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## Swedish Episcopal Letter on Sex Problems

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6. For the following compare the stimulating chapter "Augustins Gottesbegriff und die Entstehung der Gnadenlehre" in Viktor Stegemann, *Augustinus Gottesstaat*, No. 15 of the "Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte" (Tuebingen, 1928), pp. 4—18.
7. The phrase "altera aeternum supplicium subire cum diabolo" offers a severe exegetical problem. But the force of the parallelism in "altera," as well as the lack of anything else in the context to which the "subire" can be attached, makes the interpretation given above most plausible. Cf. also the question, spoken of the evil angels: "Who, then, can doubt that God, either in foreknowledge or in act, separated between these and the rest?" (XI, 33: p. 224.)
8. On the significance of "vitium" cf. XI, 17: p. 214, with Dods' note there, as well as his note *sub* XII, 1: p. 227.
9. Interesting to note is Coquaeus' comment, recorded by Dods (to XII, 21: p. 241), that "this passage is leveled against the Pelagians."
10. On Marcellinus cf. the note in Benjamin B. Warfield, *Two Studies in the History of Doctrine* (New York, 1897), p. 28, and Scholz, *op. cit.*, pp. 7—8, where reference is made to Angus.
11. J. L. Jacobi, *Die Lehre des Pelagius* (Leipzig, 1842), p. 27.
12. In his article on "Pelagius und die pelagianischen Streitigkeiten," *Real-enzyklopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, XV, 747—774.
13. He repeats this statement at least twice explicitly (XII, 24: p. 242; XXI, 7: p. 458), and implicitly *passim*.

St. Louis, Mo.

J. J. PELIKAN

## Swedish Episcopal Letter on Sex Problems

*The Lutheran Quarterly*, February 1952, published "A Letter Concerning a Life Problem of a People—To the Clergy of the Church of Sweden from their Bishops." The episcopal letter indicates implicitly how tenuous the line between the world and the Church has become in a country which is so predominantly Lutheran. But are we not confronted by the same problems? This episcopal letter will serve to point up and correctly evaluate some of the problems which confront the Christians in our modern society. Dr. Bergendoff has translated the letter from the Swedish text and has also kindly given permission for this reprint. The letter follows.

F. E. M.

### MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Marriage, a legalized union of one man and one woman, has as its purpose the common welfare and care of parents and children. It seeks the development and deepening of their character and is the absolute foundation of community life. The Church wishes to protect and preserve this gift of God.

Marriage vows in God's will are irrevocable. Security and stability in the fellowship of the home depend on the fact that the marriage bond is indissoluble. The unshakable intention of the parents to belong to each other throughout life saves them from being driven whither in

their deepest nature they do not wish to go. Together they should share prosperity and adversity, and should seek so to solve the difficulties and conflicts which they encounter that such do not separate them but instead bring them closer to each other. Honest effort to overcome disharmony when it arises can unlock new possibilities of happiness and bring richer results than a frictionless marriage. Security and stability in the fellowship of the home—as all experience confirms—are of incomparable importance also for the healthful development of children. Children who must grow up in a home disharmonious or broken go out into life with radically diminished opportunities.

For this reason the Church is opposed to that divorce-mentality of our day which would make marriage a contract binding the parties only as long as they desire each other. Exceptions do arise when divorce can and really should take place. In such cases, as the words of Jesus remind us, the basic reason is always in the hardness of the human heart. When man and wife are both concerned about humble obedience to the will of God the thought of divorce cannot be permitted. But when one parent is guilty of conduct which destroys the marriage, and persists in such conduct, divorce can be warranted for the sake of the parent or of the children. Even this should not take place until all other ways of settling the disagreement have been tried.

#### RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

Only marriage can provide the security which is a prerequisite for a life together of lasting happiness. In an age where looseness in sexual relationships becomes increasingly common only the irresponsible can fail to see the peril threatening both the young and the entire community. Many parents seem to have lost faith in the possibility of maintaining fixed and firm norms for their children. But just as little as widespread dishonesty can induce the Church to lower the standard of truth, ought the sexual looseness of our day influence the Church in its stand that all sexual relationship before and outside of marriage is sin both against God and man. Unless a proved and steadfast will to faithfulness and life-long companionship is present, the fundamental requisite for trustful sexual intercourse is lacking. The Church cannot approve even of so-called common-law marriages, since the thought of possible dissolution is not excluded from the start. From social or other viewpoints they may seem to be different in character, but this does not mean that they can be justified from a Christian viewpoint.

