

Christianity and The New Eugenics: *Should We Choose to Have only Healthy or Enhanced Children?* Calum MacKellar

- IVP 2020 ,224pp, £12.199, ISBN: 9781783599134,
- Reviewed by **Trevor Stammers**, Reader in Bioethics at St Mary's University and Director of the Centre for Bioethics and Emerging Technologies

Most Christians will have no idea of the history of eugenics, aside from vague associations with the Third Reich. They will certainly not have any awareness of how deeply embedded the ideology of the new eugenicists is within the NHS and indeed, most other Western healthcare systems. Hence, this book that aims to examine the past to learn lessons for the present will be a total eye-opener to many readers.

It first examines the rise of eugenics in Nazi Germany but also charts the course of the practice in the UK and US. Frances Galton, Dean William Inge, Winston Churchill, Arthur Balfour, Neville Chamberlain, Glanville Williams, Francis Crick, Julian Huxley and Robert Edwards all feature in the gallery of shame which MacKellar unveils. In the US, many Bible-believing Christians were also swept up in the eugenics movement at the start of the 20th century. 'In fact, the Nazi government '.... looked to the USA for favourable results of sterilization policies, which were portrayed as being both feasible and humane' (p22).

The second and largest chapter explores the Christian perspective on eugenics. The biblical theology of creation is briefly considered followed by an in-depth

discussion of what it means to be created in the 'image of God'. Other themes in this chapter include procreation and its meaning, eugenics and human equality, discrimination and the disabled, and questions about eugenic selection and the instrumentalization of children. A prominent theme throughout is that of unconditional love. *'...if parents set preconditions and do not accept their child for the mere sake of his or her existence... the child will always be aware that his or her very life was related to the selection procedure and associated preconditions, instead of being appreciated for the mere fact of existing.'* (p74)

The final main chapter explores ten different methods of eugenic selection ranging from the selection of sexual partners to cloning, infanticide and germline editing. Along the way, many other areas of beginning of life ethics, such as child and embryo adoption, saviour siblings and designer children, are critically evaluated from a Christian perspective.

With lists for further reading, an excellent glossary and both a general index and an index of scriptural references, this book is an excellent summary of where the new eugenics currently stands and how it has embedded itself within Western healthcare.



Gain from Pain *God's purposes are always good* Janet Goodall

- Gilead Book Publishing, 2020, £8.85, ISBN: 9781999722456
- Reviewed by **Ruth Butlin**, a retired medical missionary and member of the Triple Helix Committee

At only 173 pages divided into 17 short chapters, this is an easy read. But, as each chapter ends with suggestions for further reading (both Bible passages and other books), it could lead on to wider study.

A small book with a large message spelt out in its subtitle 'God's purposes are always good'. It reassures us that, in distressing circumstances, we can by the Holy Spirit's help learn to trust in God's long-term creative purposes.

There are no startling new theological insights, but rather a distillation of a lifetime's thought on the subject informed by the author's professional experience as a Paediatrician who sees '(her) patient is the whole family, not just the sick child' (chapter 5).

It is a book for Christians, full of anecdotes of people who have suffered in different ways; an eclectic mixture of people - from the Bible, from more recent history and from our own generation. Many of those whose experience is described have left us a

precious legacy (a hymn or some prose or an example, or even an institution) which might aid us in our own struggles with pain. Each anecdote is presented in the context of scriptural truth, with a focus on the redemptive suffering of the incarnate Christ.

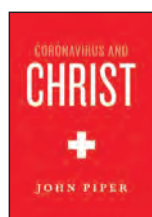
Speaking of personal calamities, the author writes, *'When the agony is raw, there will be little comfort in a well-intentioned comment that "God can bring great good from it", though people of faith learn by experience to trust this truth, even in the dark'* (from chapter 15).

