

Thumblings

Far more than Once Upon a Time,
A lonely would-be single-mom
Wished for a child, and one soon came,
Not in the usual way—but sprung
From golden seed of barley corn
Sold by a fairy. And when it bloomed,
A little unborn maiden stood
Among the flower's velvet stems,
So small, a shell served for her bed.

She slept beneath a counterpane
Of rose leaves, till a thieving toad
Abducted the unknowing child
To make her the unwilling bride
Of darkness in an underworld
Of labyrinthine tunnels where
A blind mole made his fetid den.

Or else a couple who bemoaned
Their childlessness conceived a son
Curled like a cashew in the womb,
A shadow pulsing like a drum
No bigger than his father's thumb,
Like pictures on a sonogram,
And in but three months, out came Tom.

Now dressed in cobwebs, thistledown,
And apple rinds, our little Tom
Mourns being traded for the coin
That made his parents prosperous
But him a tiny beggared orphan;
While Thumbelina, like swansdown
Floats in the wind on borrowed wings,
Still haunted by the wedding gown
Woven by spiders her dark groom,
Clad in black velvet, dressed her in.

Now she's escaped that narrow tomb,
Riding a swallow pierced by thorns
Who resurrected from the dead
To fly her to where tulips bloom
And thumblings fill the sky with laughter:
So Thumbelina and Tom Thumb
Have found a happy ever after.

Paul Lake is professor of English at Arkansas Tech University and a member of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This poem first appeared in First Things and is reprinted here with kind permission.

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Life News

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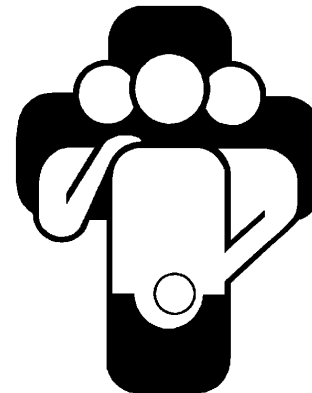
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A wake-up call on abortion

Paul O'Rourke



As a society we are increasingly inconsistent, hypocritical and contradictory in our attitudes to the unborn.

Last year a Victorian couple who conceived twin boys through IVF aborted them because they wanted a girl. The couple previously had a daughter who died in infancy.

A few months later a Melbourne hospital aborted the “wrong” twin, resulting in the deaths of two unborn children at 32 weeks. Only the “sick foetus” was meant to die. The parents, and presumably many other Australians, were outraged at the death of a perfectly healthy baby at 32 weeks gestation, yet that’s what happens in around 96% of all abortions in Australia each year – the life of a perfectly healthy child is ended.

The press widely reported in December the story of an Australian woman who says she was bullied by doctors into aborting her baby six years ago. She has suffered depression and her marriage ended as a result of her decision to abort. She said doctors strongly advised her to terminate the baby girl she named Lillie at 16 weeks because the child had Down Syndrome.

Each year in Australia there are “about” 80,000 abortions, yet less than 50 local adoptions. I say “about”, because we don’t actually keep an accurate count of

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Editorial

As we go to print this month, the church is gearing up to celebrate the annunciation of our Lord. In his acceptance speech for the 2010 LCA Servant of Christ award, Rob Pollnitz implored the LCA to celebrate this feast with joy and with a mind for unborn. The annunciation proclaims the mystery of Christ’s incarnation in a way perhaps even more surprising than we are used to. Here is not only God in a manger, infinity dwindled to infancy (as a recent book puts it). At the annunciation, we proclaim our God has become an embryo, that here is infinity dwindled to a mother’s womb.

If we can celebrate our Lord as an embryo, then we too can celebrate all embryos who are made in God’s image. Paul O’Rourke, who writes the main article in this issue, is the CEO of a group whose aim is to do just that—to fall in love with the unborn. In his article he reminds us of the tragedy of our sidelining of children in the womb, and it should encourage us to redouble our efforts to pray and work for the sake of these little ones, or thumblings, to quote the poet Paul Lake. We’re privileged to be able to bring you his verse in this edition and hope you enjoy it.

Amy Mann is a member of the LFL council and has passed on a video link. The narrator is woman who discusses how her autistic son was welcomed and integrated in to the life of her church. You can find this video, ‘Dancing with Max’ at <http://media.willowcreek.org/weekend/summer-at-the-creek-2011/#content>.

