

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

ABORTION

Prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations. Adopted by General Synod, 1970 Convention.

Edited June 2001.

This statement by the General Synod of the Lutheran Church of Australia is intended to be a guide to the members of the church. It is also a statement to the public on the matter of legalising abortion and liberalising existing legislation on abortion.

1. With the church of all ages the Lutheran Church upholds the biblical view that the fetus in the mother's womb is human life created by God. This life is entitled to the care and preservation which God's command ('Do not kill') provides for all human beings. Furthermore, the fetus has the right to live under the protection of the laws of the state. So abortion, in the sense of the artificial or induced termination of a pregnancy, is not justified.
2. The Lutheran Church recognises that there are circumstances under which a termination of pregnancy may properly be considered, namely, when competent medical people are of the opinion that the life of the mother can be saved only by terminating the pregnancy. In such a case it's a question, humanly speaking, of choosing between one human life and another. A choice cannot be avoided. Before choosing to abort the child the mother should, if possible, seek both medical and pastoral guidance.
3. There are other special cases -- for example, pregnancies which result from incest, rape, or other perverted sexual relationships -- and special problems with which parents and members of the medical and nursing profession have to wrestle. These special cases and situations must always be evaluated and decided in the light of the basic principle that the fetus is human life created by God.
4. All those who have problems of conscience in connection with the performing of an abortion are advised and invited to consult a pastor or priest concerning the Christian ethical aspects of these problems.
5. The Lutheran Church firmly believes that hospital authorities should respect the conscientious objections of medical and nursing personnel to the performing of abortions.

Note: The General Synod in Convention, 1970, also resolved

THAT the governments, medical associations, and hospital associations of the respective States be officially informed that if a Lutheran doctor or nurse refuses on conscientious grounds to take part in an abortion except for the reasons given in the attached statement, such action has the full support of the Lutheran Church of Australia; in cases of victimization on account of such stand the officials of the Church or District shall take up the matter with the body taking such action.