

RENEW your LFL Membership!

Have you been lagging on your membership fees?

Would you like to make a donation to the urgent work of LFL?

While Lutherans for Life wants to send *Life News* to as many people as possible, we survive only on private donations. Once a year we will be appealing for donations by June 30 to support this valuable wing of the Lutheran Church of Australia. Please support the work of Lutherans for Life by renewing (or beginning) your membership today, and help give a voice to those who have none. Any extra donation you can manage will be greatly valued. And there is good news. You can now pay your membership or make a donation by credit card via LCA Online Donations. It's very simple, just go to <https://donation.lca.org.au>, click on the organisation labelled *Other* and then click on *Lutherans for Life*. By paying through *LCA Online Donations* you save on postage, your payment is banked immediately, and LFL is notified by email of your payment. Of course we still welcome your payments by cheque through the mail!

<u>One-year Membership Fees</u>	<u>Life Membership Fees</u>
Individual.....\$25	Individual..... \$200
Concession/Unemployed..... \$15	Pensioner..... \$50
Family.....\$30	Family..... \$300
Institutional..... \$100+ (contact for details)	

Name: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Rev/Dr _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Occupation: _____ Congregation: _____

☐ New Membership (or) ☐ Membership renewal

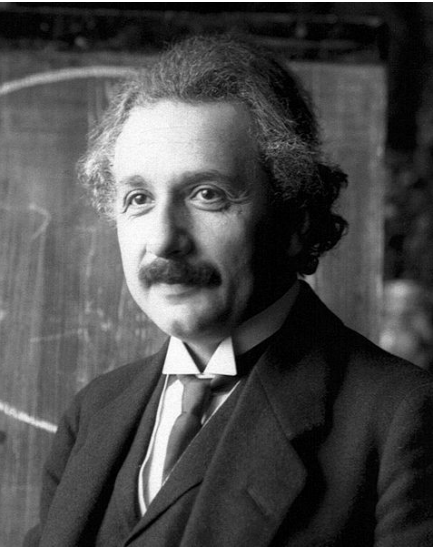
Type of credit card: _____ Amount: \$_____ Card number: _____ Expiry: ____/____

Name as it appears on card: _____ Signature:_____

Please send your completed form to: Pastor Christian Fandrich, 6 Cheviot Street, Harristown QLD, 4350.
(Privacy note: Membership information is used only for LFL membership.)

A quotation from 70 years ago...

“Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came in Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but, no the universities immediately were silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks ... Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler’s campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.” *Albert Einstein*



Life News

Inside this issue:

Editorial	2
Free book deal	3
P&A Points	4
World Snippets	6
Donations appeal	8



Life News is the newsletter of Lutherans for Life Inc—Established in 1987 and sponsored by the Lutheran Church of Australia.

Print Post Approved
Periodical No.
PP442570/0006
ISSN 1033-7725

Editor: Thomas Pietsch
 LN.editor@gmail.com

Personhood

Joshua Pfeiffer

Our grandma Mary has been sick for a long time. In the last few days she has gone down hill quickly and now she has slipped into a coma. She doesn’t seem to be aware of her surroundings at all. She can’t communicate. Her body still seems to be ‘working’, but she shows no signs that her mind is active. We wonder if grandma is still ‘really there’. One of the doctors raises the issue of intervening to end grandma’s life. It’s confusing. Some family members say that even though her body is still alive, grandma isn’t really still with us. I’m not sure.

Without realising it this family has touched on a fundamental issue in many modern ethical discussions surrounding life issues. It is the issue of *personhood*. Grandma Mary is obviously still a human being, but is she a *person*? It is not unrealistic to imagine that behind the scenes at this hospital an ethics board could determine that grandma Mary has lost her status as a person, and so has lost her right to moral consideration. And the way in which this thinking works itself out more broadly is that if one can manage to consign a certain group, such as embryos, to the category of *non-persons*, then all those pesky questions about whether we can kill them, harvest them, or experiment on them similar disappear. If we are to understand and engage the current debates on issues such as abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, infanticide, and euthanasia we must understand this distinction and the thinking behind it, and think through what may be the appropriate Christian response. The crucial question is as follows: *are all members of the human species automatically to be regarded as human persons*? The traditional answer has been yes, the prevailing modern answer is no.