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 : Dr Petrus Simons 04 476 9398

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

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

Update from the Riverland Branch

Our small Riverland Branch has had an opportunity to present the “Great Expectations” stand at local events. This stand has been shown at the Royal Adelaide Show for a number of years by “Family Voice” of Adelaide.

The purpose is to celebrate the first nine months of our existence. “Family Voice” has lent us all this classy and beautiful material free of charge. We have taken it now to Loxton Show three times, Renmark Show once, and the Field Days in Barmera twice. Loxton and Barmera are two-day events.

The “Great Expectations” stand is demonstrated with large, unique laminated pictures set out on display panels of the developing foetus from conception to birth. There are also models of the developing child in the womb from conception to birth. There is a continuous DVD showing topics concerning pregnancy and actual birth, ultra-sounds etc. There is also much

clear written information. For sale there are ‘Tiny Feet’ and ‘Tiny Hands’ badges, other badges, fridge stickers, soft models of embryos—all sorts and plenty of free leaflets. Then there are the free balloons for children with the message ‘THESE FEET WERE MADE FOR WALKING’ with little footprints. A great conversation started.

We do not mention the ‘A’ word for probably obvious reasons unless someone else does first. We have had some interesting conversations. It is especially good to speak to young people as they are the ones we are really targeting. Little people love to hold and cuddle a soft little embryo, especially if Mummy has one this size in her tummy!

Altogether we consider it is time and money well spent.

Lois Rathjen, Secretary of the Riverland Branch

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Snippets

Also in Melbourne, late last year a “selective reduction” of twins tragically went wrong. At 32 weeks into the pregnancy ultrasounds revealed one twin to have a major heart defect likely to need multiple operations over years, with no guarantee of long-term survival. The doctors advised that twin be aborted. Despite ultrasound guidance, somehow the doctor gave the lethal injection to the wrong twin. When the mistake was realized the other twin with the heart problem was also aborted. The woman was very distressed. “She went to the hospital with two babies and now she has none”, a friend commented. Peter Saunders notes that the only reason this story became international news is that the wanted normal baby was killed. “Abortion of unwanted babies is not news, it takes place 40 million times every year around the world.” (Bioedge)

South Australia was the one state to include a requirement in its 1970 abortion law that abortions be reported to the Pregnancy Outcome Unit of SA Health. The figures for 2009 have been collated and released, and there were 5,054 abortions reported for that year, compared with 19,901 births. Hence the proportion of all reported pregnancies terminated was 21 per cent. Over 96 per cent of abortions were done on alleged mental health grounds. The peak year for reported abortions in SA was 1999 when 5,679 were notified. In theory both surgical and medical (as with RU-486) terminations are to be reported.

President Obama orders churches to fund contraception and abortion for employees

In late January the United States administration announced that church-affiliated organisations will be required under new health insurance plans to provide free contraception and access to abortion and to sterilisation for all their employees. Health Secretary Kathleen Sebelius is reported to regard these services as fundamental to health care and their provision as a women’s rights issue and not affecting religious freedom. Jewish, Catholic and some Protestant leaders have united to protest the decision as failing to respect their freedom of conscience and religious belief. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (pictured, right), said – “We join with those who champion their God-given right to freely exercise their religious beliefs according to the dictates of their faith, and to provide compassionate care and clear Christian witness to society’s most vulnerable, without government encroachment.” (Cyberbrethren)

A head-and-shoulders portrait of a middle-aged man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing glasses and a dark suit with a white clerical collar. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

French move to punish prostitution clients

France’s parliament has approved in principle a proposal to fight prostitution by making payment for sex a crime punished by fines of 3,000 euros and imprisonment for up to 6 months. There are estimated to be 20,000 people working as prostitutes in France, with nine out of ten believed to be victims of trafficking. The act of prostitution itself would not be a crime. Pimping would be punishable with a prison sentence of seven years. Sweden introduced a similar law in 1999 which has been widely praised.

Both South Australia and Western Australia have bills to legalise prostitution before their parliaments. SA parliamentarians have rejected six previous changes in our prostitution law, and SA is the only state without some form of government control over the sex industry. The Sex Work Industry Bill 2011 proposed by Steph Key MP would allow brothels with up to 3 prostitutes to operate anywhere, and those with 4 or more to operate in any location beyond 200 metres of a school or other children’s facility. Critics note that since Victoria legalised prostitution there has been an increase in the number of illegal brothels, linked with organised crime and the drug trade, with human trafficking and street children being abused.

