



Social Issues

Abortion

Abortion has been catapulted into the forefront of the ethical problems confronting Christians today. The issue has been nurtured in a general climate of moral relativism, a growing sexual permissiveness, and a threatening population explosion.

The moral issue of abortion is more than a question of the freedom of a woman to control the reproductive functions of her body. It is rather a question of those circumstances under which a human being may be permitted to take the life of another. We believe that all life is a gift of God, so that neither the life of the unborn child nor the mother may be lightly taken. We believe that, in Scripture, God Himself has conferred divine blessing upon unborn infants and has provided penalties for actions which result in the death of the unborn.

The Missionary Church believes that abortion, for reasons of personal convenience, social adjustment or economic advantage, is morally wrong. Consequently, we urge our pastors and people to become well informed concerning alternatives to abortion.

At the same time, we recognize certain medical conditions which pose a serious threat to the life of the mother and which may necessitate therapeutic abortion. In these cases, the decision for abortion should be made only after there has been medical, psychological and spiritual counseling of the most sensitive kind.

We also recognize certain traumatic conditions such as rape and incest which may result in pregnancy and which can create a serious threat to the psychological well-being of the mother and any existing family. We do not believe that the scriptural answer is to end the new life which may have resulted from such traumatic circumstances. Rather, we do strongly urge that total and continual Christian understanding and support be shown by the membership of the local church to the mother and any family involved during the pregnancy and following the birth.

Furthermore, the Missionary Church believes that local congregations and individual members must accept responsibility, under God, for the acceptance and loving care of all those born into this world as a result of our strong stand against abortion and that ministries should be offered to such persons within and without the church fellowship.

Homosexuality

The Scriptures declare that God created us male and female. Furthermore, the biblical record shows that sexual union was established exclusively within the context of a male-female relationship (Gen. 2:24), and formalized in the institution of marriage. The partner for man was woman. Together they were to be one flesh. In the New Testament,

the oneness of male and female in marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-23). Everywhere in Scripture, the sexual relationship between man and woman within the bonds of marriage is viewed as something natural and beautiful.

Homosexual activity, like adulterous relationships, is clearly condemned in the Scriptures. In Leviticus 18:22, God declares the practice of homosexuality an abomination in His sight. In Romans 1:26-27 the practice of homosexuality is described as a degrading and unnatural passion. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 identifies the practice of homosexuality as a sin that, if persisted in, brings grave consequences in this life and excludes one from the kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul, strong in his condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, also testifies that those once engaged in homosexuality were among those who were forgiven and changed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). This declaration offers hope both for forgiveness and for healing. Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations need to maintain the belief that all human beings have sinned, and that all Christians have received God's mercy while helpless, ungodly, and hostile to God. In the name of Christ we proclaim forgiveness, cleansing, restoration and power for godly living for all who repent and believe the gospel.

We believe that homosexuality is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender, or national origin, all of which are free from moral implication. We believe that homosexuality is a deviation from the Creator's plan for human sexuality. While homosexuals as individuals are entitled to Civil Rights, including equal protection of the law, the Missionary Church opposes legislation which would extend special consideration to such individuals based upon their "sexual orientation." Such legislation inevitably is perceived as legitimizing the practice of homosexuality and elevates that practice to so-called "Gay Rights" legislation. Where such legislation has been enacted into law, the Missionary Church strongly urges that churches and organizations be exempted from compliance by amendment to the law. The position and practice of such organizations regarding homosexuality is determined by their religious convictions. This we hold to be a grave matter of religious freedom.

Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations should compassionately proclaim the good news of forgiveness and encourage those involved in homosexual practices to cease those actions, accept forgiveness, and pray for deliverance, as nothing is impossible with God. Further, we should accept them into fellowship upon confession of faith and repentance, as we would any other forgiven sinner (1 Cor. 6:11).

We further call upon pastors and theologians, along with medical and sociological specialists within the Christian community, to expand research on the factors which give rise to homosexuality and to develop therapy, pastoral care and congregational support leading to complete restoration.

