A Statement on Proposals for Family Limitations

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Cardinal Manning once remarked that all human controversy, ultimately, is theological. His meaning was that every intellectual or moral position taken or rejected by man is dictated finally by his belief or disbelief in God, his understanding of the person, nature, and will of God, his acceptance and comprehension of God's revealed word, and his balancing of God's mercy against his justice. It is an aphorism which was substantially repeated, it may be recalled, by Gen. Douglas MacArthur on the occasion of the signing of the armistice with the Japanese emperor at the end of World War II. Whether the soldier was conscious of the prelate's earlier insight, we do not know. But solemn occasions not infrequently provoke powerful formulation of the great basic truths by which we live.

There is no question but that the current debate on ecology and the population crisis is theological at bottom. It has recently been sharpened by recommendations of a highly contentious nature, made conspicuously by Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert Finch, and by the junior Senator from Oregon, Robert Packwood. If you believe the God exists, and that He has laid down certain laws of life by which humanity is to be governed, laws implicit in the very nature with which man is endowed, laws explicit in God's revealed word as taught by His accredited spiritual authority here below, then any proposal which would put the state in the place of God, as possessing final power over human life, human freedom and human dignity, must be rejected absolutely.

Let certain points of this debate be clarified. We share, as Christians and Catholics, as concerned Americans, the general anxiety of the civilized world over the problem of population. We are fully aware that at least in certain areas of the world population growth threatens to outstrip the present and foreseeable possibilities of accommodation and vital sustenance. At the same time we entertain some grave reservations as to whether the threat is as general, as acute, or as portentous for the future of the race as some of the more highly colored propaganda now in circulation would persuade us to believe. But insofar as population growth poses a genuine problem for human life and happiness, we too would seek means of limiting or controlling that growth. Such means, if it goes without saying, must be sanctioned by the Christian moral code and applied by force of conscience, not the exercise of the police power of the state.

In like manner, we share the general concern over the ecological deterioration with which the world is confronted. Dissipation and pollution of our nation's resources, the resources of our rapidly contracting world, through the enormous expansion and concentration of industry and technology, are real enough and terrifying in their ugly implications. We too, most assuredly, would keep God's footstool sweet and green. It must be pointed out, however, that we are here dealing with two problems, not unrelated, it is true, but clearly distinct. The ecological salvation of the sphere is a matter, primarily, of reversing the trend toward careless waste, of stemming economic irresponsibility, and of educating humanity in the proper care of itself and of its physical surroundings. As such it has very little to do with the population crisis, unless one is to subscribe to the ultimate counsel of despair, that man is himself the worst of polluters, and ought therefore to be exterminated. It might be remembered that if the projections of the Rev. Thomas Mal...
Gross National Product, nor in permissive sexual indulgence. Conformity of human life and thought to the will of God, expressed in his divine law, is far more germane to its true understanding and possession.

We can appreciate the sincerity of those who are advocating the substitution of the law of God by the law of Thing, insofar as they are motivated by an honest, if mistaken, anxiety over the shape of things to come and the means to be adopted in order to avoid possible catastrophe. But at the same time we must serve notice that these political leaders persist in their efforts to propagandize compulsory family limitation and planned parenthood as a national policy, and abortion and the pill as weapons in the hands of the state to impose conformity in defiance of conscience and the will of God, the Catholic community will fight back. Please God, it will not fight back alone.

Sexuality is an integral and important part of human life. It has always been so, although we may not always have been willing to admit it. There have been moments in our history when we tended to ignore it, moments when we tended to suppress it, and there are times, like ours today, when we seem to be pre-occupied with it as if there were nothing else to living except sex and its consequences.

Sex may not be the summum bonum of life, but neither is it an insignificant detail which can be left ignored in the background to resolve itself into what it will. It is, undeniably, one of the strongest driving forces in life, and it permeates the entire personality of each individual. Every single cell in the body is, in fact, male or female, because each cell contains the chromosomes that make it one gender or another. Manifestations of our sexuality are present, in one way or another, in practically every action we undertake. It forms an integral part of our personality and affects our lives and well being in many different ways.

But human sexuality is essentially different from pure animal sexuality or the sexuality of plants. In plants, it functions at a purely mechanical level. In animals, it is pure instinct, or perhaps, pure biology. In man, it has dimensions that put sexuality at an entirely different level of