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# Unexpected Sequelae of Contraception

by

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One could understand how, when *Humanae Vitae* was issued in 1968, there was a reaction of disappointment, even anger, among those who had mistakenly expected that the teaching Church was about to abandon its historic condemnation of contraception. But it is hard to explain how all these years later the latter-day dissidents still persist in their stance when the contraceptive subculture has obviously created a disaster area in society. The promised joys of contraception have proved to be illusory; and the calamities which Pope Paul had predicted have all come to pass.

The laxist theologians and laity had given the impression that all that lay between happiness and sorrow within marriage was a little pill (or IUD, or condom, etc.). If only we would worship before the golden calf of contraception all our problems would be solved. If this thesis were true, the happiness of the contraceptive group and, *per contra*, the misery of the faithful Catholic enclave would be obvious. The evidence to support this logical deduction is completely lacking.

## A Package Deal

Despite the paternal warnings of the Pope it would be a fair estimate that some 70 percent of Catholics now use contraceptives while almost 90 percent of our non-Catholic friends accept them. The difference between those figures, 20 percent, is a measure of the success (or failure) of the apostolate in the area of marriage and sexuality.

Those who opt, perhaps in desperation, for contraception do not realize that this is a package deal. It is not simply a matter of using a contraceptive — there are several inescapable sequelae which the otherwise intellectual dissident theologians do not seem to appreciate.

## Moral Assessment

One should not expect an analysis of the morality of contraception from a simple physician but suffice to say that its fundamental fault is that it divorces the loving aspect of sex from its fertile nature. *H.V.* No. 12 refers to: “. . . the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning.”

Far be it from me to demur when the Holy Father speaks but perhaps one might be permitted to observe that the translation is sometimes less than felicitous. “Unitive”, “procreative” and “meaning” are not words one uses in ordinary speech. They intend to convey the concepts of “loving” and “fertile”. Note that fertility does not necessarily imply fecundity. There is no obligation to achieve pregnancy with maximum efficiency; in fact, couples with a serious problem might be obliged to have no children. The principle is that fertility must not be artificially interfered with. In practice that means that only normal intercourse is permissible.

### A Technicality?

To some this may seem to be a technicality but the principle enunciated by the Pope is of fundamental importance. This point emerges more clearly when in vitro fertilization is considered. Here the fertile episode is separated from the married partners and transferred to the laboratory; and the loving action is replaced by masturbation. Thus contraception offers sex without babies while IVF provides babies without sex. Both actions are wrong for the same reason but paradoxically they aim at different ends.

### Secondary Considerations

Barrier methods alter the nature of the male and female anatomy converting the male organ into a simple phallus and the female into an indifferent cavity. This involves impure acts similar to masturbation. “The pill” is mainly a suppressor of ovulation creating a medical, but temporary, sterilization. In a minority of cases it must act as an abortifacient because ovulation is not invariably suppressed; therefore fertilization must sometimes occur but endometrial atrophy or a tubal factor prevents implantation. The IUD is almost certainly an abortifacient. The same applies to other hormonal methods such as Depo-Provera. RU 486, “the morning after pill” and menstrual extraction are unashamedly abortifacients. Spermicidal jellies or pessaries are sterilizing in effect.

Sterilization and abortion, even if early, are both serious moral faults. All of these techniques therefore offend against purity or justice or both.

### Remote Sequelae

Those who oppose papal teaching must accept responsibility for the many serious sequelae which are inseparable from contraceptive acceptance.

1. It is the first step towards embracing the antinatalism that is destroying most Western countries. Individuals as well as societies must opt for either pronatalism (in favor of births) or antinatalism (rejection of births). In rich countries immigration obscures the reality but the threatened demographic collapse will become obvious in the next two or three decades.

2. It leads on imperceptibly but irresistibly to the “antinatalist triad”, that is, there is an inevitable progression from contraception to sterilization and then to abortion. Once contraception is introduced to a society it is only a matter of time before abortion arrives. This observation, which can be confirmed in every country, exposes the fallacy of the common claim that, if there was more contraception, there would be fewer abortions. The reverse is the case.

Further painful experience of life has shown that the “progression” postulated above should really be extended at both ends. Before contraception insert masturbation; after abortion add homosexuality. Masturbation is widely recommended in the sex education advocated by such organizations as Planned Parenthood. Homosexuality is enjoying one of its periodic historical explosions. The features that all these activities have in common are: antinatalism, and the separation of love from fertility.

If anyone doubts that contraception and homosexuality come from the same stable, let him listen to what Rev. Richard Kirker, General Secretary of the Gay Christian Movement in England, has to say: “. . . the roles of ordained minister and practicing homosexual are quite consistent since this logically flowed from the Anglican Church’s radical alteration of its teaching as to the purposes of the sexual act through its changed teaching on contraception at the 1930 Lambeth Conference.”

3. Contraception facilitates, and therefore encourages, all the premarital and extramarital liaisons which have made modern society into a sexual jungle, as every distressed wife or mother will agree.

4. Up to modern times sex has been regarded as the privilege of the married state but with the advent of contraception it has become accessible to everyone, married or single. The married union has therefore been depreciated and regarded as superfluous. “Why get married?” the young ask. Freed from the burdens of childbearing, permanency and fidelity, marriage has become undervalued and denigrated while common law unions abound.

5. The rejection of childbearing has contributed to the estrangement of teenagers from their parents. The children come to realize that they are lucky to be alive and they probably hate the patronizing label of being a “wanted child”. Their parents have settled for sterile sex and money rather than providing them with the brothers and sisters they would prefer to have in their journey through life.

6. In Catholic marriages contraception leads on to neglect of the sacraments and impoverishment of the spiritual life.

7. Contraception fosters unrealistic fears about a “population explosion” and the concept of people as a curse, not a blessing. Too late, many countries will find that their citizens are not just “more mouths to feed”; they are hands to work with, consumers to provide demand, brains to think with, hearts to love with.

8. A suprising consequence of contraception is that it has contributed to the

modern shortage of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. It is not simply the demographic factor, although inevitably smaller Catholic families provide fewer recruits to serve God as front line troops. It is a more subtle influence.

What young men and women offer to God is their greatest treasure, His gift of marriage and sexuality, but they generously give this up “for the sake of the Kingdom”. But if marriage is depreciated the quality of their sacrifice is diminished. This observation is not new. It was made by St. John Chrysostom (d. 407), the “golden voiced” Bishop of Constantinople, when he said: “When marriage is not esteemed, neither can consecrated virginity or celibacy exist; when sexuality is not regarded as a great value given by the Creator, the renunciation of it for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven loses its meaning.”

The only method of family limitation that does not offend against purity or justice is the natural method based on ovulation detection. In practical terms the choice for married couples is therefore limited to NFP or nothing.

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