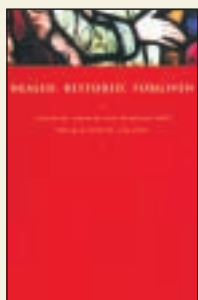


# BOOKS

## Healed, restored, forgiven *Liturgies, prayers and readings for the ministry of healing*



Written and compiled by  
John Gunstone  
Canterbury Press 2004  
£12.99 Pb 117pp  
ISBN 1 85311 587 8

In 2000, the Church of England produced its monumental report *A Time to Heal*. This

book draws from that report, and is a valuable collection of material for use in connection with healing prayer. It is a resource not just for Anglicans but for all Christians everywhere.

There are sets of personal and responsive prayers, prayers for intercessors, ministry teams, preparation, thanksgiving and a general selection. There are liturgies for healing services that include anointing and laying on of hands, and the Eucharist. The ministry of reconciliation (confession to a priest with absolution) is also covered. The book ends with a relevant and representative selection of Bible readings from Old and New Testaments, and with helpful readings from some twentieth century writers.

The Christian healing world has long been indebted to John Gunstone and this collection increases that debt. He has composed much of the material and compiled the rest from other sources, mainly Anglican but occasionally Roman Catholic and Orthodox. There are frequent cross-references to the exhortations in *A Time to Heal* and this book therefore functions as a supplement. Gunstone uses Scripture well throughout, and the only quote from Ecclesiasticus (38:1-2) is the well known: 'Honour physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; for their gift of healing comes from the most high'. Some might be uncomfortable with repeated references to Mary as the 'Mother of Christ', always in capitals.

All those who pray for healing in church contexts, no matter their denomination, will want this to hand. But do busy health professionals need it? I think so. There were insights, profound in their simplicity, which I found illuminating as I reflected on my own

lot, and on that of many whom I have attended professionally and in prayer. You might even consider using sections with carefully selected patients.

Andrew Fergusson is Chairman of the Acorn Christian Foundation

## Driven beyond the call of God *Discovering the rhythms of grace*



Pamela Evans  
The Bible Reading  
Fellowship 1999  
£7.99 Pb 224 pp  
ISBN 1 84101 054 5

Are you a driven person? Do you think you drive yourself too much? This book will

help you answer these questions and do something about it. Pamela Evans is a doctor who is also a counsellor, and investigates some of the reasons behind spiritual 'driveness' and 'workaholism'. 'Anything that's used to alter our mood or block out troublesome feelings is potentially addictive', she writes, and gives the example that some people can be 'addicted' to helping others in the church. She helpfully warns against co-dependency where someone's whole life is focused on the needs of others. Such people's helpful manner, she suggests, attempts to cover up their own deep needs. She warns against religious activity becoming an end in itself; people can easily get trapped on a treadmill of compulsive church activity at the expense of a vibrant relationship with the living God.

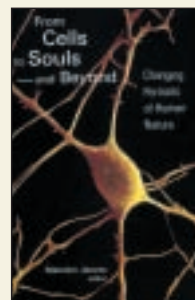
The title of the book derives from Jesus' words: 'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly' (Matthew 11:28-30, *The Message*). Evans sees learning the rhythms of grace as keeping in step with God as he directs our path, rather than following a set of instructions. She gives examples from her own experience of how

easy it is to 'put on a show' rather than to be honest with ourselves and with God. She encourages us to do the latter so that we can become more mature in Christ.

This is a challenging book. It is well written in a lively style and with many examples from daily life. I definitely recommend it for anyone in the caring professions, very busy in the church or who thinks that they may be doing too much.

Dominic Beer is a Consultant Psychiatrist in London

## From cells to souls *Changing portraits of human nature.*



Malcolm Jeeves (Ed)  
Eerdmans Publishing  
2004  
£19.99 Pb 250pp  
ISBN 0 80280 985 5

The Psalmist's question 'What is man that you are mindful of him?' has never been more relevant than today. The Christian understanding of man is now under particular pressure from neo-Darwinians such as Dennett and Singer who look at our biology and morality, and from neuroscientists who challenge our concept of consciousness and of free will.

This book, written from a clearly Christian perspective, examines the current debate about the nature of human personhood. Its contributors are philosophers, theologians, psychiatrists, neuroscientists and biologists. Malcolm Jeeves, the editor, deliberately skews the mix towards a clearer understanding of the implications of current science. This is helpful, as it ensures the debate is as well informed and as contemporary as possible.

