

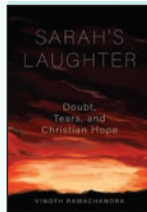


**2084**  
*Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity*  
John Lennox

- Zondervan Reflective, 2020, £10.99, 208pp, ISBN: 9780310109563
- Reviewed by **Jennie Pollock**, CMF Associate Head of Public Policy

In 2017, the London Science Museum held an exhibition of robots. It featured some of the earliest automata and followed their progress through to the robots in development today. What struck me was how much effort was being channelled into making robots that could do things humans can do. They can sort and analyse data far more quickly and efficiently than humans already, but it turns out it is incredibly hard to develop hands that can pick up a selection of different objects, or eyes that can judge distance, or legs that can take a step. There is a lot more engineering in the human body than I had ever considered.

But the question I was left with was, why were they bothering? As John Lennox points out in his new book *2084: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humanity*, 'the aircraft industry involves making machines that fly... [but not] in exactly the same way as birds do.' It was striking that these scientists were not simply trying to make machines to solve our problems, rather to make beings in our own image, but which would supersede us. The project of robotics, and particularly of the striving towards Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), Lennox argues, is an attempt at self-deification. Like Adam and Eve, we are not content to be God's creations, made in his image, but rather want to be gods ourselves. This little book covers a lot of ground and is an accessible introduction to many of the vast ideas and dilemmas surrounding AI and AGI. The final apocalyptic chapters are perhaps the more worrying since it has been clear throughout the Lennox is not a Luddite; he appreciates what technology has to offer but has significant concerns around its trajectory. Perhaps one outcome of this book will be to encourage scientists with what Lennox calls 'transcendent ethical convictions' to take a seat at the table when it comes to wrestling through the ethics of what we should do, as what we can do races on apace.



**Sarah's Laughter:**  
*Doubt, tears, and Christian Hope*  
Vinoth Ramachandra

- Langham Global Library, 2020, £9.44, 137pp, ISBN: 9781783688579
- Reviewed by **Trevor Stammers**, former Reader in Bioethics at St Mary's University and Director of the Centre for Bioethics and Emerging Technologies.

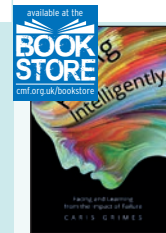
For those whose faith in God is tested by evil, pain, and grief, this book is for you. From his opening analysis of the civil war in his beloved home nation of Sri Lanka, Ramachandra, in the five chapters of this sobering yet ultimately hopeful book, covers a vast terrain of pain, including his own. He mentions the death of his wife, Karin, only once early on, yet this inevitably influences the text, and the book is dedicated to her.

Scripture also permeates the pages with extensive quotations throughout, especially, as one might expect from the many passages of lament. Ramachandra bewails 'lamentless churches' which don't permit such pain to be expressed.

The many unanswered questions in the book of Job are also explored. The author's central point is that Job's anguish is not so much about the fact of suffering but rather the religious attempts to explain it away. Ramachandra sees in God's speeches that conclude Job the gratuitousness of divine love, sovereignty, wisdom, patience, justice, and engagement as sources of hope.

*The Tears of God* chapter explores the suffering of God over and with his people. Classical theism's doctrine of God's impassibility receives a challenge here as Ramachandra suggests its origins lie more in the pagan Plato and Aristotle than in Scripture.

The final chapter looks towards our future hope as God's people, seeing this hope as both a struggle and a sign of our vulnerability this side of heaven. Yet, it is also a prophetic way of life, pointing others to the Christ who sustains us. He reminds us 'The church, that section of humanity which has glimpsed the dawn in Easter Sunday while sharing the agony of Easter Saturday in fellowship with the rest of humanity, seeks to witness to that dawn'.



**Failing Intelligently**  
*Facing and Learning from the Impact of Failure*  
Caris Grimes

- Sarah Grace Publishing, 2019, £10.99, 179pp, ISBN: 9781912863051
- Reviewed by **Patricia Wilkinson**, a GP in East Lancashire

As doctors and other health care professionals, we are expected to know everything and get everything right, making all the correct decisions and never failing at anything! However, we know and admit, if we are being honest, that this isn't always the case. Although such honesty may not come easily to us. We try to avoid failure or minimise the damage rather than accepting it.

In this book, Caris Grimes looks at failure and how we can manage to deal with it. She starts by looking at the (seemingly) most significant failure of all; that of Jesus on the cross. Then through other characters in the Bible, who have failed for various reasons, she looks at how we may be able to cope with what may appear to be or actually is failure in whatever field; work, home, relationships or church. There are several real-life examples drawn from the author's experience, and each chapter ends with questions to reflect upon.

This is a practical book with tips and ideas about how we can cope when things go wrong, whether it is our fault or out of our control. I particularly like the idea that we need time and space to process failure rather than moving quickly on to the next thing.

I would recommend this book to anyone who has ever failed or is likely to fail, in whatever way.