Christianity and the Coronavirus: Four reviews



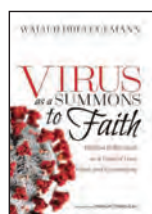
Where is God in a Coronavirus World?
John C Lennox

■ The Good Book Company, 2020, £2.54, 63pp,
ISBN: 9781784985691



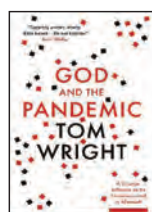
Coronavirus and Christ
John Piper

■ Desiring God, 2020, £4.99, 112pp,
ISBN: 9781433573590



Virus as a Summons to Faith
Biblical Reflections in a Time of Loss, Grief, and Uncertainty
Walter Bruggeman

■ Paternoster Press, £4.99, 92pp,
ISBN: 9781788932011



God and the Pandemic
A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and its Aftermath
Tom Wright

■ SPCK, £6.99, 88pp, ISBN: 9780281085118

■ All four reviews by **Steve Fouch**, CMF Head of Communication



An Eastender's Tale
Dr Peter Armon

■ feedaread.com, £7.98, 2017, 367pp,
ISBN: 9781786979919

■ Reviewed by **Vicky Lavy**, a former CMF Head of International Ministries

When there is nothing else to do, an author's instinct is to write. For four leading Christian writers and theologians, the COVID-19 pandemic has been fertile territory to write books to reassure, challenge, inspire and warn the church.

Piper and Lennox's books were first to appear back in March and are close kin. Starting with the rapidly unfolding crisis caused by the novel coronavirus, both authors seek to understand the nature of suffering, death and disaster and from these move towards a positive Christian message of hope and salvation. That they take different journeys to get there is primarily to do with their starting points. Lennox, as a scientific polymath, looks at the evidence from creation and human philosophy before leading us to Christ as revealed in Scripture. Piper, as a pastor starts with Scripture and what it says about the nature of creation and humanity. Both books end with encouragement and hope, and each is a good, short(ish) evangelistic tract to share with colleagues.

Bruggeman, as befits an Old Testament theologian, looks at the Hebrew Scriptures and how they understand God's purposes and agency during times of disaster and suffering. Drawing on the Psalms, the historical books (especially 1 and 2 Kings), Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and, of course, Job, he warns of the pitfalls of a simplistic reading of suffering and disaster. Get the bigger picture of what God is doing before jumping to conclusions.

East End boy makes good. The first doctor in his family, Peter served God as a gynaecologist in the UK, Malawi, Tanzania, Israel, Spain and Gibraltar. Friends will smile at his winsome gems that remind us of his cheerful self-effacing nature: 'I had red and curly hair, rabbit teeth and ugly NHS wire glasses – Altogether I was not a handsome lad and got made fun of, but wouldn't call it bullying'.

Billy Graham's Harringay Crusades started his lifetime habit of reading the Bible morning and evening. But he was not a complete goody-goody, and once swapped his dad's valuable stamp collection for a bicycle.

We are taken on a journey from East Ham Grammar with homework done to Radio

Wright starts at the same point with which Bruggeman concludes, before taking us on a different journey. Wright argues that Scripture teaches us to face calamity with lament – for the loss, pain and disruption of the pandemic, but also for our complicity in the sins that have added to that suffering. But we cannot stay there, and he shows us that Scripture always asks the question 'what' rather than 'why'. What do we do in response is the crucial question to address, rather than why God allowed this. The Bible also answers the question of 'why' with a 'who'. As Job 38-40 shows us, the why questions have no answer save in the person of our Creator and Saviour. He also warns against jumping to the simplistic conclusion that COVID-19 is a sign of the end-times by putting it into the historical context of the epidemics and global pandemics of the past.

While all four books touch on the history of pandemics, Wright, as a scholar of ancient history, explores how the early church responded to the wide-ranging epidemics of the first few centuries of its history. Christianity was birthed in such crises and has grown throughout them. We can gain great wisdom and insight from how the early Church Fathers and others (such as Martin Luther) responded to parallel crises in their days.

Four very different books, each appealing to different audiences and with differing but complementary messages, all are worth reading and sharing widely during the time of COVID.

Luxembourg, via Charing Cross Medical School to becoming a gynaecologist. His first date with his future wife, Carol, where she is an hour late reminds us of those days before mobile phones.

We learn of his time in the 1970s and at KCMC Tanzania that he calls the Golden Years, and at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Blantyre in the 80s. Back in the UK, Peter, Carol, and their three boys save money by buying a house in Newcastle with another Christian family who only had girls. All went well until the fire...

If you knew Peter, who served as CMF's 'Overseas Secretary' back in the late noughties, you must get this. Regardless, his story is still a gem; a glimpse into the life of a servant of God.