When the Church decisively warns against sexual intercourse before marriage it does so in a truly positive spirit. For one does not do youth

a service by a compromise which will only increase the difficulties standing in the way of a happy marriage.

The Church opposes all talk about trial marriages. There is no guarantee in trial marriage that it will bring success. When there is genuine affinity and true love, there is a possibility for mutual concern to discover increasing harmony in the sexual relationship.

A difficult problem arises when two young people wish to marry but have no prospect of a home. Such a situation reveals a fundamental defect in modern society which the State has an urgent duty to remedy through its social politics. Where the problem is not solved the Church recommends to the youth that they get married even if for a time they must live apart from each other. Such a solution is certainly not ideal, but the couple do live their sexual life under these circumstances as man and wife who through marriage have wanted to certify that their relationship is permanent.

#### CONTRACEPTIVES

The Church cannot approve of the idea that pre-marital intercourse is permissible if contraceptives are employed. Contraceptives can indeed reduce the risk of an illegitimate child, but this changes the character of pre-marital relationships just as little as the fact that one party to adultery may be sterile changes the nature of the adultery.

There is something wrong in any marriage where the couple are biologically normal but want no children. Yet children are not the sole purpose of marriage. Above all, marriage is significant because it establishes a firm and genuine fellowship between man and woman. Sexual intercourse between man and wife can be a complete expression of this fellowship though unusual conditions may make necessary an avoidance of conception. Seriously considered this situation does lead us to concede that under certain circumstances contraceptives may be permitted.

#### ABORTION

From experience we know that fateful conflicts can arise between the dutiful love to the living and to the unborn. Situations can occur where a choice must be made between the life of the mother or of the unborn child. Our Church does not share the opinion that abortion under any circumstance is to be condemned. But on the other hand our Church is deeply distressed over that abortion-mentality which would give to the pregnant woman free choice as to whether or not her child should be born. Only in those cases when conception is the result of a clear violation of a woman may she herself request abortion and when

after thorough consideration she decides that it would be better if this child were never born.

When a physician finds on examination that a continuance of conception until birth may in all likelihood mean the death of the mother or physical or mental incompetence for either mother or child, he may consider the possibility of ending pregnancy. On such medical advice Christian love can counsel abortion. But to put an end to pregnancy on account of the community's inability to provide life's social opportunities for the child and the mother is to indict a community which ought to be concerned about the remedy of such social faults. The Church appreciates the establishment of clinics which through expert and responsible personnel seek to prevent abortions. The Church is especially conscious of this need under the present law on abortions, for she has experienced in her ministry of counselling what anguish and anxiety can plague both the subject of abortion and the physicians and nurses who must take part in the operation.

The Church strongly emphasizes the responsibility of the father both towards the expected child and the expectant mother. Any man who evades this responsibility is unworthy both as an individual and as a member of society.

From a Christian point of view the child out of wedlock is just as valuable as the one born in marriage and is entitled to the love and care of those to whom it belongs.

Pastors and members of the Church must consider it their duty to prevent abortion on the part of a mother in desperate circumstances by being ready to offer economic support or finding a suitable foster home.

#### STERILIZATION

The Church raises no objection to the theory that some persons because of constitutional reasons should not reproduce themselves. But sterilization involves a mutilation and should not be resorted to except after full consideration of all factors. Experience can testify that serious mistakes have been made in this matter. It is therefore necessary to emphasize the importance of careful investigation before such an operation is undertaken. Study ought to be made of the possibility both of loving care for the offspring and of eventual favorable development even in regard to constitutionally-determined factors so that the subject might be restored to complete social life.

It is important that if sterilization be undertaken the subject shall have full knowledge of what this means. There may be cases where such knowledge may instead be given to those closest of kin.

### ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

The science of genetics has discovered the possibility of conception by artificial means. Its motive in this research has been highly commendable, namely, a solution to the problem of childless marriages. From a purely genetical viewpoint it may seem to be of secondary importance where the sperm comes from. But this question is highly important from the viewpoint of religion and morality.