If human beings are not automatically to be regarded as human persons we might ask what criteria are used for making this judgment. Ethicists have various lists including things such as the ability to think, to be self-aware, to feel pain, and to relate to others. It has been observed that although criteria differ, generally it boils down to the ‘core concept’ of rationality and self-consciousness. Apart from the hopelessly subjective problem of not having common criteria for personhood, the bigger concern for Christians is that a human person is often defined *functionally* rather than in an *intrinsic* or *essential* manner. They are not defined by what they *are*, but rather by certain *capacities they possess*, capacities which may come and go at different stages in life. Hence grandma Mary might be a person one day and so worthy of being protected, but a non-person the next day and so face an uncertain future.

By now many of the practical implications of this distinction will be clear. Given the common criteria we have noted for this concept of *personhood* it is clear that humans in the womb will not qualify. And so abortion and embryonic stem cell research become non-controversial to this way of thinking. This is an important change. On a popular level the view is still heard that the issue of abortion is about when human *life* begins. However the vast majority of current pro-abortion advocates have no qualms in asserting that human *life* begins at

Continued on page 7

Editorial

In G.K. Chesterton's novel *The Ball and the Cross* (1909), the character Turnbull complains to Professor Lucifer (a thinly disguised devil) about his plan to kill the unemployable and so eliminate the needy. Surely they have rights! Professor Lucifer responds, 'Yes, indeed, Life is sacred – but lives are not sacred. We are improving Life by removing lives.'

One hundred years later, and the argument seems to have remained the same. If we can eliminate some lives, then Life will be better. Of course, people say that these decisions are not easy, that their decision to end someone's life in order to improve Life was a very difficult one that they by no means took lightly. But when the dust is settled, every tree is known by its fruit. Indeed, I don't suppose it has ever been easy to improve Life by removing lives. You will remember the cult of Molech, which God in Leviticus so strongly condemns, which would sacrifice children to the god Molech in exchange for peace and success. Rabbinic commentaries say that as the child was committed to the flames, the priests' drums would beat loudly so that the parents might be spared the agony of hearing their child's cries. It must have been a difficult decision. It can't have been made lightly. And yet, the fruit is putrid. A decision agonized over is not necessarily a decision justified, and removing lives can never improve Life.

In this quarterly issue of *Life News* we publish an article by Joshua Pfeiffer on *Personhood* that merits close reading. Occasionally one hears that there is no progress in life debates and that we must agree to disagree. But this is not true. One of the significant steps forward in the last twenty years has been the now unanimous scientific consensus that life begins at conception. It used to be claimed that human life only began at a particular stage of pregnancy, or perhaps only upon birth. Embryos, however, are unlikely to grow into Eurasian otters, or sapling trees for that matter. They are human beings. As this common sense wisdom has emerged, the debate has changed from the scientific to the legal and philosophical. Pfeiffer shows how this has happened, and what we can do to respond. Pfeiffer is the newest member on the LFL council and a sometime vicar,

anticipating ordination at the end of this year.

If I may, there are a few more items to bring to your attention.

Firstly, the presentations from the 2009 LFL Conference are now available to watch online. You can see the links to these talks at the LFL homepage - <http://www.lca.org.au/action/lifeissues/lfl/>. Please have a look if you're interested. It's a service we hope to continue providing and would appreciate your feedback.

As *Life News* is funded purely by donations (along with all the work of LFL), we meet once a quarter to fold the latest issues and stuff them in envelopes. If you're in the Adelaide vicinity and would like to help out, please contact me at LN.editor@gmail.com.