The writer has worked for over 30 years as a doctor in public hospitals, listening to unhappy women who feel trapped in the sex trade, who use drugs to dull the pain, who get bashed by their pimps when their earnings are deemed inadequate, and who are depressed enough to feel suicidal. I like the comment of Mariette Ulrich – “(The base cause) for prostitution is men indulging a disordered appetite. If only men – all men – would act like Real Men. Real Men protect and defend the innocent and the vulnerable. Real Men don’t hurt women and children.”

Freedom of religion

The Open Doors World Watch List reports that North Korea remains the worst country in the world for persecuting Christians, and the only one to receive the “severe” ranking this year. The communist state is reported to have imprisoned from 1 in 4 to 1 in 8 Christians in labour camps. Next come Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Iran and the Maldives. These are Islamic countries, and in all it is reported that “indigenous Christians have almost no freedom to believe at all.” A pastor in a Gulf country comments on the list – “When we suffer, we bring a credibility to the gospel that cannot be ignored, because we show that Christ is worth it, and that is the secret of growth under persecution.”

Snippets

Same-sex marriage bills before Australian Parliament

Our current Marriage Act of 2004 defines marriage as “the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.” Green and Labor MPs have introduced three amendment bills, one in the Senate and two in the House of Representatives, all of which seek to repeal the definition of marriage. For example, the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2012 substitutes – “Marriage means the union of two people, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.” Further details are available at www.aph.gov.au and concerned readers can make submissions. The bills will also allow same-sex marriages performed overseas to be recognised in Australia.

World-wide, Christian churches hold differing views on homosexual activity. Our LCA Commission on Social and Bioethical Questions has produced a discussion paper on homo sexuality, aiming for a warmer and more pastoral approach to people who are battling with a same-sex orientation - readers wanting a copy can email pollnitz@senet.com.au

Our LCA Commission on Theology is making a study of the whole area of human sexuality and is likely to report to General Synod in 2013.

Those in favour of same-sex marriage argue that it is an issue of equality and tolerance, of human rights and removal of discrimination against gay and lesbian couples. Their tolerance does not extend to those who argue the contrary view, who are likely to be vilified as bigots and homophobes who deserve to be charged with hate crimes.

Not all homosexuals regard marriage as desirable – activist Dennis Altmann writes “monogamy is not a realistic choice .. gay marriage would need to allow for extra-marital outlets.” Other nations that have legalised same-sex marriage have found that less than ten per cent of gay and lesbian couples take up the option.

Many Christian writers note God’s plan of creation as one man and one woman becoming one flesh and that this union provides the best environment for children to grow. Every society that has grown throughout human history has worked around the unique marital relationship between a man and a woman. There is a large body of social science evidence indicating that children do best when raised by their two biological parents in a low-conflict relationship.

Bill Muehlenberg notes that marriage has become “a tremendous fiscal issue. The problem of marriage absence is now costing taxpayers even more than national defence. It’s not poverty that causes broken families; it’s the absence of marriage that causes poverty and puts kids below the designated poverty line. Social issues cause fiscal expenses.”



In the five per cent of nations that have legalised same-sex marriage there has tended to be a domino effect, with further legislation regarding same-sex parenting including reproductive technology, surrogacy and adoption rights. There has been pressure to allow group marriage and polygamy and incest between consenting adults. In Canada there has been “normalising” of homosexual activity through “equal” sex education in the school system, with parents refused permission to withdraw their children from those classes because it violates the school human rights policy. Rebecca Hagelin writes – “‘Falsehoods’ that support traditional marriage are now ‘hate speech’, thrown into the same filthy bucket as KKK and Neo-Nazi ideology.” (various sources)

Melbourne academics favour “after-birth” abortion

Readers may remember utilitarian philosophers Peter Singer and Julian Savulescu advising that giving lethal doses to unwanted human newborns is morally acceptable, because a baby is not yet a thinking person, not able to form long-term aims. Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva continue this view in the Journal of Medical Ethics, arguing that they see no moral difference between aborting an unplanned foetus and killing a defective or unwanted newborn. In their view adoption of the newborn might “torment” the mother (an “actual person”) with a further sense of loss. Some ethicists agree there is no moral difference between an abortion and infanticide, in that both end a new human life. In one way the authors’ paper is welcome in that it shows the slippery slope onto which abortions lead. (The Week)

LFL Secretary encourages LCA to engage in social debate

Rosie Scheffe

A three-month opportunity to live in community, sharing opportunities to learn, pray and delve deep into the Bible and other texts underpinning western civilisation has been invaluable, Lutherans For Life secretary Chelsea Pietsch says.

