



ABORTION: 207/93S

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES

OF SYNOD 1993

Resolved:

That the Synod adopt the following statement on abortion as an accompaniment to the resolution of Synod 1992 (minute 241/92S)

Introduction

The Synod is aware that in 1991 the Assembly established a Task Group on broader issues of sexuality to report back in 1997. Therefore the Synod limited its discussion to abortion. In particular, this issue arose in the 1991 Synod because of bills introduced into the NSW Parliament by Rev Fred Nile, and is designed to allow the Church to take a position on abortion as a public issue. It needs to be stressed that the 1992 Synod resolutions do not limit freedom of conscience. It is accepted that members and Parishes will need to make their own decisions in specific circumstances, and the resolutions were structured in that way.

Abortion - The Starting Point

The question of abortion must be considered in the light of the fundamental truth that human life is God given from the beginning, and all human beings are made in the image of God.

We recognise that abortion is a tragic circumstance. All Christians yearn for a world in which every child is conceived in a married family where there is a committed relationship of love and trust and where every child is welcomed. We recognise that abortion, practised indiscriminately, damages respect for human life. We also recognise that in certain circumstances a woman will make a decision for abortion. In such circumstances abortion remains an option.

Making the Decision

It is impossible for the Church to lay down in a resolution all the circumstances which may lead to the decision for a woman to seek or not to seek an abortion. But it can remind the woman of the rights of the unborn child. Abortion is not merely a social issue but is a moral issue in which the Church has a right to promote the sanctity of life. Any act to terminate life is primarily a moral act - not just a social act. The best role for a Church resolution is to set the Scriptural framework within which such a decision may be taken. In most cases there is no alternative to the woman making the final judgement.

It is not possible to specify the various circumstances that may lead a woman to make a decision for or against an abortion and it is undesirable for the Synod to attempt to do so. But we acknowledge the anguish that she might well face and accept that the fundamental role of the Church in this situation is instructional, pastoral and supportive rather than legal and directive.

The decision by the woman should be taken after she has searched her own heart, and after she has consulted with her best advisers, her family and friends. Christians should seek counsel within the community of faith. No woman should be made to feel that abortion is her only option. Special care and counselling should be available to help women make their decision.

Criminal Law

The Church does not normally approve of abortion. However it recognised that Legislative efforts to ban abortions only lead to their being undertaken by incompetent people in unsatisfactory circumstances. Legislation cannot address the complex situations that confront women involved in making these decisions so that unintended results are inevitable and can lead to grave injustice. Criminal sanctions discriminate against the poor and expose the enforcement agencies to the risk of corruption. Abortion is primarily a social and moral issue, not a criminal one.

Support

Although there is some criticism in the Church of women who obtain abortions, there is often not a corresponding level of support for those who complete their pregnancy. This is particularly so for unmarried women, even where they may choose to have the child adopted.

We need to be supportive of women who face this dilemma and give them our support in making a decision. It is not appropriate for the church to seek to participate in the decision-making without a corresponding commitment of support for the outcome.