

BOOKS

Jesus the Healer – Paradigm or Unique Phenomenon?

Keith Warrington
Paternoster Press 2000
£19.99 Pb 208 pp
ISBN 0 85364 822 0



This book is a paradox. It has an intensely relevant message that broadly states that we should not equate the healing ministry of Jesus with our own Christian healing ministry; his was

unique. Jesus' healings were unique because they were more than just healings, indeed, they were even more than a signpost to the Kingdom. His healings actually demonstrated the initiation of the Kingdom. Even those who choose to disagree with his perspectives, which he backs up with closely reasoned argument from scripture, are challenged to examine whether our 'success rate' remotely compares with Jesus'. Moreover, he warns that scripture does not support those who claim that the problem today is lack of faith in those pray for healing. There is, in chapter 2, analysis of many relevant scriptural passages about healing, and the major themes of each passage are highlighted.

So far, so good, but what is the paradox? It is the style of the writing. I do not believe that this book was intended to be an easy read, but it does not need to be so obscure. The third sentence in chapter 1 is an example of the style Keith Warrington adopts: 'Claims today that, because Jesus healed, it is to be expected of believers that they emulate him, are to be critiqued in the light of this pedagogical dimension of the healings.' Another sentence: 'Nevertheless, the healings had valuable potential to stimulate a more developed faith in Jesus than to simply recognise in him a therapeutic agency of significant power'. I can grasp the overall meanings but I am not even sure that the second sentence makes sense.

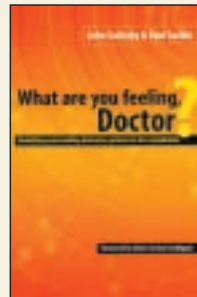
So should one buy this book? I think it is a volume of great importance. But I do hope that Keith Warrington teams up

with somebody from the Plain English Lobby and rewrites it. Then it will be even better.

Michael Harper is Medical Director of Burrowswood Hospital, Kent

What are you feeling, Doctor?

John Salinsky & Paul Sakin
Radcliffe 2000
Pb 174pp
ISBN 1 85775 407 7



If you find practising medicine easy then this book is not for you. For the rest of us it is a thoughtful and at times embarrassingly relevant read. The book is the result of a Balint group

recording and analysing their work together, and then being brave enough to share it with the world.

Michael Balint was a Psychotherapist who worked with groups of GPs from the 1950s onwards. He is gone but not forgotten. Many 'Balint Groups' live on, seeking to enable doctors to use psychotherapeutic insights and techniques in the context of an ordinary consultation. His seminal book 'The Doctor, His Patient and the Illness' was published in 1957. It opened the floodgates of current GP literature by importing psychological concepts into the medical model.

But I have to confess that Balint groups make me think of brown suits and horn-rimmed glasses. Surely we've moved on? I brought my prejudices along as I picked up the book. But they were soon replaced by a recognition that this is a superbly honest, reflective and intelligent work. It gazes mercilessly at the experience and frustrations of being a flawed human being put into a demanding, pressurised and intimate professional role.

This book came at an interesting time for me. Recently I have been reflecting much on what it is to be a disciple of Jesus in the consulting room. In line with the old adage, when I was young I wanted to

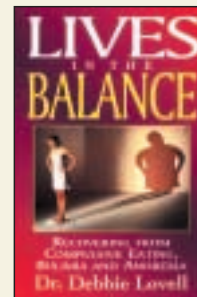
change the world and now I am a bit older I realise that it is I who must change. This book is a real stimulus to honest self-examination, and offers genuine insights into the person behind the professional mask. As Christians what will we do with this? Can this area of professional life come more fully under the saving grace and the lordship of Jesus?

All grace is God's grace. Yet again the GP educational world brings questions and challenges which we as Christians should see as our home turf. Any book that makes me want to join a Balint group must be powerful stuff. I recommend it.

David Misselbrook is a General Practitioner in London

Lives In The Balance

Dr Debbie Lovell
Eagle Publishing 2000
£7.99 Pb 260 pp
ISBN 0 86347 392 X



This little book seeks to bring a message of hope to those people who are suffering from a broad range of eating disorders including binge eating disorder (compulsive eating), bulimia nervosa and

anorexia nervosa. In addition, there is a section on eating disorders in men, which are much rarer, plus a section for carers from the perspectives of a mother and a husband. The book closes with an afterword and an appendix of addresses, websites and books.

There is a strong Christian emphasis throughout the text. Using the powerful tool of personal testimony on a chapter by chapter basis, the book follows themes that lead to each person's recovery from their particular disorder. There are three testimonies under each category, each one making the very important point that recovery was only achieved through partnership with God. The book does not purport that recovery is easy. In most cases it was a lengthy voyage of personal discovery, leading to greater honesty in



dealings with others and God, through commitment to change, forgiveness and challenging unhelpful thoughts. There is an implicit message that people with eating disorders are individuals with individual reasons for developing their illness, and so there is no blanket solution. Accordingly, some individuals receive help from a variety of sources over time to reach that place of healing.