Inevitably a multi-author book will have its stronger and weaker parts, and my opinion will differ from yours as to which bit is which. Some of the book, such as its consideration of cloning or the definition of personhood, goes over well worn ground, but this will help those who have never considered the issues before. The standard of contributions is high. It is easy to read bit by bit, as the chapters naturally stand alone, as a series of separate articles around a theme.

# BOOKS

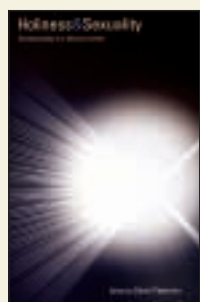
For me the important core of the book is in its consideration of the nature of consciousness and an understanding of human agency. I enjoyed the contributions of Alan Torrance, a theologian, and Diogenes Allen, a philosopher. They point out the paradox of scientists, clearly *acting* as agents yet at the same time questioning the nature of agency as a plausible concept.

Another theme of the book is that man is defined by relationships. It explores the relationship between mind and brain and body, and calls for an integrative view of man, rejecting both a dualistic and reductionist view of man's nature. Glen Weaver describes man's nature as 'embodied spirituality', a helpful concept. The book also explores our nature in terms of our own relationships, not least our potential for relationship with God.

This is a rewarding and useful book. It could have been even better if it had an index and suggestions for further reading. It makes me realise just how much we don't yet know about ourselves - how much basic theory is still being played with on the drawing board. The philosophy and theology of neuroscience will be a hefty issue for the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Reading this book is an excellent introduction.

*David Misselbrook is a General Practitioner in London*

## Holiness and sexuality *Homosexuality in a biblical context*



*David Peterson*  
Paternoster Press  
2004  
£7.99 Pb 212pp  
ISBN 1 84227 269 1

There are so many books available exploring both theological and

personal Christian perspectives on homosexuality that any new addition to the field should offer fresh insights. This one does. The chapters were all originally papers given at a symposium at Oak Hill Theological College in April 2003. Although the chapters by Oak Hill

Principal David Peterson on interpreting the biblical texts, and Peter Saunders on the origins of homosexuality are models of lucid, well-referenced synopses of current understanding, this or similar material is available elsewhere.

In his chapter charting his personal journey as a Christian gay man, Martin Hallett offers some profound insights, not least that 'Perhaps one of the reasons why we deal so badly with the issue of sexuality in the church is that we expect total transformation of the present. Sex demands so much of our attention because it connects with so many other fundamental issues'. However Martin's life story *I am Learning to Love* has recently been republished and tells his story in much greater and therefore more helpful detail.

It is the two chapters by David Field on the nature of sexual sin that make this book essential reading for all those interested in the theology of sex. They are not an easy read in their style, content or implications. However, I have not previously read anything on this topic that has given me such deep insights into God's heart and how sin in all its forms affects our relationship with him. Under headings such as 'Sin is suicidal and deicidal', 'Sin is the contradiction of life, love and truth and the embrace of death, loathing and falsehood' and 'Sin is one and many', Field explores practical issues such as gay men and the love of the father, how the concept of 'homosexualities' may offer a better framework for understanding than 'homosexuality', and the relationship between sexual orientation, sexual behaviour and sin. Though requiring careful study to avoid misunderstanding, there are parts of these chapters that will cause discomfort to the reader who understands, 'Inordinate horror at sin is not excessive horror - for no horror at sin can be excessive. It is rather the horror that discriminates in my favour and other's disfavour. Horror not at the sinfulness of an action, but at its strangeness. It is the horror of offended taste rather than offended holiness. This is particularly pertinent in matters of sexuality.'

This is a sobering and necessary book.

*Trevor Stammers is a General Practitioner in West London*

## Children and bereavement



*Wendy Duffy*  
Church House Publishing  
2003  
£6.95 Pb 74pp  
ISBN 0 71514 998 9

Wendy Duffy, previously a hospice nurse, is now a bereavement

counsellor. She is also a pastoral assistant in her local parish church and writes from many years' experience of supporting children and families through the bereavement process. Her short book is easily readable and is targeted at parents, teachers, clergy and others involved with helping children or teenagers come to terms with a death.

The book is a mixture of information and stories from her experience. It includes sections on suicide, sudden death and the role of the school in helping to support a community of children after a tragic event such as 9/11, or an individual child after a personal loss. That many young teachers may not have suffered any form of bereavement themselves and may struggle with their own reactions was a point well made. There is also a useful chapter on resource organisations and appropriate books for children, teenagers and adults who help them.