Pornography and Obscenity

Definitions:

Pornography: From the Greek words porne (harlot) and graphos (writing). Webster's Dictionary defines pornography as: (1) originally a description of prostitutes and their trade; (2) writings, pictures, etc. intended to arouse sexual desire.

Obscenity: From the Latin word obscaenus ("ob" means to, "caenum" means filth). Webster's Dictionary defines obscene as: (1) offensive to modesty or decency, lewd, impure; (2) foul, filthy, repulsive, disgusting.

WHEREAS the multi-billion dollar pornography industry in America has grown and continues to grow in epidemic proportions and is invading and affecting every segment of society; and

WHEREAS the lifestyle advocated by the pornography industry is in direct conflict with the holy living that is taught in the Word of God; and

WHEREAS family, church and community values and relationships are being seriously affected by this industry; and

WHEREAS the Supreme Court in 1973 reaffirmed that a community does have the right to establish and protect its standards; and assaults upon women and children, and the demeaning of persons in direct proportion to the degeneration of biblical moral values;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that members and adherents of the Missionary Church unite their efforts and energies with organizations such as the National Consultation on Pornography, Inc., National Federation of Decency by Law, and other like agencies to defeat all forms of pornography.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge our people to become aware of the magnitude of the problem and become involved in community plans to exercise a positive voice through actions such as the boycotting of products, publications, TV programs and places of business that promote this cancer on our society; and finally

BE IT RESOLVED that our people write to the president of the United States—

1. Thanking him for his own stand against the porno-graphic industry in this country.
2. Requesting him to order the Justice Department to enforce obscenity laws which are already on the books.
3. Assuring him of our prayers and support in this effort.

Gambling

The Missionary Church reaffirms its opposition to gambling and lotteries, including those run by government. These are socially, morally and economically destructive. They are rooted in covetousness and violate the biblical work ethic.

We believe that gambling in any form is potentially addictive. It is a social evil that feeds upon greed and sells a set of fantasy values that exploit people. It especially harms the

poor who can least afford to forfeit their financial resources on the promise of instant wealth. The tragic end result is often deepened poverty and increased welfare rolls, to say nothing of the emotional damage and disillusionment experienced by the vast numbers of planned losers.

Gambling undermines the economic base of a nation in that it reduces the purchasing power of people. Money gambled by wage earners cannot be spent to purchase goods and services of constructive and productive businesses.

Compulsive gambling may cause the individual's character to be further weakened and to disintegrate. It may lead to indolence and self-delusion, the break up of families, crime, loss of jobs and even suicide.

Since we deplore the exploitation of the weaknesses of humanity, the Missionary Church calls upon all who are in positions of influence and decision-making to seek other means by which to raise revenue. We further call upon the churches and schools to conduct programs that will inform people of the evils of gambling.

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a growing epidemic that may surpass the ravages of any plague in human history. In this decade, tens of thousands of North Americans have contracted AIDS and more than a million North Americans are carriers of the AIDS virus. For those who have contracted AIDS, currently there is no known medical cure, and thus the disease is fatal. The evidence is not clear concerning the long-term results of those who are carriers of the AIDS virus.

We extend Christian compassion to all who have acquired this disease by whatever means (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; Luke 10:25-31). We urge the provision of spiritual, emotional, and even physical care for them to the same degree that patients with other life-threatening diseases receive. Christians, following the example of Christ, should seek to minister to HIV infected persons. In keeping with our historical precedents (e.g., the furtherance of medical missions, retirement homes, inner city missions, etc.) we urge our local churches to become involved with the development of new ministries to provide compassionate care for persons with AIDS. They need the hope and peace that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can give them.