This brings me to the final point. In this issue, we are appealing for donations and membership renewals. All that we do is funded by private donations, and at this time every year we will be appealing to your generosity and concern for the work of Lutherans for Life. While we want *Life News* to reach as many readers as possible, we cannot keep going without your support. Please pray for our work, and consider renewing your membership or sending us a donation. You will find details on the final page, including information about paying online – a new service that we are offering.

Every blessing to you as you read this issue.

Thomas Pietsch

Lutherans for Life Branches:

Riverland Branch (Serving the Riverland area of South Australia; established in September 1989)
Contact Person : Mrs Lois Rathjen 08 8584 5706

New Zealand Branch (Established in June 1991)
Contact Person : Mr Petrus Simons 04 476 9398

Sunshine Coast Branch (Serving the Sunshine Coast area of Queensland; established in August 1992)
Contact Person : Mr Norm Auricht 07 5443 6849

Darling Downs Branch (Serving the Darling Downs area of Queensland; re-established in October 2005)
Contact Person : Mrs Joy Wurst 07 4613 4189

Would you like more copies of *Life News*? To have the latest edition emailed to you in a PDF format that is ready to print, write to LN.editor@gmail.com.

Personhood by Joshua Pfeiffer, *continued from page 1*

conception. The question is not when human life begins but rather when that human life acquires the status of personhood, and so acquires the right not to be killed.

Although abortion is widely accepted on the premise that the fetus is not a human person, fewer people have been comfortable with extending this logic to areas such as infanticide and involuntary euthanasia of the severely disabled. Peter Singer on the other hand is famous for following the logic of his argument as far as it takes him. For Singer this has meant that he has applied his criteria for personhood to newborn infants and in certain circumstances found them non-persons. After outlining his basic criteria for personhood Singer says '[d]isabled infants lack these characteristics. Killing them, therefore, cannot be equated with killing normal human beings'.

As we saw in the case of grandma Mary, issues also arise at the end of life. What do we make of those in a coma or a persistent vegetative state? When the criteria of personhood is applied to them they may also be found wanting and so lose their right to protection. If one's family member has deteriorated to a point where they appear to have little rational capacity left and are unable to meaningfully relate with others, have they ceased to be persons? Many modern bioethicists say yes. Thus they argue families should have the right to end these people's lives or at least to remove their basic treatment including food and hydration. In some cases it has been reported that personhood arguments have been used to do this against the wishes of the family or even against the patient's advanced directives.

Thus far we have had a snapshot of how thinking in this area has progressed in the secular world. So how should Christians think through this concept of personhood? For this we must return to some very basic Christian teaching about humanity. I mention here just two points.

The teaching of Christianity is that every human being is a human person. There is no distinction between the two. Every human being is intrinsically valuable simply by virtue of their membership in the human race. And this most basic ethical stance comes from the Christian teaching of the *imago Dei* or creation in the image of God. In Genesis 1:27 we read, ‘So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.’ This special act of creation is attributed to no other creature. Human beings are set apart as creatures which reflect the glory of God. The ethicist Darryl Charles connects this nicely to the issue of personhood, writing that ‘the image is a reflection of its origin. It follows then that our full imaging of that Creator expresses itself through our

fundamental nature and not merely our functionality, social utility, or qualitative development.'

Christians can consistently and without qualification defend human life at all stages because the dignity of that human life has an objective and unchanging source and reference point, namely in God himself.

The teaching of Christianity is that every human being is a human person. There is no distinction between the two. Every human being is intrinsically valuable simply by virtue of their membership in the human race.

The second important Christian insight is the relationship between body and soul. There have been Christians who have appropriated the modern distinction of personhood/human-being because they believe it follows from the Christian view of the human being as both body and soul. For example, J.P Moreland points out the 'troubling view' that there are some Christians who have even claimed that for those in a persistent vegetative state only their bodies remain and they have in fact lost the image of God. Even in the growing popularity of organ donation among Christians there is a danger in the body being seen 'simply as collections of organs potentially useful to others'. In these trends Gilbert Meilaender points out that 'we are in danger of losing any close connection between the person and the body. That connection has always been affirmed in Christian thought, although it has often been a fragile connection. We are regularly tempted to suppose that the "real" person transcends the body. When we do that, dehumanization lies near at hand.'

