

THE CONTINUING CHEAPENING OF HUMAN LIFE

The Western Australian Parliament has legislated for virtual abortion on demand. There is now no legal protection of the unborn in that state up until birth. There will be a price to pay, quite apart from the increased murder by abortion. There is a link with impaired fertility and the frequency of abortions. Many mothers will be emotionally disturbed for years afterwards by guilt for what they have done, and each year they will wonder what their child would have been like if it had been permitted to live. It is an awfully selfish thing for people to disregard the quality of life of the baby whose life is terminated for the sake of their own "quality of life." Even on a social level, there is a great price to pay, as human beings become more callous. Violence is already increasing in our society, and this violence done to the defenceless is a sad increase in it, and will lead to more and more callousness. People will even more fail to treat human life as a wonderful gift of the good God, and act even more as if God had not designed human life to bear His own image.

Proverbs 31:8 says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." There is no one more defenceless than an unborn child is.

There is also continuing agitation about the Powers of Attorney Bill before the Queensland Parliament for the terminally ill for make directions about "the quality of their death." The bill suggests that a patient may fill in a form in advance, to indicate that certain injuries and illnesses may be the reasons for them to direct a doctor to withhold medication. Though the bill purports to exclude homicide and suicide, it provides what is tantamount to suicide in advance. God's commandment "You shall not kill" has placed a fence around human life, to protect it. He will punish those who flout His will.

What the bill provides for is the alleged right of individuals to refuse unwanted medical treatment and the right of agents to decide for sick people. Signing such "wills" in advance is a form of euthanasia, and Christians should oppose it.

Arguments in favour of it run this way: A person has the right to dispose of his assets and make funeral arrangements in advance, and therefore he should have the right to make provision for what should happen to him if he becomes terminally ill or has to face life with handicaps that he regards as unacceptable: 'such as being confined to a wheel-chair. The two should not be compared. The first are permissible, because they are not contrary to God's commandments; the second is contrary to God's commandments.

One of the arguments is that the religions and health professionals are making the decisions, contrary to individuals' wishes. Churches ought to make it clear that people who resent what the church is, or ought to be, saying have God to deal with, because it is His Word that the churches are, or ought to be, proclaiming.

The health authorities are another matter. It is alarming that a survey of NSW nursing union members found that 80% of respondents favoured a change in the law to allow voluntary euthanasia under some circumstances, and that 70% supported a change in the law to permit a doctor to assist with a suicide when a patient wanted one. If nurses are saying these things, people should be genuinely concerned that some may already be taking it into their own hands to administer an overdose of medication or withhold it when it is needed, for it is easy for such actions to go undetected. True, nurses appreciate how much patients, family, and friends have to suffer. Their task is to preserve life, and alleviate suffering, and they should know that they are answerable to God for the faithfulness in which they do it. The decision that suffering is too great for a life to be prolonged should not be the reason why they may act according to their own feelings. Care and concern for people should never include killing them to end their troubles!

Saying this implies that Christian people must be more sensitive than ever to the need to support mothers who are tempted by various circumstances to get rid of their embarrassing unwanted pregnancies. Encouraging them to keep their babies means standing alongside them to help them to cope when their babies are born. Christians are called upon to act in caring ways towards the elderly, the terminally ill, and those who are facing pain or disablement. They should see to it that people in their communities are not cast aside as lonely non-contributors to the economy, and a hindrance. They should regard every such case as an opportunity to act to such people as Jesus would, and in Jesus' name. Paul wrote: "Be kind and compassionate to one another."