

Myths and Maybes

By Millie and John Youngberg

THE 1992 ANNUAL COUNCIL vote taking a stand concerning abortion merits reflection. We praise God that the church has taken formal action, which is better than the lack of a statement which had left us rudderless. While the tenor of the document is positive, there are inconsistencies and loopholes.

On the positive side, the church did take principled action concerning the protection of human life at the end of the life cycle—euthanasia—and documented it well with a biblical rationale on the sanctity of life. Overt action cutting life short was rejected. A sick person is not justified in the “choice” of death by unnatural intervention. However, this same principle was not consistently carried over into the area of the beginning of the life cycle where people may choose to terminate human life.

It is not appropriate to terminate human life for those who have the power of choice. Is it appropriate to terminate human life for the helpless and innocent who have no choice—as in rape and incest? “Consistency, thou art a jewel.” Yet we prefer to see the church inconsistent when it is partly right, than to be consistently wrong.

Myths

Many times we operate on the basis of myths that we would like to believe, even though hard evidence indicates otherwise. Here are myths relating to the abortion statement.

Myth 1. That this statement was based on Scripture. The lack of a strong biblical rationale was the main concern of the minority report. The majority report was perfected largely from the viewpoint of ethical considerations, and although it finally offered a series of Bible references like beads on a string, it was not born in Scripture.

Myth 2. That the statement represents a consensus. To charge a committee to come up with a consensus statement is illogical when members’ views are in opposition, and to a degree represent differing authority sources. Pastor Neal Wilson said it well: “Whose consensus?” Later the word “consensus” was removed from the final document.

Myth 3. That the statement reflected a consensus from the world field. The world field was asked to give input to the report; however, a large number of the world field reports had grave misgivings about the health clause and other areas of the report.

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Myth 4. That these resolutions are going to stop abortion on demand. When some individuals decide to have an abortion, they will obtain it under one category or another. Health and mental anguish may be invoked. However, let them go to non-SDA institutions. We need not comply with their demands.

Myth 5. That we have to make a statement which is applicable and practical to the whole unbelieving world. We cannot be all things to all people in all cultures. Our business is to restore the Edenic ideal among those who choose voluntarily to come out of the world.

Myth 6. That because a mother may feel deeply depressed over pregnancy at a given moment of time, that she will always feel that way should the little one live. Are we sure that we want to leave the health loophole, which will be construed to include mental health and severe depression? Feelings are so changeable. Things may look entirely different years later.

Maybes

The Annual Council has taken a stand, but this still leaves unanswered questions:

Maybe 1. Maybe Adventists will take seriously the Council’s stand against abortion as birth control. Only time will tell. Only careful accounting, kept in our hospitals and honestly reported to the church, will tell.

Maybe 2. Maybe the Council’s resolutions are a first although imperfect step, and maybe the church will move toward a truly Bible-based, principled stand by the time of the 1995 General Conference.

Maybe 3. Maybe the one quarter of the delegates at the Annual Council who voted against the resolutions were right and maybe the three quarters who voted for the resolution were wrong. Truth isn’t always decided by a majority vote.

Maybe 4. Maybe the resolutions will not be implemented. Some institutions consistently boycotted the former “guidelines,” and maybe some will not suddenly have a change of heart at this time.

Maybe 5. Maybe some of the resolutions will be overturned (if not now, in the final judgment). “For every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted will be plucked up.” We haven’t heard the last word on this yet, and we won’t until “the trumpet shall sound” at the final day. □