We are concerned for both the confidentiality of the infected and the protection of the uninfected. Failure by one who is HIV positive to inform any person who may be exposed to the virus is as morally reprehensible as is discrimination against an identified HIV positive person. We believe that the interests of the uninfected (including an uninfected spouse) have priority over the confidentiality of persons who are HIV positive and persist in high risk behavior. Furthermore AIDS is first and foremost a public health concern, not a civil rights issue. Hence, any proposed legislation that would confer special "civil rights" on persons afflicted with AIDS but threatens the health of others is totally unacceptable.

The Missionary Church reaffirms the sanctity of marriage and deplors nonmarital sexual intercourse, homosexual practices, and intravenous drug abuse. While we acknowledge that there are innocent sufferers of the disease, the fact remains that the two primary groups of individuals with AIDS in North America to date are practicing homosexual men and drug addicts who share needles.

Family life teaching and sexual education is a God given responsibility of parents. The church's task is to assist both parents and youth in understanding their sexuality in the context of biblical values. Sexual education alone, however, will not stop the spread of AIDS. Our society needs to understand and acknowledge that there are compelling emotional, philosophical, medical, sociological, historical and biblical reasons for practicing abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage. Since God has designed sexual intercourse for monogamous heterosexual marriage alone, and since this form of sexual practice will ultimately help to solve this problem, the Missionary Church calls her people and her world to teach and live by biblical sexual morals.

In conclusion, the Missionary Church recommends the following three responses:

1. Confront the disease as Christ and His disciples dealt directly with the issues of their day (Matt. 8:2-3 and 9:35-36).
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2. Care for those stricken, with the love of Christ and the good news of hope, forgiveness and salvation (Matthew 22:39; Galatians 6:2; Matthew 7:12).
3. Promote the biblical lifestyle which minimizes the spread of this infection (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20).

Amos, Williams E., *When Aids Comes to Church*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988.

Dobson, James, "Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions," *Focus on the Family*, February 1986, p.5.

Hayner, Stephen A., "AIDS: Ethical and Moral Questions," May 1, 1987.

"Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome," A Christian Medical Dental Society Statement. Passed unanimously by the CMDS House of Delegates, April 29, 1988, Seattle, Washington.

"National Association of Evangelicals Resolution on A.I.D.S." Adopted by the N.A.E. General Session, March 9-10, 1988, Orlando, Florida.

Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

The intent of this position paper is to address euthanasia and assisted suicide. It is not intended to address every issue of human suffering related to death.

We believe that human life is a gift from God and has absolute, not relative, value. Death is a significant transition that everyone faces. Suffering that may precede death

can be very grievous. It also affords the opportunity for personal reflection and reconciliation.

The ultimate test of our life's priorities may well be how we deal with suffering in the face of death. Such was the case for our Savior in the garden of Gethsemane. He was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14:34) and zealously prayed to be spared from suffering that would only intensify. At the same time, He affirmed His commitment to the larger purpose of the Father, whatever suffering that might involve. The absence of suffering is good, which is why Jesus prayed for it. At the same time, it is not the highest good, which is why He was willing to endure substantial suffering.

The Missionary Church opposes any intervention with the intent to produce death for relief of pain, suffering or economic consideration, or for the convenience of the patient, family or society. We believe that secular arguments for physician-assisted suicide are superseded by a biblical view of a sovereign God who places a limit on human autonomy. We further believe there is a profound moral distinction between allowing a person to die, on the one hand, and taking of a life on the other (Ex. 20:13, Deut. 5:17). In order to affirm the dignity of human life, the Missionary Church advocates the development and use of adequate pain management to relieve suffering, provide human companionship and encourage spiritual support and intercessory prayer. While for the believer to die is gain (Phil. 1:21), it is wrong to impose upon God's prerogative by advancing that day. Rather, we look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us until we meet Him face to face (1 John 3:2).

"Physician-Assisted Suicide": a position paper of the National Association of Evangelicals, 1997.

"Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia: Theological Perspectives": a position paper of Trinity Seminary: The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, n.d.

"Euthanasia": a position paper of the Christian Medical and Dental Society, approved by the CMDS House of Delegates, May 1, 1992.