



The Shaming of the Strong
The challenge of an unborn life
Sarah Williams

- Life Journey (Kingsway) 2005
- £6.99 Pb 176 pp
- ISBN 1 84291 1791

To date, there has been a shortage of accessible material on the experience of continuing a pregnancy where the child has been found to have a severe abnormality. Here, at last, is a book where allied medical professionals, pastors and friends can see into the hearts of a family living through the dilemmas, sorrows and joys that this experience brings.

Sarah and Paul Williams' third daughter, Cerian, was diagnosed prenatally as having thanatophoric dysplasia – a condition incompatible with life outside the womb. The book is beautifully written, carefully crafted and, at times, completely heartbreaking. Sarah Williams takes the reader from the scan where the bad news is given, right through to the death, birth, funeral and her return to work. The only autobiographical details given are those we need in order to understand her journey, and so her story is uncluttered and can be read in just a few hours.

For some, the theological and ethical discussions, which are a normal part of Sarah's academic life, may make sections of the book hard going. For some, her relatively comfortable, middle-class life will be hard to relate to. It is out of this context, however, that the title of the book comes: 'Cerian was, by the world's definition, a weak thing, but the beauty and completeness of her personhood had nullified the value system to which I had subscribed for so long'. Hear the tribute Sarah reads at Cerian's funeral: 'You were not precious

to me because of the things you did. Your worth was written into your being from the very first moment of your existence'.

Is this a book you could give a couple going through a similar experience? It is certainly not reading for the faint-hearted, but such a couple won't be and are likely to be eager to learn from those who have gone before. It is not a formal resource book – there is no index or reference section or list of helpful agencies – but it will be a valued resource: ways to help other children in the family, ways for family, friends, pastors, colleagues and staff to make the journey easier.

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Ultimately, this is an uplifting book. It tells of our wonderful God, who loves and treasures the damaged, and calls us to do the same. Sarah Williams writes as a Christian but not a legalist. She works through a variety of issues honestly and humanly – not in a way that would be unattractive to non-Christians but in a way that is likely to intrigue. Is it a book to give to your obstetric colleague or your obstetrician? Most definitely! Mine should get his in the post any day now.

Karen Palmer is a Staff Grade Psychiatrist in Glasgow



Sent to Heal!
Emergence and Development of Medical Missions
Christopher H Grundmann

- University Press of America 2005
- £30 Pb £45 Hb 375 pp
- ISBN 0 7618 3320 X

Midway through the nineteenth century, a new force emerged in Western missions to Africa and Asia – the medical missionary. Prior to that time, doctors, nurses and others with training in the healing and caring arts had travelled with missions to the far flung parts of the world, but only as an adjunct to the primary task of 'winning souls for Christ'. But a seismic shift in missiology and praxis occurred as mission societies were set up with the express aim of providing medical services to the world's poor.

Grundmann's scholarly work looks at the sources of this movement – from the nursing and medical monastic orders of the Dark and Middle Ages to the early medical missionary work of the Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits of the sixteenth century, through to the Catholic nursing and missionary orders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But it was with Peter Parker and the Medical Missionary Society in China in Guangzhou (Canton) that the modern, protestant/evangelical medical missionary movement began. Forced by the Chinese authorities into the small Euro American enclave of Canton, with limited access to the Chinese population, the small number of missionaries found that provision of medical service offered the one opportunity to reach out the local population. Parker became an enthusiastic advocate for this strategy, and soon medical missions began to grow up either as separate societies (for example the

Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society and the Medical Missionary Association), or as part of existing missionary societies.

This book looks at the other key figures in the development of nineteenth century medical mission, particularly from the UK and the USA, but also Dutch, German and Danish medical missionaries, at their achievements and wider impacts. And he asks probing questions about medical missions – did they succeed in the missionary task? What was the view of medical mission and medical missionaries held by the wider mission and Christian communities? Not all the answers he comes to are comforting; yet, despite his strong critique, Grundmann is undoubtedly an enthusiastic advocate for medical mission himself.

This is not light reading – the main text and very extensive appendices and references formed the basis of a PhD thesis – so it is not best approached as a motivational book on mission. But for the serious student of medical mission, and for those wishing to grapple with the roots of the twentieth/twenty-first century wave of healthcare mission, this book forms an extremely valuable source of detailed background information. It reveals how many of the strategies, questions and struggles being faced today by those using medical skills in the mission field are echoed in the experiences of the past.

Steve Fouch is CMF Allied Professions Secretary