

Three score and ten?

Taking their cue from Psalm 90:10, Christians are apt to say mortals are allotted 70 years 'or 80, if our strength endures.' Imperial College London and the WHO's study of lifespans in 35 industrialised countries says life expectancy is set to rise, with women in South Korea to average 90 by 2030. Between 2015 and 2030, life expectancy in the UK is expected to go from 79 to 82 for men and from 83 to 85 for women. Here's a stern challenge for social care and pension planners. *BBC Health* 22 February 2017 bbc.in/2kYBHKH

Talking about mental health

Few employees, less than one in ten, feel comfortable telling employers about their mental health problems, says a Legal & General study. In contrast employers seem to have a perception that employees feel comfortable talking about them. The charity Wellbeing at Mind commented, 'Unfortunately there's still a taboo around talking about mental health at work, and a disparity between how well employees and employers think their organisation is doing when it comes to creating mentally healthy workplaces.' The cost of mental health to UK employers is approximately £30bn per year. *People Management* 20 February 2017 bit.ly/2meHTWq0

NIPT private providers criticised

Pregnant women are being urged to question private providers of a new test for Down's Syndrome. Women tend to receive too little advice and support, says the Nuffield Council on Bioethics. They often fail to make it clear that non invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) is not diagnostic. The Nuffield Council says advertising by some clinics fail to point out that NIPT can vary in its accuracy and may give a reading that turns out to be false with the NHS 'left to pick up the pieces' but not given sufficient follow-up. *BBC Health* 1 March 2017 bbc.in/2mJ177Q

When 'selfie' culture hurts

People tend to view 'selfies' as a bit of fun. But is that all? Does it stop there? Psychologist Linda Papadopoulos has warned that 'selfie culture' could cause harm to the mental health of young people. She thinks a rise in eating disorders and mental illness is linked to 'millennials' spending too much time analysing their social media image and treating themselves as a product. In her book, *Unfollow*, Papadopoulos urges people not to 'put all their self-esteem eggs in one basket' and not view beauty as the only desirable attribute. Well said. *Evening Standard* 17 February 2017 bit.ly/2kSlvVB

In praise of home cooking

Adults who never watch TV during family meals and eat mostly home-cooked food are less likely to be obese. The study of over 12,000 Ohio residents showed that eating at home, rather than out, and without the television on, was tied to lower obesity risk. Adults who cooked all family meals at home were 26 per cent less likely to be obese, compared to those who ate some or no home-cooked meals. Adults are likely to eat more food when watching TV. Meals that are not home-cooked may be less healthy, warn the researchers. *Reuters* 2 March 2017 reut.rs/2mr2PNY

Faith and the public square

Eutychus suspects only a minority of our readers troop off to church on Ash Wednesdays to have their foreheads 'ashed' with a sign of the cross. When Catholic MP Carol Monaghan appeared on television with a cross on her forehead *BBC Politics'* social media asked: 'Was it appropriate for an MP to work with a cross on her head?' We could ask: was it appropriate that @bbcpolitics should query a show of Christian faith in public? Was this a case of ignorance or hostility by our national broadcaster? *Daily Mail* 4 March 2017 dailym.ai/2naCxMD

Esther: case study in civil disobedience

The principle of natural law has largely been abandoned in our times, at a cost. It leaves the most vulnerable at risk, those at the beginning and end of life; those who depend on the more powerful to defend them. So what does the thinking believer do? Becoming more powerful is rarely an option. In *God and the Politics of Esther*, Yoram Hazony finds answers from Esther. He finds biblical warrant for civil disobedience in Esther's actions, subverting the will of a tyrant despite huge personal risk. *ABC Religion and Ethics* 2 March 2017 ab.co/2mB4f8F

Awful legacy for Romanian orphans

The plight of Romanian orphans certainly pulled at UK heartstrings in the early 1990s. Long-term studies of 165 of them show many still experience emotional and social problems, with only one in five unaffected by neglect experienced. Problems with concentration and attention levels continued into adulthood. Professor Edmund Sonuga-Barke from King's College London, said it was possible that 'something quite fundamental may have happened in the brains of those children, despite the families and schools they went to'. Getting children out of neglected situations as soon as possible was crucial. *BBC News* 4 February 2017 bbc.in/2mxrIRI

Help in the barber's chair

People acknowledge how time in the hairdresser's chair can give you a lift. Now the Lions Barber Collective is joining forces with Public Health England to provide barbers with mental health training. Research has found that suicide is a leading cause of death in men under 45 and this triggered the initiative. One barber said that 'having a haircut provides men with precious time to offload and discuss problems in a friendly, non-clinical environment'. Eutychus knows barbers who have made their work a ministry. And there are stories how in some countries closed to the gospel, barbers engage in fruitful evangelism. *Daily Mail* 11 February 2017 dailym.ai/2mbPsyY

Miracle babies and the law

Professor John Wyatt has long pointed to the irony of how our society expends so much fighting for the survival of tiny premature babies while consenting to the killing of the unborn. The gap between capacity for tiny babies to survive and the 24-week abortion legal limit is closing. A case in point is the plethora of recent media reports tell the story of Abiageal, born at just 23 weeks gestation. Little wonder there is a growing groundswell opposed to terminations. See *CMF Blogs* cmfblog.org.uk/2017/03/07 for a fuller treatment of this topic. *Guardian* 1 March 2017 bit.ly/2mczuX4