Chelsea, a law graduate and researcher, was one of eight people awarded a Lachlan Maquarie Internship last year—an opportunity for Christians interested in influencing public policy and politics to study, gain experience in how modern politics works in Australia, build connections across denominational borders and meet high-profile Christians who already have a voice in public life.

She spent three months living on a property outside Canberra with the other interns, studying under various guest lecturers, sharing the daily workload of caring for each other, and praying and worshipping as a community.

‘Living with seven strangers and negotiating our way through three months was a challenging but rewarding experience’, Chelsea said.

‘We were a diverse group, including an international businessman, a finance broker, a philosopher, a social scientist, a graphic artist, a chemist, a pastor and me.

‘One of the highlights was reading primary texts of some the greatest thinkers of western civilisation, such as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, St Augustine, St John Chrystosom, Luther and Calvin.

‘We also met a lot of high-profile Christians who came along for dinner and discussion around the table with us—people like former Governor-General Sir Michael Jeffery, human rights campaigner Father Frank Brennan, and Managing Director of Australian Christian Lobby, Jim Wallace. ‘They shared their faith journeys and stories from their personal and professional lives with us.

‘We also spent a week of work experience at Parliament House, shadowing members of parliament and senators on both sides of politics’, she said.

Chelsea returned to her home in Victoria ready to



Chelsea Pietsch addresses the Australian Christian Lobby conference during her internship.

take on new opportunities in the area of public policy.

As well as working one day a week as a researcher for Professor Patrick Parkinson of the University of Sydney looking into anti-discrimination law and religious freedom, Chelsea has taken on a part-time role with a suburban law firm in Melbourne advising churches and not-for-profit organisations on their internal governance and legal responsibilities.

She also serves as the secretary of Lutherans For Life, which seeks to promote respect for the sanctity of human life within the LCA.

‘I connected with many people who will be of benefit to Lutherans For Life and it was helpful to see and hear how similar organisations run in other churches’, Chelsea said.

‘It is important to have the confidence to engage as Christians in public life

and I hope that the (Lutheran) Church does take on a bigger part of the social debate.

‘It’s not rocket science. We just need to be a voice and a support for other Christians who are out there and engaging in the debate, as they carry the weight of the whole media and the wrath of the public eye’, she said.

The Lachlan Macquarie Internship program meets the majority of the costs for participants through sponsorship, but interns are also expected to fund part of the costs themselves, either through their own means or with support from churches.

Chelsea was provided with support through the LCA Standing Committee on Scholarships, which recognised the wider benefit of her study to the church.

‘While still comparatively young, Chelsea has already contributed much to the LCA, and her internship is giving her, and the LCA, absolutely invaluable skills and experience’, committee representative Mervyn Wagner said.

This article appears courtesy of The Lutheran online where it first appeared.

A wake-up call on abortion

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abortions. I can tell you with more certainty how many new cars were sold last calendar year than babies aborted. An estimated one third of Australian women will have an abortion. That equates to about one in four pregnancies.

In most States, late-term abortions are legal and have become more common while, in contrast, more increasingly premature babies are surviving as a result of medical technology. A wanted baby’s death from unintended causes results in a funeral, while aborted babies of the same age are disposed as a biohazard. Value is largely in the eye of the beholder.

Similarly, while we end the life of a child in the womb through medical or surgical means, we are saving the lives of babies, many the same ages, through keyhole surgery performed while babies are still inside their mothers.

We are none too keen on the deaths of whales, dolphins and baby seals, but seem to have scant regard for unborn babies.

In 2007, a Melbourne *Herald Sun* investigation revealed that several high schools were taking students to clinics to get the morning-after pill without parents’ permission or knowledge. The head of *Parent Victoria* Gail McHardy said at the time it seemed ludicrous that children needed a permission note to go on a school excursion to the zoo, but not to access the morning-after pill.

