



**The Baby Business**

*How Money, Science and Politics Drive the Commerce of Conception*

Debora Spar

- Harvard Business School Press 2006
- £15.99 Hb 299pp
- ISBN 1 59139 6204

From the position of a Harvard Business School professor, Deborah Spar tackles the thorny issue of infertility and the markets that it has created. Her thesis is much broader than one might expect. She covers the ethical dilemmas thoroughly and describes beginning of life issues in a clear and engaging manner, embracing multiple perspectives as she tours the arena.

In-vitro fertilisation (IVF), pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), cloning, surrogacy and adoption are described accurately, and their positives and negatives weighed. Her chapter headings include quotes from Genesis 30:1 and Isaiah 54:1-2, and the final chapter is called *Songs of Solomon*. This seemingly tries to hide a utopian ethic in her conclusions.

Put simply, Spar argues that the market for babies exists because of the human longing to procreate. When the natural process fails, no price can be put on the possibility of creating a baby. Couples will pay whatever they can afford, even when a fertility specialist hasn't succeeded for them on previous attempts. The author states plainly: 'the market will function even if the morals are cloudy and the law uncertain'.

Spar's research shows that the market for babies is large as up to 15% of couples are infertile; in the USA about a third of these seek treatment. The product sold by clinics is not babies but 'hope and medicine to make babies'. Each IVF cycle has a 60-70% failure rate. Buying and selling of gametes occurs in many states and is not well regulated. A top-of-the-league egg from a university student donor can change hands for up to \$50,000!

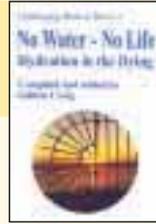
In recent years, couples consid-

ering adoption have had to wait longer as the number of available babies has dwindled with the surge in abortions. The combination of low IVF success rates and fewer domestic babies available for adoption has resulted in a market for international adoption. The fees charged in some cases reach up to \$25,000. Her main arguments here are for tighter government regulation.

In the middle of the book, Spar discusses the issues surrounding designer babies and unpacks the history of eugenics during the Nazi regime. The USA led the way in this field in the 1930s, and Germany subsequently amplified it. She further discusses the attempt of the anti-abortion lobby to block PGD and embryo research, and the outlawing of cloning in the USA by President Bush. Some of her research reveals disturbing philosophical applications.

Spar concludes by laying out various models by which the baby business could be regulated. She feels that there should be a wider political debate to decide which techniques are acceptable and which are not. But, as she says, the fact remains that as long as the will and the technology exist somewhere in the world, no amount of ethical persuasion will stop somebody from using it, especially if there is a profit to be made. Although this book is not aimed directly at Christians, it would be helpful for any Christian interested in the challenges raised by the fertility business.

*John Wenham is a GP Principal in Manchester*



**No Water - No Life**

*Hydration in the Dying*

Gillian Craig (ed)

- Fairway Folio 2004
- £15 Pb 188pp
- ISBN 0 95454 4536

The debate about hydration in the dying has been intense and very important. Gillian Craig, a retired geriatrician, brings an excellent breath of fresh air to this debate, providing data, published research and a wide range of opinion. The style of the book is interesting, a collage of papers and opinion. In one book she provides access to a lot of papers and opinions, along with just a few bits of her own commentary.

Hydration is essential for life but a view has arisen that those who are dying do not suffer from thirst. Developed in the context of cancer care, this view has been extrapolated to those who have fluid and food removed following strokes and other illnesses. Under English and Welsh Law, artificial nutrition and hydration are viewed as medical treatments. As such, BMA guidance permits their removal with the result that patients who have suffered a stroke or other illness may die from dehydration. Craig's book scrutinizes this practice and the clinical evidence and moral theories that are used to support it.

Craig has worked hard to review the broad body of evidence on this subject, to challenge current medical wisdom, and to put it into context. Having read her work, I am drawn to the conclusion that the

evidence has often been selected and extrapolated to fit with the desire to believe that removing food and fluid is okay. This is most certainly Craig's view. She has done a huge service in putting the evidence into a single, readable place.

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The book outlines the way in which medical opinion has changed in recent years. Dame Cicely Saunders supported the use of subcutaneous fluids and I well remember using them when I first qualified. I still find that patients and relatives consider it to help at times. But my overriding impression is that there is now a widespread fear of starting fluids and a perceived wisdom that doing so does not reduce suffering.