The chapter on children's perception of death at different ages is very brief. I felt that it lacked a clear explanation of the difference between the concrete thinking of children under seven years of age, and older ones who are developing an ability to grasp more abstract ideas. Tailoring explanations to children's age and understanding of the world is crucial to minimise confusion. The quotes from the children themselves would have had more power if the interpretations had been expanded.

Many of us will come into contact with bereaved children either professionally or in our personal circles. Indeed, we may be asked to be involved in explanations or support for children of friends or of church families because of our medical training, and we may feel inadequate for the task. For my own purposes the book was too



brief but it could be useful for a local church leader or a teacher. For more detailed coverage of how children think and react to death, dying and bereavement, I would recommend a book by a past President of CMF and retired consultant paediatrician, Janet Goodall: *Children and Grieving*, Scripture Union 1995. This book has helped me immensely over the years.

*Liz Walker is a General Practitioner in Farnborough*

### In a strange land... *People with dementia and the local church*



*Malcolm Goldsmith*  
4M Publications 2004  
£14.95 Pb 239pp  
ISBN 0 95304 946 9

This book offers a compassionate and well-informed look at the world of dementia.

The author is an Anglican minister with many years' experience in pastoral ministry in this area. He paints a realistic and forthright picture of the problems of dementia, and talks straightforwardly about the difficulties and opportunities of reaching out through visiting and 'alongside' ministries to both sufferers from dementia and their carers. He is a passionate advocate of the personhood of people with dementia, and feels strongly that the church should be a community of 'loving defiance' to the values of the world. There are many more questions than answers, which is the nature of things and not a defect of the book.

I do confess to getting a little lost in Goldsmith's description of spirituality without faith, and I suppose I cannot go

along with all of that. But it is clear that he is trying to grapple with difficult issues, and to explore how people with a very limited capacity for coherent thought can experience transcendence, and be all that they can be.

I was much more moved by one of his quotes from a Christian lady with early dementia: 'I refuse to be a victim, to succumb to the lie of dementia, that as my cognition fades, so must my spirituality. I will trust in the Holy Spirit within me, and the fellowship of the body of Christ around me, to help me as I make this journey.' Now, that's faith! Overall, this is a highly useful introduction to the ministry of caring for these people, and should be required reading for all ministers and elders.

*Mark Cheesman is a Geriatrician in Bristol*

### Straw dogs *Thoughts on humans and other animals*



*John Gray*  
Granta 2002  
£8.99 Pb 246pp  
ISBN 1 86207 596 4

We have become used to modernism, and got the hang of post-modernism but what comes next? Perhaps

post-humanism? Christians and humanists mostly get along. We share a broadly similar and liberal vision of what is good for society because we both believe that being human is special and valuable. To a humanist we are special because we possess a high degree of reason, self awareness and moral agency. As Christians we see ourselves as special because in addition, God created us in his own image, with the capacity to relate to

him. But can you imagine a world where humans no longer see themselves as special but as just another animal? A world where we do not see ourselves as free or responsible? A world where we do not see any point or purpose to our lives?

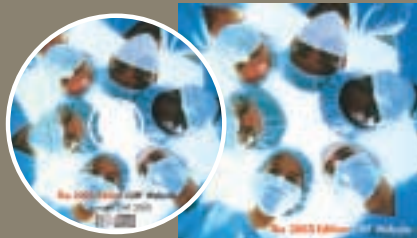
Gray writes off both the Enlightenment and its progeny humanism as a blind alley. He follows Schopenhauer in his view that humanism is just Christianity with God left out, and that without God it is unsustainable. But if the 21st century does indeed leave humanism behind as a pseudo-Christian hangover, then what is left? According to Gray, only a bleak mixture of nihilism, Eastern philosophy and a dash of neuroscience.

This book is horribly readable. It paints a vividly accurate picture of how this world would be without God. What value our ethics if humans have no special place? What value beauty if there is no meaning? What value my personhood or my relationships with those around me if consciousness is just a cosmic accident and 'free will is a trick of perspective'? According to one reviewer 'nobody can hope to understand the times in which we live unless they have read Straw Dogs'.

Gray may be a prophet for the 21st century. He joins the likes of Dawkins, Dennett and Singer in seeing only a world without God. But as CS Lewis pointed out, if you abolish God then the abolition of man as a free and worthwhile being is not far behind. It remains to be seen whether people will really accept Gray's despairing message. If the 21st century world does indeed become bleaker and more futile, then the treasure we possess in knowing the living God through Jesus his son should shine all the more brightly. Read this book – you will be glad you are a Christian.

*David Misselbrook is a General Practitioner in London*

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