I would thoroughly recommend this book for any Christian who seeks to have a deeper understanding of eating disorders. It is a sound and helpful text that covers a large amount of ground in seeking to embrace a message of hope for both men and women suffering from all forms of eating disorders. This means that it has a broad appeal and perhaps could be most usefully employed as a source of encouragement for everyone who has been touched, either personally or indirectly, by the shame and tragedy of an eating disorder.

For the professional working in a more secular setting, it would be an ideal book to use in the pre-contemplative phase of therapy ie in those people who are struggling for a motivation to change. Because of its strong Christian emphasis, care would need to be taken in checking that, at the very least, the client has Christian sympathies.

Angus Bell is Associate Medical Director of Teesside Psychiatric Services

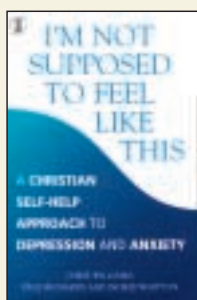
I'm Not Supposed to Feel Like This

Chris Williams, Paul Richards and Ingrid Whitton

Hodder & Stoughton 2002

£6.99 Pb 280 pp

ISBN 0 340 78639 6



This is an excellent book, written by a Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry, the pastor of a Baptist Church and a Consultant Psychiatrist in Leeds. It provides a Christian view on anxiety and

depression, and is written for sufferers and their carers as well as providing practical help for church leaders. Because of its multiple authorship and wide appeal, it is a book that could probably be dipped into at different times by readers from the differing constituencies. It is accepted that a depressed person may well find it difficult to read through the book at one go, yet it is written in such a way as to make reading and reflection easy. There are invitations to 'stop, think and reflect'. Various parts of the text are highlighted. There are spaces to make one's own notes. Key points are recorded at the end of many sections and prayers are suggested.

The book is quite clear that depression and anxiety are not due to a lack of faith in God - they are illnesses and should be treated as such. Whilst most people have an idea about treatments for physical illnesses, many are not so well informed about the treatments that are available for depression and anxiety. Along with the stigma of mental illness, there are often preconceived ideas about mental health treatments with stereotyped fears that are inaccurate. There is an excellent chapter on psychiatry and health services that should allay the majority of these fears. The section on 'overcoming your problems' is written from a cognitive behaviour therapy viewpoint and is very full in its treatment.

The book well recognises that as Christians we are all different, with varying personalities and experiences of church life. Some prefer a more emotional experience and others are more intellectual. For church leaders there is a similarly excellent chapter emphasising the integration of spiritual and medical approaches as helpful aspects of whole person care. The development of a *Religion and Spirituality Special Interest Group* in the Royal College of Psychiatrists is further evidence of the positive working relationships that are developing between professionals working in the Health Service and within churches to the benefit of our patients.

Richard Turner is a Consultant Psychiatrist and Medical Director of Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Health, Healing and God's Kingdom

Meredith Long

Paternoster Publishing 2000

£9.99 Pb 260 pp

ISBN 1 870345 36 3



'Compassion is the immune response of the body of Christ. ...What sets (the church) apart is not that its members suffer, but that the whole body responds to that suffering by sharing it'.

Writing from personal experience, Meredith

Long nevertheless draws upon an eclectic variety of African resources. This is a well researched and cogently argued book that addresses the paradigm shift from western models of health and disease to an alternative world-view.

We begin to understand the chasm in outlook between the scientific mind of a western-trained physician and the fundamental beliefs and expectations ingrained in a diversity of African cultures. Moreover, our attention is drawn to parallels in cultural norms of biblical society, thereby promoting a broader understanding of scripture.

There is much that is challenging but there are also attitudes to question. 'The doctor treats my disease. The nganga heals me', is a striking yet simplistic statement, particularly for those who have seen some of the repercussions, both physical and spiritual, of the ministrations of traditional healers. Fear and spiritual 'dis-ease' cannot be glossed over, nor can the fundamental need of men and women to be redeemed from the powers of darkness into knowledge of salvation through Christ be overstated. The power of traditional African religion is undoubtedly real, and Meredith Long recognises that this is essentially demonic. On the other hand, in a constructive analysis of healing in the context of Christian gifts, the author comments, 'The Holy Spirit does not intend to establish a branch of alternative medicine'!

