

Support in stepping to recovery

Penny Seabrook finds this personal account not to her taste

Addicted to Love: From rehab to heaven

Clare Catford

Darton, Longman & Todd £9.95
(978-0-232-52728-5)
Church Times Bookshop £8.95

AT FIRST GLANCE, Clare Catford does not look like an addict. Like others who have trodden the same path, she knows how to present herself well; and her former career as a broadcast journalist successfully papered over the cracks in her life until they were prised apart when an early marriage failed.

At this stage, some people reach for the bottle; but it was bulimia that imprisoned Clare. This was interspersed with bouts of over-indulgent shopping, and affairs with married men. Yet nothing stopped the pain. Despite therapy, her emotions drove her, blinding her to any honest and constructive appraisal of the situation.

It was only when she hit rock-bottom, and discovered a Twelve Step support group, that she began to understand the link between addiction and fear, which was wrapped up for her, with childhood trauma, and a conditional idea of God's love. Although church always played a central part in her life, she had never really believed she was good enough to match up to the picture of Christian perfection preached from the pulpit, and so guilt simply added a toxic layer to her struggles. In recovery, it was the non-judgemental love of the group that taught her to let go and to trust — one step at a time, one day at a time.

The book illustrates her progress. It is a brave personal exposure, and one that might encourage others to cast pride aside and find the help that leads to greater serenity.

The relationship between addiction and faith is explored at a deeper level in titles such as Gerald May's *Addiction and Grace*, or James Nelson's *Thirst: God and the alcoholic experience*. Catford makes little reference to other writers, which is both the strength and the weakness of the book. It is quickly read, and has a cover and title that could pass it off as a romantic novel — which is useful, since few will openly be seen with a book on addiction.

I would give it space on the church bookstall, but will not feel anxious about losing my copy, because there are plenty of books of this genre on the market, and the journalistic style of this one is not really my cup of tea. The appendix provides the information that has most lasting value, listing as it does Twelve Step websites for the following: Alcoholics Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Codependents Anonymous, Al-Anon (for families and friends of alcoholics), Sex Addicts Anonymous, and Overeaters Anonymous.

The Revd Penny Seabrook is to be Associate Vicar of All Saints, Fulham, from next month.



Milk-o: this coloured lithograph, *Milkwoman, Kingston, Jamaica (1837-38)*, is by Isaac Belisario, and is one of a series entitled *Sketches of Character*, which shows Kingston to be a thriving urban centre. From *Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement* by Kay Dian Criz (Yale, £35 (£31.50); 978-0-300-14062-0), which considers prints and paintings of the British West Indies 1700-1840, and the links between brutality and fine living

Banish the shadows of ageing

James Woodward on a rich potential in the neglected third age

MOST OF US prefer the relative comfort of denial when it comes to older age. This is a serious state; for it is always better to prepare ourselves for ageing, so that we can unlock its rich potential. In the words of Antonio Piarro, "Getting older is an adventure, not a problem." What might our churches look like if we really acted on that conviction?

MacKinlay has established herself as a leading advocate for older people and their pastoral needs. Her work is based in Australia, where the health and social-care provision is of a higher quality than in the UK. In this book, she turns her attention to some of the issues that surround frailer older people, and the challenges they face in maintaining well-being.

The 17 chapters take as their focus the way in which ageing affects people who have mental and developmental disabilities. Many of the writers are practitioners who want to develop more effective and creative relationships between carers and older people. More people whose main focus is everyday engagement with age should be encouraged to write: the best essays here convey the wisdom that comes from this earthed experience.

The spiritual dimension, both implicit and explicit, is examined as part of a commitment to compassionate engagement, where there is much to learn from people who age. The subjects covered include reminiscence, depression, music therapy,

Ageing, Disability and Spirituality: Addressing the challenge of disability in later life
Elizabeth MacKinlay, editor
Jessica Kingsley £19.99
(978-1-84310-584-8)

art, ritual, humour, memory, community, and other faith perspectives.

There is an inevitable unevenness in the range of writing, and a firmer editorial hand might have helped provide more guidance for the reader. The book has a comprehensive index and bibliography. Some of the references cited are not easily available. This is something that should be considered when compiling such volumes.

It is impossible to give account of the diversity of ways in which people age, but we can learn about the pastoral challenges that face those who live in that strange land between remembering and forgetting. This book succeeds in challenging the reader to see dementia in a different framework, one in which there is profound wisdom about personhood and our values. We need an approach to care that can celebrate personhood in all people, and thereby build communities in which

ANGER can be destructive or it can be used creatively, Andrew Lester argues in his book *Anger: Discovering your spiritual ally*. He offers a six-step approach to using anger positively; he explores its causes, and what the Bible says about it; he addresses the ways in which it can destroy, and those by which it can become a spiritual friend and a diagnostic tool (published by SPCK at £8.99 (£8.10); 978-0-281-05954-6).

Ministering to the vulnerable

Theologically thin, but this book offers much practical advice, says David Atkinson

The Pastoral Care of People with Mental Health Problems

Marion L. S. Carson

SPCK £12.99 (978-0-281-05866-2)
Church Times Bookshop £11.70

THIS IS described as a "state of the art yet accessible book" for those who minister to people suffering from mental-health problems, or to those close to them — which, in one way or another, will include most of us at some time.

Marion Carson is Lecturer in New Testament and Pastoral Care at the International Christian College in Glasgow, having previously been a psychiatric nurse. In the prestigious SPCK New Library of Pastoral Care series, Carson opens up understanding both about the pastoral responses that are appropriate for clergy and other churchpeople to make to mental-health sufferers and their carers, and about the bound-

aries between disciplines, and the extent to which pastors working alongside other professionals may need to refer and defer.

Using many pastoral illustrations and examples, Carson reflects on mood disorders such as depression and bi-polar disorder; on anxiety, phobias, and stress; as well as on schizophrenia, addiction, and dementia. There is a small section on reacting to suicidal people, and coping with the grief caused by a suicide.

She has a section specifically on clergy stress and burnout, as well as ones on eating disorders, and self-harm. I was puzzled to find no reference to the consequences of childhood abuse, which is often at the root of these disorders.

There are chapters on the questions surrounding the notion of personality disorders, and on anti-social behaviour. She does not hide the frightening aspects of mental disturbance, not least the social rejection that often goes with it, and calls on the Church to develop "radical friendship" with people who are affected.

In a book of fewer than 200 pages, which includes much illustrative material, it is inevitable that the approach is more broad-brush than in-depth. The theological reflection is fairly thin. There is much valuable information, and there are good references and a bibliography, but I was surprised at — in a world of such rapidly changing understanding — the proportion of books quoted that are more than ten years old.

There is a too-brief nod at the "over-zealous" Christian carer. And the complex question of confidentiality is noted, but not really addressed. That said, the breadth of information which Carson provides should go some way towards addressing the pervading ignorance of mental-health questions in many within our churches. As she says, "If we open ourselves up to our own and others' vulnerabilities, if we are willing to take the risk, we will go some way to providing a safe place for sufferers and those closest to them."

Dr David Atkinson is the Bishop of Thetford.



Bargain books: this browser at a bookstall is one of the illustrations in a pocket-sized book of black-and-white photographs, *On Reading*. This classic by Andr  Kert sz was first published in 1971, and is reissued by W. W. Norton at £16.99 (£15.30), distributed by J. Wiley (978-0-393-06656-2). The pictures, all of readers, were taken between 1920 and 1970