**Disability and the Gospel:**  
*How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace*  
Michael S. Beates

- Crossway, 2012, £9.99, 192pp, ISBN: 9781433530456
- Reviewed by **Ruth Eardley**, a GP in Market Harborough



**Promises in the Dark**  
*Walking with Those in Need Without Losing Heart*  
Eric McLaughlin

- New Growth Press, 2019, £12.17, 176pp, ISBN: 9781645070290
- Reviewed by **Steve Sturman**, CMF Associate Head of Doctors' Ministries and a semi-retired Neurology Consultant in the West Midlands,



**Irreversible Damage:**  
*The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters*  
Abigail Shrier

- Swift Press, 2020, £12.68, 288pp, ISBN: 9781800750340
- Reviewed by **John Greenall**, CMF Associate CEO, and a paediatrician

For the Christian response to disability, I invariably turn to Joni Eareckson Tada. However, Michael Beates (who has served for twenty years on the International Board of Directors at 'Joni and Friends') has written here an excellent exploration of the theology of brokenness. The father of Jessica (now 38), who was born with a rare chromosomal abnormality and lives with profound, multiple disabilities, Dr Beates carefully takes the reader on a survey of disability through time.

Starting with the voice of God through the prophets and the law, he shows how physical and spiritual brokenness is a biblical motif. Beates is self-deprecating: *'I am not by any stretch of the imagination an expert'*, and his openness is disarming. Yet here is someone who knows what they're talking about and can answer tough questions with convincing scriptural applications.

The author's convictions are Reformed, and some may query his assertion that God ordains and causes disability, preferring to say that he allows it. Years of raising Jessica have, by his own admission, *'softened his edges'*. He is gracious when speaking of differing viewpoints; for example, those who say that even calling someone 'disabled' is reinforcing an oppressive stereotype. He points out that the ear was designed for hearing and that it is an obvious disability to live without that sense *'no matter how courageous and proud the accomplishments of the Deaf culture'*. (p110)

It is a slim volume, so mental health is not addressed, and there is a distinctly American perspective. However, the challenge to welcome and assimilate the 'broken' and to recognise our own brokenness applies to churches worldwide. As Joni Eareckson Tada says in her foreword, *'God's power always shows up best in brokenness. And you don't have to break your neck to believe it.'*

Eric McLaughlin is a missionary physician in Burundi. In this remarkable book, he takes us on his journey from A&E residency in the USA to dealing with the almost impossible demands of his mission hospital career, as he faced a series of under-resourced and heart-breaking healthcare situations.

This extremely honest book tackles enormously deep questions and challenges, from the problem of suffering in the face of God's love, to being haunted by the thought that more could have been done and bearing the moral injury, and of seeing the preciousness of the mundane. It is as if he has encountered so much moral distress and difficulty that he has been able to write a catalogue of almost every challenge one might face in healthcare. The intensity and the poignancy of each situation is amplified by the spiritual and resource-poor context in which they are experienced.

The truly remarkable thing about this book is that he not only frames these dilemmas with powerful, personal narratives, but he then expertly applies the Word of God to each one. The reader can almost hear God speaking to McLaughlin and explaining, reassuring and giving perspective that helps him cope. Anyone dealing with healthcare's moral dilemmas, particularly in the present pandemic, will find this book of God's promises, explained through narrative, encouraging, informative, and even foundational in their service for Christ. I strongly recommend it.

In our current climate, it takes courage to write a book critiquing the transgender movement. But that is what *Wall Street Journal* journalist Abigail Shrier has done. I confess that I was sceptical when approaching the book, given the title, as strong opinions in this realm often lead to echo chambers of accusation, 'cancellation', and insult-throwing. Yet Schrier writes in a disarming and compassionate way which meant that I emerged with greater understanding and empathy for those involved and more conversant with the arguments in both directions. However, as a parent and a paediatrician, I also emerged feeling disturbed that something is very wrong indeed.

Before 2012 *'there was no scientific literature on girls aged eleven to twenty-one ever having developed gender dysphoria at all'*. But this has all changed. As well as a 4,000 per cent increase in referrals over the last decade, last year, 77 per cent of referrals between ages twelve to 16 to the UK's Gender Identity Development Service were for females, reversing the trend of the previous ten years.

Meticulously researched, we hear from several of 'the girls' involved, as well as their parents, schoolteachers, the social media influencers, 'the shrinks' and those who have detransitioned. We are painted a humanising picture of people with real hopes and dreams, but simultaneously a disturbing theme of 'cult-like' internet subcultures preying on vulnerable girls.

Shrier concludes that we are witnessing a social contagion, a hysteria akin to multiple personality disorder and anorexia.

Whilst Shrier reports from America, it's happening here in the UK too. How will history judge our professions? Will we live up to our calling and training in the face of political ideology, or will we capitulate and leave our legacy as those who abandoned our girls in their time of need?