Abortion is touted as the zenith of women’s rights – the absolute, immutable and noble right of a woman to have control over her own body. It sounds good in theory. However, we place many other restrictions on what a woman can do with her body. She cannot legally buy cigarettes, drink alcohol, or get a tattoo until the age of 18, but a teenage girl can have an abortion without requiring permission from anyone.

The UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) states that children need special care and legal protection before as well as after birth. The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides added protection for children, declaring that governments shall always act in their best interests.

However, the rights of children in the womb, who are voteless, voiceless and vulnerable, have been superseded by adult rights, or more accurately, the rights of the mother. Her best interests are also deemed to be those of her unborn child.

A much-loved, wanted child had no rights when her heavily-pregnant mother was hit by a car on Christmas Day, 2009. NSW police were unable to charge the drug-affected driver with Zoe Donegan’s death because she had not yet taken a breath.

Abortion ends the lives of more baby girls than any other cause, even extreme poverty. About 7.5 million children under five die annually from preventable causes related to poverty, compared with about 60 million as a result of abortion.



Most abortions continue to be for psycho/social reasons. Women who feel they could not cope with a baby due to their age, their relationship with the father, financial pressures or because they already have enough children. The long-held view that women need access to abortion because of incest or rape, or because the child has a severe disability is untrue in more than 96% of all abortions.

A good friend, who is the product of rape, does not regret her life, nor do her biological or adoptive mother. She is a wife, mother, grandmother and friend to many. One UK study has found that not one woman who continued her pregnancy despite conceiving as a result of rape wished she had aborted her child.

However, like our apples, we want our children to be without blemish or imperfection, otherwise we

are free and even encouraged to reject them. Abortion is now widely accepted as a valid form of contraception and, just as startling, sex selection.

There is a cooling off period for a home purchase, and every other medical procedure, but not for an abortion – you can decide and discard the same day.

Abortion proponents laud the procedure as a safe, quick-fix for an unwanted problem with minimal physical and emotional side effects. However longitudinal studies of women who have had an abortion tell a different story, although there is fierce conflict in the academic world and among the media as to the extent and severity of Post-Abortion Survivor Syndrome (PASS).

The most notable life-affirming advocate is Dr Priscilla Coleman, a Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Dr Coleman has done a meta-analysis of 22 studies into the effects of abortion published between 1995 and 2009.

The results of these combined studies reveal higher rates of anxiety related disorders (34%), depression (37%), alcohol use/abuse (110%), marijuana use (230%), and higher rates of suicidal behaviour (155%).

When comparing women who had abortions with women who delivered after an unintended pregnancy, those having abortions had an overall increased risk of 55% for experiencing any mental health problem.

Of particular interest is the finding that almost 10% of the incidence of all mental health problems in the community has been shown to be directly attributable to abortion.

Those who love and defend the unborn are called “anti-choice”, while those who defend abortion as a woman’s irrevocable and inalienable right are

called “pro-choice”.

Those who seek to dehumanise the unborn refer to



them as “embryo or foetus” in preference to baby.

Emily’s Voice, the organisation I lead, is committed to helping Australians fall in love with the unborn, and to shine a bright light on the dark side of the womb. The organisation was named after a real child, Emily, the first-born daughter of the organisation’s board chair.

Former US President Ronald Reagan said: “I’ve noticed that everybody who is for abortion has already been born.”

In other words, those who defend the right to abortion-on-demand, can only do so because a woman chose not to have an abortion.

Paul O’Rourke is the CEO of Emily’s Voice, an organisation seeking to “help Australians fall in love with the unborn”. He is the former CEO of child sponsorship organisation Compassion Australia, and a former editor of the Newcastle Herald. His fourth book, published last year, is called Why Satan Hates our Kids: How Children are Suffering and Why the Church Should Care.

LFL Conference 2012

Following successful conferences in Adelaide (2010) and Toowoomba (2011), Lutherans for Life will be coming to Victoria for this year’s conference. Excellent speakers, encouraging company, winning fellowship and more will all descend on the city of **Geelong** on **Saturday**

the 3rd of November. More details will follow in the next issue of *Life News* so keep your eyes open and your diaries planned for this rewarding day.