This is a crucial warning for Christians. Indeed the attempt to define the human person apart from their body is already here.

I have attempted to show here how the Christian worldview provides a stark contrast to the current secular views of personhood. Christian theology posits that every member of the species *homo sapiens* is intrinsically valuable and so deserving of dignity at all stages of development. From this perspective grandma Mary is still 'really there'. She is a human person deserving of moral consideration, although she is experiencing in a dramatic way the effects of our fallen world. Our society needs this consistent defense of human life at all stages lest all that remains is the hopelessly subjective and ever changing criteria for personhood.

Snippets from around the world

Russia seeks to reduce abortions to combat under-population

Health Minister Tatyana Golikova says that her government wants to boost the birth rate by 20 to 30 per cent to combat the shrinking population and shortage of workers. The population has fallen from 154 to 142 million over the last 15 years. Russia has one of the highest abortion rates in the world, with 1.714 million births in 2008 compared with a reported 1.234 million abortions. This equates to abortions being 72 per cent of the birth rate,



compared with about 30 per cent in Australia. A national poster shows a picture of a woman with three children and the slogan “Love for your nation starts with the family”. President Dimitry Medvedev, pictured left, says a baby bonus will be introduced. (LifeNews.com)

The Netherlands reports an increase in euthanasia deaths

The Dutch News notes that there were about 2,500 deaths by lethal dose on request reported in the Netherlands in 2009, compared with 2,300 in 2008. The exact number is unknown because some studies indicate that a quarter to a half of euthanasia deaths go unreported. “Life terminating acts without explicit consent” are also not included in the total because the Dutch define euthanasia as voluntary. The practice of aggressive terminal sedation is also unregulated and uncounted. (BioEdge)

In Australia euthanasia activist Dr Philip Nitschke claimed to be busy in December, with many elderly couples approaching his Exit group to buy each other suicide kits as Christmas gifts. Dr Nitschke has been angered by the Federal government plan to filter out internet information on assisted suicide and euthanasia, and is thinking of “seeking political asylum overseas.” (Courier Mail)

India has on-going problem with sex-selective abortion and female infanticide

The United Nations Development Program estimated in March 2010 that up to 42 million girls in India every year are lost to sex-selective abortions, infanticide or neglect. In theory ultrasound testing for gender is illegal in India but the law is not enforced. Some doctors openly advertise ultrasound services with slogans such as “Spend 500 rupees now and save 50,000 rupees later” – a reference to the dowry parents must pay to a groom’s family.

With girls being seen as a financial drain, wives struggle to resist pressure from their husband’s family to produce sons. The practice is leading to gender imbalances, with a national average of 108 boys born per 100 girls, and reports of a 130/100 ratio in some Indian states. Similar problems are evident in some other nations, including China. (The Australian)

Americans find unregulated surrogacy causes problems

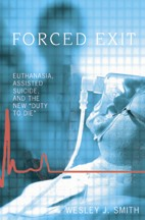
The New York Times reports that the “lax atmosphere” of surrogacy regulation in the USA “means that it is now essentially possible to order up a baby, creating an emerging commercial market for surrogate babies that raises vexing ethical questions.” In one case a woman agreed to be a surrogate for her brother and his male partner. The gay couple purchased donor eggs through a fertility clinic and the partner donated sperm, and the woman gave birth to twin girls. The woman became unhappy about the arrangement and has refused to give up custody of the twins. In a second case an eccentric man of 60 bought donor eggs and sperm through a clinic and employed a surrogate mother to produce twin girls. The man is reported to have approached the transaction so carelessly that he has an on-going battle with child welfare authorities seeking to remove the girls from his care. Prof George Annas of Boston (pictured) comments – “This is the main problem with commercialisation, seeing children as a consumer product. This is especially true when there is no genetic connection with the child. It really does treat children like commodities. Like pets.” (NYT.com)

Are UK nursing homes using PEG feeding tubes to cut costs?

