

Would Jesus have been uplifted?

'Social workers were called late last night to a rundown stable behind a seedy hotel, and later uplifted a newborn child under a Warrant issued under Section 39 of the Oranga Tamariki Act. They said they were concerned as the teenage mother claimed to have conceived by way of a Holy Spirit, despite the fact that her fiancée was present at the birth. Also noted were a group of men in shorts and swanndris, claiming to be sheep farmers who had seen a star, and three Iraqis who had also travelled a long distance, claiming to be Kings. Their gifts were referred to the Drug Squad for further examination. Most worrying of all, the child's parents held 3 one-way air tickets to Egypt, claiming that the King was planning to kill every male child born that night'.

Fortunately, a Family Group Conference was held promptly, which involved not only the above people but also an Elizabeth and a Zechariah, who were able to confirm that the events described were long-predicted, and that the baby was not after all in need of care and protection. A close reading of scripture explained everything, and after a strong argument from the parents and from the Baby's lawyer, it was resolved that no further action was required and that the 3 of them should be transported to the airport as a matter of urgency.

This could be a Christmas tale, but instead it is intended as an invitation to thoughtful and prayerful consideration of how our child protection system operates, and of how things are not always as they first seem at first sight and at night, seen through tired eyes. A thoughtful response could be 'This could happen to anyone'. We must be careful to stereotype neither the families under scrutiny, nor the social workers who have to make tough decisions based on incomplete facts. Our legislation contains many checks and balances, but uplifting children (even in the utmost good faith) can cause long-lasting damage.

And next time it could happen to "us" rather than to "them".

Please pray for all who are involved in child protection; grant them knowledge wisdom and compassion.

Richard Swarbrick