

### A Theological Diagnosis

*A new direction on genetic therapy, 'disability' and the ethics of healing*

Matt Edmonds

- Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011
- £25 Pb 208pp
- ISBN 978 1 84310 998 3

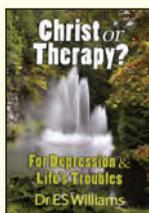
**T**his unusual book includes chapters on theology, genetic techniques and faith healing. The surprising link is the author's experience with the L'Arche community. He reviews the literature on the theology of disability and explains his personal theology of grace and concern for each individual known by name. An unnecessarily detailed description of the new genetic technologies is followed by a good discussion of the theology of genetics. Of far more concern to the author is the 'prosperity gospel' and three chapters review the rise of this form of Christianity, highlighting its

limitations and disasters. Its emphasis on healing as a 'right' of true believers denigrates and distresses those with disability, implying that it is their faith, or that of their carers that is lacking.

The final chapter outlines the work of the L'Arche communities with their attitude of grace and acceptance for each individual however severe their inability.

Well referenced and indexed this is a complex book, difficult to summarise briefly but well worth reading.

*Caroline Berry is a retired Consultant Geneticist who worked at Guy's Hospital in London*



### Christ or Therapy?

*For depression & life's troubles*

Dr ES Williams

- Belmont House Publishing, 2010
- £6.95 Pb 156pp
- ISBN 978 1 87085 571 6

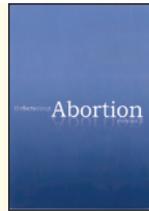
**L**ife in a fallen world can be profoundly challenging, driving us to seek relief wherever it can be found. In this book Dr Williams poses a basic dichotomy – do Christians need secular psychotherapies, or can they find all that they need in Christ and His word? He critiques the rise of pop psychology in the contemporary church, and the secular assumptions underlying this. He then challenges some commonly held doctrines, in particular questioning the biblical basis for thinking that God's love and forgiveness are unconditional, and rejecting marriage education and cognitive-behavioural therapy as unbiblical. He concludes that Christian counselling is modern-day gnosticism and has 'perverted

the Gospel of Christ'.

Dr Williams rightly questions the appropriate scope and applications of extra-biblical strategies for psychological difficulties, while accepting that some problems can be severe enough to require medical treatment. However, several of his conclusions do not provide a sufficiently nuanced biblical response to core issues, coming across as somewhat naively dismissive and overstated pietistic reactions to false dichotomies.

This book is worth reading critically for the questions posed, but not all conclusions should be taken as biblically comprehensive nor universally applicable.

*Everett Julyan is a psychiatrist in Ayrshire*



### The Facts about Abortion v.2

- Lovewise 2011
- £12 Running time: 45-60 minutes
- Available from [www.lovewise.org.uk/abortion.html](http://www.lovewise.org.uk/abortion.html)

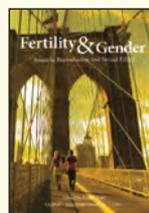
**T**alk about Abortion and God in schools? Surely not! Yet it is possible and necessary amid the fallacies and fallout from this procedure. This excellent teaching package on Abortion, by Newcastle paediatrician Dr Chris Richards, provides a good quality pro-life resource for use in PSHE, RE and science lessons as well as for youth groups.

We professionals are well placed to teach "in season and out" on abortion to church or youth. But where does one begin? Here are 50 slides and three videos ready to use. Pitched at the general level for ages 14 up to adult, the material can be split

into two lessons starting with the facts about the wonders of our own beginnings. The resources cover biological, medical and ethical issues including the damaging consequences and the hard cases like rape.

Video ultrasound of a lively foetus backs up interviews with two women over their agonising choices. A running script offers questions and discussion starters to get people talking. Yes God appears by slide 5, but naturally and sensitively as a delighted Creator not a threatening judge. Here is a useful tool for teaching.

*Mark Houghton is a GP and Chairman of Love2Last*



### Fertility & Gender

*Issues in reproductive and sexual ethics*

Edited by Helen Watt

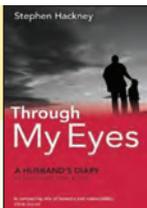
- Oxford - Anscombe Bioethics Centre 2011-08-27
- £15.95 Pb 220pp
- ISBN : 978-0-906561-12-6

**T**his book contains the proceedings of an international conference 'Fertility, Infertility and Gender' held in Maynooth, Ireland in 2010 by the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics (now the Anscombe Bioethics Centre). Its thirteen chapters cover contributions which will be of interest to Christian doctors such as: Fertility, Celibacy and the Biblical Vindication of Marriage, Psychological Issues in Gender Identity and Same-Sex Attraction, Teenage Pregnancy, STIs and Abstinence Strategies, Population Growth and Population Control, Contraception, Moral Virtue and Technology, Condoms and HIV Transmission, Motherhood, IVF and Sexual Ethics. Authors

include philosophers, psychologists theologians and priests.

Although Scripture is quoted, the underlying authorities are Papal Encyclicals especially *Humanae Vitae* (1968). This makes it of especial value to Roman Catholic Doctors. As an evangelical I find it difficult to accept its teaching that contraception within marriage is always wrong and sinful and that 'faithful compliance with natural law is necessary for eternal salvation' (Pope Paul VI). I think *Fertility & Faith* by Brendan McCarthy (IVP 1997) has a more biblical foundation and will be more helpful to CMF members.

