clinical microbiology. Apart from a too ready acceptance of standards as though they are
god-given absolutes (is this an opportunity to use the word “data” in its true sense?), there is
much food for thought. Chapters 23 and 24 are disappointing. An account of paediatric
bacteriology (Chapter 23) of any profundity is probably impossible; for a variety of reasons, the
gap between the laboratory and the clinician is probably at its widest here. Accounts of
techniques such as ELISA (Chapter 24) are dull because they are of interest only to those who
actually practice them at the bench, once the theoretical basis has been grasped. Chapter 25, on
trends in organisms isolated and their antibiotic sensitivity, is a classic ending—“not with a bang
but a whimper”. The plain fact is that over the past decade almost nothing has changed. *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus* still rule despite the threats of more exciting
collectors, and little of note has happened to antibiotic resistance despite ominous rumblings.

My overall feeling is that the book provides useful source material for aspirants to the
membership of the Royal College of Pathologists and the like, as well as for their examiners. If it
were half as long and less irritatingly insular it would behove (sic: OED—obsolete except in
North America) any practising clinical microbiologist to read it. As it is, perseverance with at
least some of the chapters would be rewarded.

I. PHILLIPS

**Handbook of medical parasitology**


This is a paperback book with 218 pages and 334 illustrations, including 32 life-cycle
diagrams. It is arranged in four sections, on protozoa, helminths, arthropods and diagnostic
techniques. There is a very limited reading list of 18 items. The preface tells us that the book is
written especially with students in mind and that “illustrations are the back bone of good
teaching”.

There is no doubt that there is a need for a book on Medical Parasitology, suitable for
students and for teachers of lower level parasitology courses. One of the major problems with
this book is that the black and white plates are obviously taken from the coffee-table colour atlas
previously published by the senior author and have suffered greatly from being considerably
reduced in size and being reproduced from colour originals. Some have lost all recognizable
qualities, and the reviewer had some amusement from covering up the text and asking experts in
the field to identify the more ridiculous examples. In many cases, the pathologist could not even
identify the tissues. One would also have expected a textbook on parasites of man to have some
pictures of patients showing the more bizarre clinical manifestations of parasitoses. On the
whole, the line drawings of life-cycles are useful but occasionally are a little difficult to
disentangle, especially where there is a zoonotic component in the life-cycle. The world maps
with symbols showing distribution are a good idea—even if occasionally one is mislead by
adventitious spots on the maps—with only occasional inaccuracies. More careful editorial work
might have had the line drawings more closely associated with the relevant text.

The text represents less than half the book. Most sections start with a useful list of
definitions, although the authors define a parasite in terms that cover a lion and a cow! Although
little space is devoted to any one parasite the information is very clearly presented and
is usually accurate. One could nit-pick through the text but this is hardly productive at this late
stage; minor errors could have been identified by a suitable referee at the proof stage. Final
judgement of the book must take into account the statement of the authors that the book was
written “especially with students in mind”. The text, whilst brief, must receive a good mark, but
the half-tone figures ought to have been severely pruned so that the more useful ones could have
been larger. What might put most students off is the price of the book; at £17, it is very
expensive. A cheap textbook on Medical Parasitology for students is still needed.

D. A. DENHAM

**Cell wall-deficient bacteria—basic principles and clinical significance**

£16.45.

The difficulty and contentiousness of this subject are highlighted by the contents of this book.
The destruction of the bacterial spore


The high resistance of the bacterial endospore to most inimical agents is the main factor governing the application of sterilising processes. This book provides a welcome source of information on the complex behaviour of spores exposed to stress from physical and chemical agents.

Current knowledge of spore structure and the physiology of sporulation, activation and germination is covered briefly in the first chapter, to provide the background to the topic. The following chapters give detailed quantitative information on the effects of the well established sterilising methods of moist heat, dry heat and ionising radiation; other agents are covered under the headings of ultraviolet radiation, liquid phase antibacterial agents, vapour phase bactericidal agents, hydrostatic pressure and combined treatments, the last being a topic of increasing interest. The final chapter deals with the recovery and revival of injured spores, which is important in the assessment of sterilising processes. The most pertinent data and associated references are assembled into tables and each chapter has an extensive list of references. The complexity of the subject makes an ideal grouping of topics difficult to achieve and it is, therefore, perhaps inevitable that information relevant, for example, to the low temperature steam and formaldehyde process is distributed between the chapters on the vapour phase, liquid phase and combined treatments.

The evolution and application of sporicidal processes in different fields has caused the associated terminology to become confusing. Definitions and descriptions of the use of these terms are therefore welcome. There are, however, traps for those unfamiliar with inactivation kinetics in the treatment of the mathematical aspects of some of these terms because, unfortunately, a number of errors have crept in. Some examples are: Ln(k) (not k, p. 36) should be used in the Arrhenius plot, k is normally 2.303/D (not 1/D, p. 40) and printing D = U/(log N₀ − log Nₘₜₜ) would be less liable to misinterpretation than the form used (D = U/log N₀ − log Nₘₜₜ, p. 40, p. 92 and, for similar equation, p. 116).

It is however, valuable to have so much information from the literature of bacteriology, food