This book deals with complex issues, but in an accessible style. It is richly

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illustrated from African experience with stories, proverbs and metaphor, whilst constantly bringing us back to a biblical perspective. Meredith Long's insights into traditional African views of disease and healing, and her constructive comments on how an understanding of this worldview can be brought into a distinctively Christian model of healing, make this book an invaluable resource for everyone involved in cross-cultural healing ministries. *'In our practice, we communicate that God's realm begins where the reign of science ends. Our challenge is to understand - and practically communicate - God as king of a healing kingdom, that embraces and integrates faith and science.'*

Ian Pitt is a General Practitioner in Southampton and Medical Advisor to Africa Inland Mission

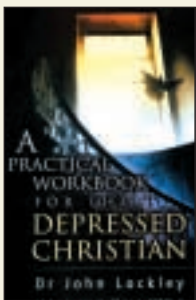
A Practical Workbook for the Depressed Christian

John Lockley

Authentic Publishing, 2nd Edition 2002

£12.99 pb 478 pp

ISBN 1 86024 226 X



I welcome this book, as I did the first edition in 1991. The author has been a GP since 1976 and is described as a writer of three novels and Christian music. Dr Lockley writes out of a wide factual

knowledge of depression as well as experience in his work as a family doctor. He thanks 'all those who helped me through my own depression'.

His style is usually chatty, which will help many, and annoy some. He covers the field well. He attacks vigorously the teaching that depression is always due to sin, failure or other spiritual causes. Great good would come if ignorance and prejudice were replaced with facts and sympathy; this book does that well. His own very firm views, however, sometimes jostle unhappily with the consensus views. The book seems to aim to be encyclopaedic and includes exercises for Christians.

There are some areas that could be improved. The bibliography is limited: I would like to see added well known names of those who have written in this area like Roger Hurding (Senior Lecturer in Pastoral Studies) and Prof Andrew Sims (Former president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists). I hope the author will revise some sections, for example, adequate explanations of CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) are missing from this book, and I believe it might be improved by CBT input for the exercises.

The result of covering both the medical views and the biblical issues is a large and heavy book, yet one that is eminently worthwhile to own, especially as a resource for churches and those involved in supporting its sick members. I hope this book will be used widely and although the severely depressed person cannot read anything properly, after recovery he may do so.

Gaius Davies is a Consultant Psychiatrist at King's College Hospital, London.

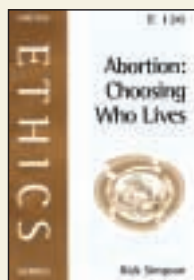
Abortion: Choosing Who Lives

Rick Simpson

Grove Books Limited, Ridley Hall, Cambridge 2002

£2.50 pb 30 pp

ISBN 1 85174 503 3



Rick Simpson, a parish priest, has written this booklet in the Grove Books series as 'a Christian ethical reflection on the process by which abortions are authorised in

England and Wales'. He intentionally discusses neither Christian ethical arguments about abortion nor other important questions within the abortion debate, such as when life begins and the rights of the unborn.

The first important issue he raises is that the process by which consultation regarding abortion occurs places Christian doctors opposed to abortion in an impossible position. 'They feel there is no

good method of handling requests, which allows them to balance their ethics with good patient care'. In addition, in my experience, some fellow Christians have strong views on what the unfortunate Christian doctor should or should not do and express these with great insensitivity.

Chapter 2, 'Abortion on Demand', contains an excellent analysis of the interpretation of the current law and the criteria allowing abortion, particularly in relation to the unjust and discriminatory Clause E. This allows abortion even when the fetus is fully mature on the grounds of 'substantial risk of the child being seriously handicapped'. As he says, the resulting 'devaluation of life because of handicap in the unborn is hugely, staggeringly at odds with our political and social morality with respect to handicapped members of society'. This concern is widely shared by disabled people.

The third chapter is a telling analysis of what we, as a society, are saying about ourselves by embracing, however tacitly, our current abortion laws. Finally in chapter 4 the author challenges us all to four practical ways forward in which we, as Christians, proclaim the truth about ourselves, and about our loving God. This booklet is a 'must' for all those deeply concerned about the immorality, injustice and ethical illogicality of the abortion law in this country.

Gordon Stirrat is Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, the University of Bristol

The 2002 CMF Website on CD-ROM - £5

The completely redesigned CMF website is available on CD-ROM: over 40 back issues of *Nucleus* and 19 issues of *Triple Helix* together with twelve years of CMF government submissions on ethics, the full set of *CMF Files*, a year's supply of daily devotions, the *Confident Christianity* evangelism training course, a quarterly newsround of issues in medical ethics and much more. Most queries can be answered within two or three mouse-clicks from the homepage. To order see the insert.

Jesus chose to heal and exorcise in order to teach. Through them he taught about himself and his mission. As a result of them, his would-be followers were guided concerning important aspects of their lives. He taught the crowds, the disciples and the religiously minded. He ruffled religious feathers, he astonished the milling crowds, he clashed with demons and he made the hearts of the expectant leap. The healing ministry of Jesus is still an enigma to many who want to believe it is valid but who recognize the significant difference between the best of healing today and the unique ministry of Jesus. God still