

Some Current Issues and where we stand

Written by Dr Rowland S. Ward

Wednesday, 16 May 2012 20:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 May 2012 08:58

Synod 2000 (Minute 2000.29): *Synod noted the three short statements (Sanctity of Human Life ; **The***

Stewardship of Creation

;

Work, Rest and the Lord's Day

) and commended them to the use of our people in ways they may judge appropriate

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Synod 2011 (Minute 2011.15.1): *For removing any question about the Church's position in the light of more recent attitudes to marriage, Synod reaffirm its commitment to the statement in the Confession of Faith 24.1, namely, marriage is to be between one man and one woman.*

Synod commended the following short statement on

Marriage

and Family Life

to the use of our people in ways they may find appropriate (see #4 below).

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(1) THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

We believe that all human life belongs to God, the author and giver of it, and can only be taken in ways authorised by him. Each person is created in the image of God and should be nurtured.

We oppose all actions and attitudes that devalue human life. The unborn, the disabled, the poor, the ageing and the dying are particularly vulnerable to such injustices. We and all people are called to defend the weak and speak up for the helpless regardless of colour, race or creed.

We believe that, subject to a proper judicial procedure to establish the guilt or otherwise of the accused, the death penalty for pre-meditated murder may be appropriate given God's words to the human family as recorded in Genesis 9:5-6.

We also stress that all are sinners, all stand in need of the grace of God, and that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour from sin. He will completely save all who come to God through him.

(2) THE STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

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We believe that the universe and everything in it belongs to God the Creator. In God's bounty meat, fish, vegetables and fruits and all kinds of resources are available for the use of the human family, whom he has made stewards of his creation as alone creatures made in his image.

The unjust exploitation of the earth, its resources or its peoples is to be resisted. God does not commend self-indulgent living nor preoccupation with money and possessions. Christians are encouraged to live lives of simplicity and contentment even as they seek to bring out the potential of the earth.

Good stewards receive God's gifts with thankfulness and use them responsibly to meet human need and to bring glory to God. The Bible also teaches regular, cheerful, sacrificial and proportionate giving to the work of the Lord by God's people so that people of all cultures may come to know Christ and serve him in all things.

(3) WORK, REST AND THE LORD'S DAY

God's good creation had in view a higher destiny after a course of history had been completed. As God rested on the seventh day, so people are called to a regular weekly rest. Such rest expresses thankfulness for what God has provided, confidence in God's sustaining care, and anticipates the future rest in the better world to come.

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Work and economic output are not ultimate values. All people should have humane working conditions and observe the weekly day of rest even though, through sin, much of the day's significance is not recognised.

Jesus, the promised Redeemer, brings about a new creation. Following New Testament example, the first day of the week, the Lord's Day is the day of rest and worship, anticipating the promised new heavens and new earth and the entry into God's eternal rest of all who put their faith in Jesus. On this day labour is limited to necessary work and deeds of mercy.

Synod 2011 (Minute 2011.15.1): For removing any question about the Church's position in the light of more recent attitudes to marriage, Synod reaffirm its commitment to the statement in the Confession of Faith 24.1, namely, marriage is to be between one man and one woman. Synod commended the following short statement on Marriage and Family Life to the use of our people in ways they may find appropriate.

(4) MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

We believe that God established the family relationship with marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman for life, and with sexual union taking place only within the marriage relationship. God is against sin but he is for the family. God intends that a secure and loving

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marriage relationship provide the context for the birth and nurture of children. We also recognize that God does not give all the gift of marriage and that the single state is to be respected and honoured as well.

We recognise that sin can fracture relationships so that divorce on the grounds of sexual immorality or irremediable desertion of marriage obligations is sometimes appropriate, the ultimate cause being the hardness of the human heart. We also recognize that the temptation to sexual relationships between persons of the same gender can exist and that yielding to such temptations is serious sin for which repentance is necessary. Pornography likewise is a sinful snare that debases and corrupts human life.

Given the way sin affects all our lives, compassion for those ensnared in improper relationships or addictions is necessary at the same time as a Biblical presentation of the solution in Jesus Christ. In the fellowship of God's family, the Church, married couples may strengthen their relationship, and the brokenness of all our lives may be overcome and healed through the love of Christ and the support of other believers.