



**The Great Mystery**  
*Science, God and the human quest for meaning*  
Alister McGrath

- Hodder & Stoughton, 2017, £9.99, 256pp, ISBN 9781473634312
- Reviewed by **James May**, GP in London

If you are looking for a confident, robust and unambiguous defence of Christian belief in the face of modern secularism, then McGrath's book may be the book for you, but not in the way you might expect. We are not observers, he says, looking on and describing what we see in a disinterested way from 'the balcony' on the sidelines. Instead we are journeying on 'the road', experiencing life in its perplexing mysteries, talking and trying to make sense of its meaning as we go. Richard Dawkins observes the 'all too limited human mind', and CS Lewis dismisses 'thin rationalism'. Religious and scientific fundamentalisms arrogantly fail

to understand or even hear other perspectives. Modernism has had its day; New Atheism has been a 'blind alley'. He debunks myths about 'secular humanism' and, 'progress' on the way, with his section 'what's wrong with us?' being particularly salutary, as it should be. McGrath concludes ambiguously, pointing to our need for humility and a sense of wonder; and yet throughout his exploration he gently suggests that knowledge is possible as part of a 'big picture' which we strive towards and yearn for, as we ponder the great mysteries of life. This is a thoughtful and historically informative guide to our journey on 'the road' in which revelation seems both desirable and possible.



**Assisted Suicide**  
Vaughan Roberts

- The Good Book Company, 2017, £2.99, 71pp, ISBN 9781784981938
- Reviewed by **Andrew Fergusson**, former Chair, Advisory Group, Care Not Killing

Following very clear defeats of assisted suicide bills in the Westminster and Scottish parliaments in 2015, debate about this subject should be over for a decade or more – but it's not. So another book in the Talking Points series designed to help Christians think and talk about today's big issues is welcome. Author and speaker Vaughan Roberts comments authoritatively here to Christians, speaking not just from research and oh-so-relevant understanding of the Bible; but because his own father was dying while he was writing the book, there is a strong note of compassion and reality throughout. It is unlikely *Triple*

*Helix* readers will find anything new in the relatively brief medical, ethical, and campaigning discussion. Almost more importantly, the prevailing cultural context is analysed and critiqued. Dignity? Ours is unique because God has made each and every one of us in his image. Autonomy? Unbridled, it ignores our inevitable interdependence. Vulnerable? Dying or not, the disadvantaged deserve special care and protection. The Christian worldview wins. With recommendations for further reading and discussion prompts for small groups, this is an excellent starter for lay Christians. Health professionals will need to read more widely.

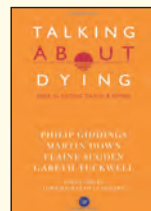


**Lighting the Way**  
*A handbook for Christian Nurses and Midwives*  
Steve Fouch & Catherine Butcher (ed)

- CMF, 2017, £7, 134pp, 9780906747704
- Reviewed by **Carrie Dameron**, Associate Professor of Nursing in California, USA

*Lighting the Way* brings Christian nursing essentials together in four sections. 'Identity' brings fundamental skills of Christian faith with discussions on prayer, church, character, and the important relationships in our lives with colleagues and family. 'On Call' merges Christian faith with professional nursing, topics on spiritual care, workplace culture and sharing our faith. The heart of the book is found in the third section, 'Frontline', which dives into the many challenges modern Christian nurses face like bioethics, human personhood and complementary and alternative medicines. The authors are brave, educated and clear on how the Christian faith defines these and other challenging issues in modern healthcare.

Each topic in these three sections includes relevant scripture, explorative questions and a reading list to guide nurses and midwives to dive deeper with each topic. The final section, 'Devotions' includes 40 daily Bible readings and meditations which support the faith and spiritual development of nurses and midwives. The chosen specific meditations encourage a vibrant relationship with the Lord through prayer and worship forged through time in the Word. I feel honored to have authored some of the devotions chosen to be included in the collection. *Lighting the Way* is a valuable essential resource for both faith and professional development. A rare publication in Christian nursing that provides knowledge, wisdom and spiritual support.

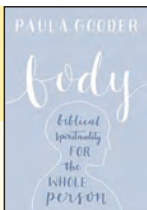


**Talking about dying**  
*Help in facing death & dying*  
Philip Giddings, Martin Down, Elaine Sugden, Gareth Tuckwell

- Wilberforce Publications, 2016, £8, 182pp, ISBN 9780995683204
- Reviewed by **Steve Fouch**, CMF Head of Nursing

Sex and politics have become mainstream, but death remains as the last subject which we do not talk about. That, according to the authors, 'simply will not do'. In reality, many people faced with life-limiting illnesses do want to talk, but are either afraid to or just do not know how to broach the subject. This pithy little volume is an attempt to help break down some of those barriers. Written from an unashamedly pastoral Christian perspective, *Talking about dying* is a helpful starter. It addresses a wide range of issues, from planning funerals

and other arrangements, to starting conversation about your own death or someone else's. It also looks at miscarriage and still birth, sudden death, suicide and talking to children. It even manages to explain the gospel succinctly in a chapter on what comes after death. Each chapter is short, with practical follow up reading and resources. Very much aimed at the concerned layperson, this book could be a useful tool for training church or chaplaincy pastoral visitors. Given that death is universal, however, it is probably worth reading by anyone and everyone.