A report in Britain says that some nursing homes are making the insertion of a feeding tube a condition for entry for dementia patients. The report observes there is no evidence that tube feeding prolongs the lives of patients, and it deprives them of the pleasure of eating and the social contact of meal times. It asserts that with time and care elderly people with swallowing difficulties can be helped to eat and drink normally. The report suggests that nursing homes are using PEG (percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy) tubes as a time-saving cost-cutting convenience, and opposes this solution to the complex needs of dementia patients. (BioEdge)


Free book sent to you!

Do you feel uninformed on life issues? Do you want to learn more about the full joy of living with integrity in Christ? Do you feel you need to hear more about the attacks on innocent life occurring all about us? *Life News* is beginning a new initiative that can help you. We'll send you a free book of your choice and in exchange you just need to pen 200-300 words on what you thought of it, for us to publish in *Life News*. We're not after academic pieces, just a couple paragraphs of reflections from common Christians. We think it's a great opportunity for members to learn more about life issues, and we hope you do too! Just email LN.editor@gmail.com if any of the books below strike a chord with you. Get in quick to nominate the one that interests you most!



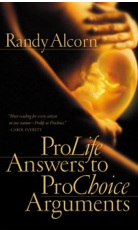
Forced Exit: Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide and the New Duty to Die, by Wesley J. Smith

In this popular book, recently updated, Smith makes a case against legalized euthanasia by using research and real life cases to argue for a humane and compassionate approach to all people.



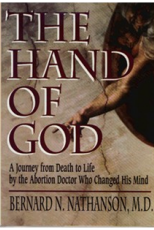
Gender: Men, Women, Sex and Feminism, by Frederica Mathewes-Green

Wife of an Orthodox pastor, Frederica Mathewes-Green here uses story to take the reader on her own journey through her early years as a feminist, a conversion to Christianity, and the realization that men and women are unique yet equal.




Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments, by Randy Alcorn

This expanded and updated classic offers real answers to real questions from a pro-life perspective. Logical and concise, the book includes suggestions for how we can help unborn babies and their mothers.



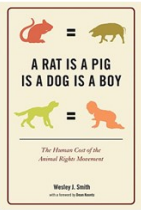
The Hand of God: A Journey from Death to Life by the Abortion Doctor Who Changed His Mind, by Bernard N. Nathanson.

The author of this book performed some 75,000 abortions before converting to Christianity and becoming a leader of the pro-life movement. He recounts his former paternalistic treatment of women and their bodies in his earlier medical years and his eventual change of heart.



The Good Girl Revolution: Young Rebels with Self-Esteem and High Standards, by Wendy Shalit

Popular Jewish author Wendy Shalit is on a mission for the women of the Western world to stand up and take notice of their objectification. Using letters, interviews and various studies, Shalit discusses what ‘empowerment’ really means, and how families can raise girls that have high standards.



A Rat Is a Pig Is a Dog Is a Boy: The Human Cost of the Animal Rights Movement, by Wesley J. Smith

In this controversial book, Smith discusses how the animal rights movement has come to see animal lives as equal to human lives. Showing the skewed thinking that results, Smith argues that a real concern for animals recognizes the greater obligation that we owe to human lives.

