Fraser & D Rivers
St John's Extension Studies, Nottingham.
2000
£9.95 108pp
ISBN 1 900920 09 3

The co-authors of this study manual are the Director of

the Acorn Christian Foundation and two hospital chaplains. Their intention is 'to help Christians who want to be involved in God's gracious healing processes in the world today'. Discussion includes the theology of healing; the skills needed and attitudes involved when engaging with

sick people; becoming a renewed and healing church; coping with failure, death, and spiritual warfare. There is also a checklist, indicating to intending participants whether they are better suited for health care or church work, if not both. Taffy's cartoons break up the (easily read) text.

The authors hope to encourage better listening between Christians of two major persuasions. Some believe that all sickness can be healed if both prayers and prayed for have enough faith, regardless of God's gifts of modern medicine and skill. Others, including some doctors, expect healing only through medical means or spontaneous remissions. Recovery after prayer is attributed to underlying psychosomatic disorder, as though this diminishes its impact.

As James 4:14-16 indicates, the early church used both physical and spiritual means to restore health. There is still room for this combination. 'Going to the doctor and receiving the laying on of hands are not mutually exclusive'. (p24)

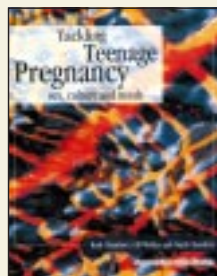
Those persisting in exclusivity can behave as though God must abide by their rules. Yet medicine without prayer and prayer without medicine fail equally to acknowledge that healing is in his hands. Although we may be instrumental in furthering his purposes, he is responsible for the final outcome. The last section, *Hard Questions*, considers the complexity of some of his ways, as when healing never comes.

All of us need to exercise a sensitivity not always reported in health professionals. The section, *Visiting the sick*, offers hints for any who hope to contribute to their wellbeing.

The frequent confusion of singular and plural (as in 'The client/person and *their*...') should be corrected in the next edition, but should not deflect from the usefulness of this one. In particular, we are reminded that a renewed church and its health workers, besides exchanging different perspectives and experiences, need prayerfully to exercise together their unique and God-given gifts of healing.

Janet Goodall is Emeritus Consultant Paediatrician, Staffordshire

Tackling teenage pregnancy: sex, culture and needs



Ruth Chambers, Gill Wakley & Steph Chambers
Radcliffe 2001
£17.95 Pb 219pp
ISBN 1 85775 497 2

This is a well-written, easy-to-read and up-to-date book on a crucial topic. It stems from the authors' extensive involvement with a teenage pregnancy prevention initiative in Staffordshire. Steph Chambers was 14 at the time she wrote her contributions and one of the major distinguishing marks of the book is its determination to reflect what young people are really thinking. The introductory chapter 'A Teenager's Viewpoint' by Anna Brown, aged 16, sets the tone and provides much for *Triple Helix* readers to reflect upon.

The approach is primary care-focused, practical and very comprehensive with chapters covering clinical governance, reaching young people, confidentiality, contraception, unplanned pregnancy, STIs, disability, sexual abuse and influence of peers, media and the press.

Culture, religion and beliefs also merit a chapter, which concludes with the warning to 'Make sure that you understand your own belief systems so that you do not unwittingly try to impose them on others inappropriately'. This sounds reasonable but of course implies there is little or no place for such belief systems (except presumably pragmatic humanism) having any influence wittingly or appropriately.

The text reflects the universal belief-system of books on teenage pregnancy in the UK that since teenagers will have sex whatever you tell them, provision of accurate sex information and easing access to contraceptives are the keys to preventing both unplanned pregnancy and STIs. Yet these authors do at least show awareness that these are not the only factors involved in sexual health. For example they conclude the section on Regretted sexual intercourse with the admission that 'Spreading the word that

many teenagers regret exerting pressure and not planning their first intercourse might help other young people to postpone instant gratification in favour of later satisfaction'.

A paragraph from the section on *Gender and sexuality* movingly describes where most young people are at: 'Young women often know about safe sex, and intend to use condoms, but find themselves unable to be assertive enough to do this within the context of a sexual relationship. They feel they should be passive and undemanding and that the man should take the lead. Young men are confused too. How can they take the lead with these apparently more confident and knowledgeable young women?

Whatever they do will be wrong....They are encouraged to despise the "easy" sexual conquest (as "cheap" and having no value), but equally they brand women who resist their sexual advances as "frigid". How can they ever get it right?

This wistful questioning surely tacitly acknowledges that there is more to teenage sexual health than correct use of contraceptives. Religious values and especially Christian ones have a more important place in sexual relationships than these authors are consciously aware of. Spirituality and sexuality are inextricably linked and we separate them at our peril.

Trevor Stammers is a General Practitioner in West London who writes and broadcasts on sexuality

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