## Body

*Biblical spirituality for the whole person*  
Paula Gooder

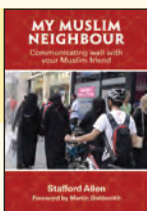
- SPCK Publishing, 2016, £9.99, 176pp, ISBN 9780281071005
- Reviewed by **Jason Roach**, medically-qualified pastor

**T**his week I sat by the bedside of a morbidly obese woman from my congregation. She confessed that her weight was the result of overindulgence. And now her heart was failing. With our meeting still swimming round in my head, I returned home to hear one of my daughters struggling with being called ‘fat’ by classmates. She is not remotely overweight. In different ways, both cases reveal something of the cultural pressure and personal sin that creates issues around our bodies. What does a Christian response look like?

Paula Gooder writes that the relative Christian silence on this subject, coupled with a prevailing platonic dualism in our culture, has led to a distorted view of the body. But do not be fooled, this analysis managed, by turns, to make my heart sing, my head ache and my thinking shift. It drew me to revisit Bible texts I thought I knew, to ask hard

questions about what I mean by words like ‘soul’ and managed to anchor it all in the practicalities of cremation, disability, contentment, praise, life after death and more.

Sweetly pastoral, concretely practical, challengingly philosophical, helpfully personal. Gooder navigates the subject deftly – encouragingly clear where the Bible is, and rightly ambiguous where the Bible is less definitive. It left me more thankful for the body that God has given me, more eager for the return of Christ and asking questions like: ‘from Paul’s perspective, how beautiful am I?’ Perhaps Gooder could have, in one or two places, tempered her celebration of our bodies with a theology of the cross. Is a pampering at the local spa or enjoying well cooked meals with friends always spiritual? But Gooder merely wants to start a conversation – and this book does that magnificently.



## My Muslim Neighbour

*Communicating well with your Muslim friend*  
Stafford Allen

- Gilead Books, 2016, £8.95, 299pp, ISBN 9780993209062
- Reviewed by **John Martin**, CMF Head of Communications

**H**ere is a very important book for any doctor or health professional who wants to share their faith with Muslim patients or neighbours. It’s the fruit of a career-long commitment of a doctor who lived and worked in several Muslim countries, then practised in a mostly-Muslim English inner-city context.

The author’s thesis is that faith sharing needs to start at gut and heart level – ‘anthropology, not

theological disputation’. Much of the book is an endeavour to find ‘a common language’. Even so he does not duck hard questions, such as questions over Islam’s inherently violent nature.

It is full of treasure: insights about the cultural and linguistic gaps standing in the way; stories of real-life encounters; accounts of lively debates; heart-warming answers to prayer; advice on how to offer and accept hospitality and make friends.



## Life Hurts

*A doctor's personal journey through anorexia*  
Elizabeth McNaught

- Malcolm Down Publishing, 2017, £9.99, 144pp, ISBN 9781910786659
- Reviewed by **Alice Gerth**, ACCS trainee in Anaesthetics

**E**lizabeth McNaught explores the challenges of living with anorexia from a deeply personal perspective. As both a doctor and a sufferer she brings a balanced and insightful perspective to this difficult subject.

She explores the complex underlying causes and the consequences of eating disorders on both patients and their families. She identifies current issues with our mental health care system in a non-judgmental manner. By walking us through her own experience the reader is helped to empathise with Elizabeth’s suffering. She does not hide the hurt her actions caused others

but helps you to understand why she behaved in the manner she did. The book ends with two short essays by her parents. These will be particularly helpful for families supporting children with mental illness. It has enough detail to interest those of a medical background without alienating a non-medical reader. Her faith is subtly present throughout the book in a manner that will encourage Christians, but won’t put off non-Christians.

Overall a short but powerful read with useful insights for all of us. You can’t help but be inspired by Elizabeth’s courage and determination to use her experiences for the good of others.



## A better story

*God, sex & human flourishing*  
Glynn Harrison

- IVP, 2016, £9.99, 216pp, ISBN 9781783594467
- Reviewed by **John Greenall**, CMF National Field Director

**I**f you read one book this year, there is none more timely and needed than this one. In *A Better Story* CMF member and former Professor of Psychiatry Glynn Harrison contends that we are failing to meet the challenges of the sexual revolution through our lack of critical thinking and inability to understand its moral dimension. Still wincing from his insightful diagnosis, I was reeling as he outlines Christians’ ‘cowardly inability to articulate an alternative vision of sexual flourishing... it is we who have been weighed in the balance and found wanting’.

Having masterfully surveyed the terrain, he devastatingly critiques the impact of the sexual revolution on society, including

the most vulnerable of all – children. He finishes by painting the compelling Christian story of God’s passionate, faithful and fruitful love in gripping multi-colour. There is invaluable insight as to how we demonstrate the plausibility of the Christian view in our individual lives as well as in our church communities. A wedding anniversary being celebrated more vigorously than the wedding day? Single people’s sexuality being a ‘powerful witness to the true nature of God’s faithful love’? Over and again I was convicted, challenged and inspired. God’s story is better, so let’s tell it better, he concludes ‘...for the sake of the gospel, for the life of the world’.