Prayer and

Australia appoints first Population Minister



Kevin Rudd has appointed Tony Burke (pictured left) as Australia's first federal Minister for Population. Burke is charged with the duty of planning the growth of the Australian population. Following Rudd's statement last year that he believes in a 'big Australia' and his suggestion that Australia have a target of 36 million by the year 2050, opponents of population growth have been considerably vocal. Interestingly, opposition to population growth has brought together anti-immigration advocates and environmental advocates such as the Greens. In particular, those who wish to limit Australia's population growth have stressed the strain on infrastructure such as roads and housing that population growth will bring. One survey has suggested that two thirds of Australians are opposed to a 'big Australia'. Tony Burke is due to release a report in 12 months time, after the next federal election. (theaustralian.com.au)

South Australian March 20 election changes balance in upper house

Last year in SA Green MP Mark Parnell introduced a bill to allow so-called voluntary euthanasia (lethal doses on request) and that was defeated by 11-9 votes in the upper house. Two Christian members of that house retired before the election, and when this bill returns in 2010-11 it could pass the upper house. Two new members of that house are another Green MP and a member of the Dignity for Disabled group, both of whom are pro euthanasia. Paul Russell comments – "While a person's opinion on such matters is principally a private affair, we should recognise that advocacy for the disabled and being pro-euthanasia are incompatible views as was highlighted by the US Disability and Health Journal only last January." Any bill has to pass through both houses of parliament to become law, and the euthanasia issue has rarely been debated in the lower house. The Parnell bill would allow a lethal dose to be given to any person of age 18 or more who has a condition that makes life "intolerable" for them – a very subjective test easily claimed and impossible to disprove. Some observers believe that Premier Mike Rann will not wish to make any place for this bill in the lower house as an uncomfortable conscience vote could disrupt his agenda for the next term. (various sources)

Action Points

Queensland passes law to allow singles and gays to have children through surrogacy

On 11 February 2010 the Queensland parliament passed a law to allow non-commercial surrogacy, where singles or couples including same-sex couples can arrange for another woman to gestate and bear a baby whose legal parentage will transfer to the "parent or parents" who commissioned the birth. Attorney-General Cameron Dick noted that surrogate mothers will be entitled to recover "reasonable birth costs" from the intending parents. Sceptics wonder if there will be any desire to question a surrogate mother who is seen living in a new home or driving a new car. Dr David van Gend of the Family Council says – "This bill is an assault on the deepest relationship between a mother and child. It tramples on the rights of a child to have at least a chance of a mum and a dad in its life and not just one bloke or two blokes or a single woman as its parents." (ABC.net)

Victorian equal opportunity bill seeks to restrict religious exceptions

On 25 March 2010 the Victorian lower house passed the Equal Opportunity Bill 2010 which removes many of the exemptions previously granted to churches. If the new law passes the upper house churches will be required to prove why it is "reasonably necessary" for them to discriminate in areas such as marital status, sexuality and gender. Church schools will be required to prove that it is an "inherent requirement" of the job for an employee to be of the faith, and not to be homosexual etc. The Bill also gives sweeping new powers to the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to initiate investigations even when no complaint has been made. Commission staff would have the power to enter a church or meeting to assess what is said, the right to demand that a church hand over records, and the right to compel church leaders to attend a Commission hearing to answer to a charge of discrimination. Readers who live in Victoria are encouraged to raise their concerns with their 5 Members of the Legislative Council. (Culturewatch)

See www.saltshakers.org.au/take-action/campaigns/611

Victorian Left continues its social engineering

Late in 2009 a Federal Senate committee refused to progress a Green Bill to permit same-sex marriage, noting a Galaxy poll in which 86 per cent of Australians polled agreed that ideally children should be raised by their biological mother and father. Late in 2008 Victoria passed the most liberal abortion law in Australia, allowing abortion on request right up to the time of birth (after 24 weeks with the nod of two abortion clinic doctors). Now in 2010 Victoria has changed its law on birth registrations so that non-birth parents can be named on birth certificates. A same-sex couple who have a child through reproductive technology can now be listed as both being parents. For the Victorian Registry, Erin Kelleher says – "This is the vanguard of social change – the department is delighted it can recognise rainbow families." Some ethicists are concerned that the large body of social science evidence which confirms that the traditional Mum and Dad family is the best structure in which to raise children is being ignored as the Labor government in Victoria proceeds with its social engineering agenda. (Culturewatch)