*Stephen Browne is a GP in Birmingham*



## Through My Eyes

*A husband's diary*  
Steve Hackney

- Authentic Media Limited, 2011
- £8.99 Pb 100pp
- ISBN 185078955X

**T**hrough My Eyes is a man's story of his wife's illness and death from cancer, written by a Pentecostal minister in Nottingham. Stephen's wife Lesley was diagnosed with a rare nasopharyngeal tumour in her early thirties and died four years later leaving him with a young daughter. The book is written in the form of a diary with the first two chapters focussing on some of his prayers. These are inevitably somewhat repetitive, but they do illustrate some of the frustration and anguish of unanswered prayer.

Later the diary takes on a narrative form and becomes more reflective. The entries are not daily, so sometimes parts

of the story are re-capped at a later date. As time goes on there is a sense of resignation to the natural course of the illness, yet a dilemma is posed every time somebody suggests prayer for healing. Stephen writes honestly about the strain put on their relationship by the illness, and the strain on himself as carer. There is a very good epilogue where he brings together some of the themes of the book, including the roles of suffering and prayer in the Christian life.

I would recommend this book as an honest and insightful look into the realities of living with progressive cancer.

*Roxanna Walker is a GP in Nottingham*



## Resistance Fighter

*God's heart for the broken*  
Susie Howe

- IVP (2011)
- £7.99 Pb 176pp
- ISBN 9781844745173

**T**his book is part autobiography and part an exploration of one of the great global issues of our time.

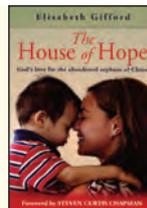
The story outlines how Susie came to faith, and as a consequence gave up the promise of a career in dancing to become a nurse. That opened the doorway for her to become involved in caring for people living with HIV and AIDS.

When she and her husband went to work for a couple of years at a small Zimbabwean hospital, she encountered one of the most dreadful consequences of HIV – the children forced to live on their own or with elderly grandparents because they have lost their parents to AIDS related

illnesses. Susie set up an NGO that has gone round the world equipping, training, supporting and learning from local communities and churches seeking to help the vulnerable children in their communities.

Susie is a bit of a one-off – dynamic, energetic, full of God's love and as a result, a burning drive for compassion and justice. But when you read the stories of tragic young lives turned round by the care and compassion of God's people around the globe, you cannot fail to be inspired, and encouraged. This is a book to challenge complacency and give hope and inspiration.

*Steve Fouch is CMF Head of Allied Professions Ministries*



## The House of Hope

*God's love for the abandoned orphans of China*  
Elisabeth Gifford

- Monarch Books, 2011
- £8.99 Pb 223pp
- ISBN 978 0 85721 059 3

**I**n 1998 expatriates Robin Hill and his doctor wife Joyce heard God's call to give up their comfortable Beijing life to care for abandoned Chinese infants, released to them from the official Children's Welfare Institutions (CWIs). Deemed hopeless, some had life-threatening but operable conditions. Sympathisers worldwide helped the Hills to build and supervise several scattered 'Houses of Hope'. One-to-one care then saved hundreds of lives, sometimes after urgent or repeated surgery by international experts, responsive to Joyce's emailed assessments. Many of these children have gone on to be adopted, usually by families overseas but often after lengthy fostering in China. A novel and

welcome development has been the supervision of palliative care units, requested by some CWIs for their moribund infants. As the Hills aimed to treat each child like one of their own they have trained equally caring managers for the different centres.

Despite sometimes disruptive backtracking, moving stories are told of God's loving care for 'the least of these'. Supposedly hopeless infants thrive, others find new families or are loved until they die, and experiences of God's perfect timing strengthen faith. Readers hesitating about saying 'yes' to one of God's surprising, if costly, invitations will find much in these pages to inspire and encourage.

*Janet Goodall is a retired paediatrician in Stoke-on-Trent*



## Keziah

*A little piece of God's heart*  
Lizzie Grayson

- Sovereign World Ltd, 2011
- £7.99 Pb 144pp
- ISBN 978 1 85240 540 3

**T**his is one of a small but growing number of books on the market telling the story of how people cope with the news that their unborn child has a potentially fatal diagnosis. 20 weeks into pregnancy, a short, 'impersonal' phone call, informed Lizzie Grayson that her daughter had Trisomy 18 (also known as Edwards syndrome). She relates her journey from that point to, and beyond, the further grief of stillbirth at 41 weeks.

Able to be read in a couple of hours, it's told with an infectious enthusiasm for God's word.

An appendix on 'Salvation' is for those who want to know how to

follow Christ. This reviewer's only concern is that, in a second appendix, 'For those who may have terminated a pregnancy', she writes 'your unborn child is safe in heaven'. Does Scripture allow us that certainty?

Lizzie's account is a hugely inspiring testimony of how repeated, deliberate decisions to praise God, no matter what the circumstances, lead to peace and joy. Every Christian should read it, and it could be given to those curious to know what (who!) can give us such astonishing strength.

*Karen Palmer is a specialty psychiatrist in Glasgow*