I recommend this book as an excellent reference and summary of this crucial debate; it is relevant to all who care for frail dying people.

*Adrian Treloar is a Consultant in Old Age Psychiatry in London*



## Adolescents and Sex

*The handbook for professionals working with young people*

Sarah Beckaert

- Radcliffe Publishing 2005
- £21.95 Pb 200pp
- ISBN 1 85775 880 3

The rate of increase of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is alarming. This clear, well-referenced book includes factual information on teenage pregnancy, contraception and STIs, alongside thought-provoking chapters on important issues for debate. It is useful for clinical practice, service commissioners, youth workers and church ministers, and parents.

The opening chapters allow for reflection on the complexity of the interval between childhood and adulthood. The milestones of adolescence in chapter one are an excellent reminder of normality. The importance of listening to young people so as to develop good communication with them is emphasised. Beckaert also looks at the other kinds of risk-taking behaviour that adolescents engage in.

I was encouraged to read: 'for professionals working with young people in the area of sexual health, child protection considerations are paramount'. This chapter's legal issues are important, especially as professionals and lay individuals may interpret laws and guidelines differently. The Frazer guidelines are laid out clearly, but Beckaert has not made clear the amount of time required to assess a young person's competence and understanding. Furthermore, there is insufficient discussion about confidentiality and children under 13 years of age. There is a detailed section on

the age of consent debate but I question the accuracy of conclusions drawn from a Channel 4 programme and a teenagers' magazine.

Sex and relationships education and abstinence campaigns are discussed. Unfortunately, the importance of empowering young people by teaching techniques to resist pressure is not highlighted as an area that requires equality with providing information on contraception and STIs.

The cover of marginalised groups is excellent and wide ranging, covering looked-after children and child prostitutes. The marginalisation of boys (who have not been equal partners with girls in the sexual health debate) is acknowledged. Specific projects are discussed, such as the use of role models in schools for African-Caribbean boys and also using peer educators working alongside disabled people. Sexual health outreach in youth settings is also dealt with well and demonstrates the importance of involving parents in this matter.

Churched young people are subject to the same worldly pressures as all their peers. Although it isn't written from a Christian perspective, this book will help to make parents, professionals and church communities more aware of these issues.

*Hazel Curtis is a consultant paediatrician with a special interest in community work in Exeter*



## Lessons Learned on the Journey

*Exploring the realities of faith through word and art*

Bob Snyder, illustrated by Andras Simon

- Baxter Press 2004
- Limited Edition \$250 contribution  
Standard Edition \$30 contribution Hb 107pp
- ISBN 1 88823 750 3

Some years ago, when he moved from Philadelphia to Hungary to work with International Health Services, emergency physician Bob Snyder began to write a journal of the spiritual lessons that God was teaching him through everyday experiences. In this book, Bob has brought together 50 of these vignettes and asked his friend, Christian artist Andras Simon, to illustrate them. Each page can be read as a separate 'thought for the day' and contains Bob's reflections on a personal experience or conversation in the light of Scripture, with an original line drawing by Andras to stimulate the reader's own thoughts on the day's theme.

Bob's personal struggles and refreshing humility in his walk with Christ come through on every page, as he looks at topics as varied as learning to live with gratitude, the benefits of repeated practice, harnessing the power of words and taking advantage of our weaknesses. In a gentle way, these pages are packed with biblical truth, but the way in is usually through a personal experience. The line drawings for each page combine startling simplicity with penetrating insight.

Bob and his wife Pamela are especially interested in the power of faith stories to communicate Christ to our generation. Why do millions of people in Britain watch *EastEnders* every week? It is because everyone loves a story. One of the great discoveries for Christians today may be that, even when our friends and colleagues will not come to a

meeting or listen to preaching, we can always tell something of our story by sharing our testimony with them as we sit and have a meal or a drink together in a 'safe' environment. We not only have ideas about God to share, but we can also tell of a living God who makes a difference to our every day lives.

**Bob's personal struggles and refreshing humility in his walk with Christ come through on every page**

I have used this book in a number of ways: to read daily for a month or so; as an aid to meditation for a concentrated period of retreat; and to refer back to a particular theme as an occasion arises. The short chapters make it very accessible and I have been both encouraged and challenged by it. I warmly commend it as an aid to reflecting on your own personal journey with Christ.

*Kevin Vaughan is Associate General Secretary of CMF and a former GP*