The Church does not believe any ethical problem arises when the sperm is transferred from man to wife—in homologous insemination. This may be regarded as a medical means of realizing the aim of marriage.

But the Church takes a different attitude towards heterologous, or alien, insemination—where the sperm is transplanted to an unmarried woman, or to a married woman from some one else than the husband. The Lord says concerning man and wife in marriage that the two shall be one. This unity is manifested in their child. A child resulting from insemination has a natural father from whom both physical and psychical traits are inherited. Such an expression as "test-tube children" therefore implies either a conscious or unconscious misuse of terms.

A man who provides sperm for insemination has violated the very principle of fatherhood. He becomes the parent of children whom he does not know and to whom he neither can nor is allowed to give fatherly care.

A woman who gives birth to a child of alien insemination can hardly avoid, during the period of pregnancy and of rearing the child, thinking constantly about the man who is the natural father of the child. Even if only in the form of a shadow he assumes a presence in the child. Thus the parents violate the commandment of God that the two shall be one.

The child born of alien insemination is the victim of a wrong. The very fact that the natural father must remain anonymous—unless indeed the marriage is to be an obvious three party affair—deprives the child of a right to know who are its parents, a right supported both by Christian principle and legal tradition. If the child discovers that he was conceived by insemination he will be threatened by mental conflicts, especially in two of life's most serious periods, that of puberty, when he will question his parentage, and that of marriage, when he may be in doubt as to forbidden relationships. If it is concealed who are children of insemination and who by natural conception, an element of uncertainty will be introduced into community life which may make

all children suspicious, but especially those who grow up in a one-child family.

The Church (in Sweden) is responsible for the community records and is therefore particularly concerned about the insertion of false or misleading data in the church records which would result from alien insemination. In such a case these records would no longer be a dependable source of research in inheritance or kinship.

### HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexual practices are a violation of the commandment of God. The provisions of the new Swedish penal law cannot therefore be regarded as giving ethical approval to homosexual acts. It can however be granted that other means than imprisonment are necessary if a homosexually inclined person is to be helped. The one who truly struggles against this affliction should be met with all the sympathy and encouragement which are called for by Christian love.

The medical profession should be particularly concerned in finding medical means to free the homosexually inclined from their abnormal impulses. It is of importance that a homosexual of weak character should not be entrusted with youth whom he might be tempted to corrupt.

The community cannot escape the duty of taking strong measures against those who promote homosexual practices in the interest of monetary gain.

A heavy responsibility rests on the clergy to bring to the individual in his particular condition the kind of help indicated by the principles described above.

To complain about the evil of our times is of little avail. Of more importance is the giving of help through preaching, teaching, and counselling. All the while we should keep in mind the Savior's own attitude. Only in the Sermon on the Mount and in Matthew, chapter 19 (and in parallel passages) is the sexual problem expressly mentioned. In none of the Gospels is there any detailed instruction on this subject. We find in Jesus nothing of that intensive busying with sex as an isolated theme which is so common in modern discussion. His instruction concerning adultery fits naturally into the context of life as a whole. If we follow this suggestion the Church will help people to understand that the sexual problem will never be solved in isolation. In its teaching of youth the Church must make clear that the life of love is a gift of God which is not to be relegated to some dark realm of dishonor. On the other hand an overemphasis on the sexual can easily imperil a healthy development.

We ought not to forget how sharply Jesus warns against adultery and how highly he estimates marriage. The joy of the wedding and of giving birth to a child became to Him a natural symbol of the joy of the kingdom of heaven. The commandment regarding adultery is reaffirmed by Jesus in strong terms.

The Church should remember also wholeheartedly the mercy of the Savior towards those who have broken this commandment. He did not speak contemptuously about the prostitute. He received the sinful woman in the Pharisee's house, forgave her many sins without any reservation, and paid more attention to her than to the self-righteous Pharisee. At times it has seemed as if the Church could not bring herself to forgive this sin as fully as other sins. Herein the Church does not follow in the Master's footsteps. The path of the Church must be that of Jesus—firmness in moral principles, clear teaching in regard to transgressions of the commandments of God, and limitless mercy towards those who repent of their sins.

"And be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

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