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John G. Quesnell

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Adam Knew Eve: Is It Time To Reassess?

John G. Quesnell, A.C.S.W.

Mr. Quesnell is a marriage and family counselor in Minneapolis, Minn. He teaches at St. Paul Seminary and conducts retreats for engaged and married couples. This paper was presented during the November, 1974 meeting of NFCPG in Portland, Oreg.

After a decade of unbridled contraception coupled with the rejection of *Humanae Vitae*¹, this counselor wonders if the nature of the times is not such that professionals must begin to study and discuss the ramifications of contraception and the rejection of the Papal teaching advising against the practice of artificial birth control. Do we notice a certain pattern which can be referred to as The Cycle of the Evolution and/or Devolution of Sexuality?

An Inseparable Connection

The first stage in this cycle depicts the traditional Judeo-Christian teaching that the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal embrace are intended by Our Creator to be inseparable. Christendom agreed upon this teaching until the 1930 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. This teaching implies that man may decide not to exercise the gift of the conjugal embrace. However, when man expresses his love through the gift of the conjugal embrace, the teaching directs that he may not separate the two meanings,2

Prior to the 1930's, couples adhering to this teaching had no means, short of total abstinence, to plan their families. The research of Drs. Ogino and Knaus (1929-1930) suggested that the time of ovulation could be predicted. Subsequent to this research, couples could, theoretically, control conception by following the rhythms of nature. During the middle part of the twentieth century, however, our society was under the influence of a Victorian attitude toward sexuality which interfered with a couple's willingness to openly discuss their intimate conjugal relationship. We were also caught in the vice of a double standard which held women totally responsible for pregnancy. Also, in spite of the discoveries of Ogino and Knaus, fertility research remained in an embryonic state.

Although one must grant Rhythm's unpopular legacy, I ask that we consider that the unique interaction of socio-psycho-medico-technological influences were such that Rhythm did not have a fair chance.

Technological Triumph? A Modified Christian View

The second stage (Technological Triumph?) represents the 1960's when the state of man's medical-technical development was such that contraception

appeared to be "safe" and not too esthetically unpleasant. People referred to "sex without fear." This implied that man had successfully separated the unitive and procreative meanings. We began saying, "God, we appreciate that You have created us as sexual beings and we are grateful that You have attached a unitive and procreative meaning to the conjugal embrace. But, we are also happy that we have been able to use our God-given technical skills to separate these two dimensions. In this way, we can have intercourse at will and use technical rather than natural means to space our children." The introduction of the contraceptive pill, diaphragm, I.U.D., and various chemicals was welcomed as more esthetically pleasant and "safe" than the condom or coitus interruptus. Since the concern about pregnancy was anxiety provoking to many couples and since Rhythm was a relatively inexact means of family planning, the conjugal embrace was often fraught with anxiety. People were relieved that intercourse could be spontaneous, that abstinence would be unnecessary, and that pregnancy could be planned rather than "accidental."

Because of the positive features, couples were willing to contend with the side effects of the Pill or with having to be rigged for intercourse. Although it was realized that the ideal contraceptive³ had not yet been discovered, many thought contraception was

less "risky" than contending with the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative.

In stage two, it seems that a respect for life and marriage is maintained. Unfortunately, it often seems that family planning is thought of as only a Catholic problem. Members of other religious denominations, as well as the general public, believe that medical technology and "modern theology" have successfully met the challenge of birth control. Unfortunately, most have been ignorant of, or misinformed about, the teaching of the Catholic Church. Some have felt the Catholic Church is telling people they must "have babies, babies, and more babies." They seem unaware that the Catholic Church has traditionally encouraged parents to responsibly plan their families and taught that parents must responsibly rear the children they bring into the world. Also, many thought that only Catholics have large families. In reality, family size is more a function of geographical location (rural or urban) than religious heritage.

Technological Travesty?

In the third stage, one notices the onset of a certain devolution⁴. Although intercourse is recognized as an act intended for a committed relationship (not necessarily within marriage) and although the unitive and procreative meanings of intercourse are still valued, spouses begin to focus more upon the unitive and recreational aspects of intercourse.5

As couples focus more upon the recreative meaning, they turn increasingly to gourmet guides for intercourse which help them discover "new and exciting ways to titillate the erogenous zones." As increased attention is given to "that great orgasm in the sky," couples seem to lose something of the warmth and reassurance which should flow from the conjugal embrace. Rather than being freed of sexual problems, it seems that sexual problems are compounded. It is recognized that the bride of the fifties may have sat on the edge of her bed crying,6 not knowing what to make of this experience that would have been horribly sinful before marriage. It was difficult for her to realize that the body which was supposed to be covered could now be uncovered and aroused. However, the emotional trauma of that experience was less damaging than that of the modern bride and groom who are disillusioned that intercourse is not all they anticipated. We simply must begin to recognize the connection between the misuse of sex before marriage and the difficulties experienced after marriage. One cannot flaunt God's laws without feeling the effects. It is not so much that God wants to punish us, but we punish ourselves (unhappiness, marital distrust, lack of sexual satisfaction, etc.) as a result of our violation of certain spiritual laws.

In this third stage, abstinence is viewed with disdain and society begins to lose its respect for marriage. Clergy, physicians, judges, and counselors begin to realize that contraception is not the answer to sexual and/or marriage problems. Parents operating at stage two are aghast to realize that their children begin at stage three.

At stage three, our society develops a contraceptive mentality - that is, there are some indications that we lose respect for life and that we resent the procreative meaning of intercourse. People begin to talk about population9 and abortion. We hear the comment, "I love children very much. In fact, I love them too much to have them." As we hear this, some become concerned about their earlier acceptance of stage two. They begin wondering if the best lesson in theology is found in the instruction booklet for the washing machine, i.e., "For best results, follow the instructions of the manufacturer." Is there an inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative? Did we decide that we knew better than God? Are we beginning to pay a price for the decision to artificially separate the unitive and procreative meanings?

As we observe the long-range effect of stages two or three, some wonder if "the glories of spontaneous sex" are mythical. Spontaneous sex implies that at certain times a husband and wife are drawn together by some irre-

sistable force. As they embrace each other, they become totally intoxicated and are carried off on a cloud of passion to their bedroom. In the midst of their passionate embrace and through the fire of their erotic exchange of kisses, the couple fall helplessly into the marital embrace.

That's all really neat! Yes, it seems that they do, indeed, become aroused and madly embrace each other. The only problem is that one or the other may fall asleep or be interrupted10 before intercourse is completed. Wouldn't it be more advantageous to anticipate intercourse and plan a time when the experience could be more fully enjoyed? One begins to wonder if an advantage of Natural Family Planning is that couples need to discuss their sexuality, their feelings, and anticipate and plan the times they will want to exercise the gift of the conjugal embrace. Some begin to realize the expectation of spontaneous sex may actually have a disastrous effect upon the sexual relationship.

The obsession with spontaneous sex has opened the door to a "slam-bam-thank-you-ma'am" type of relationship. Spontaneity may mean that intercourse depends upon the spontaneous rise and fall of passions. It can degenerate to the point of being only a "sneezing in the loins." We must decide whether intercourse is only a discharge or a true expression of love. An obsession with spontaneity may lead to insufficient planning and emphasis

only upon the orgasm rather than the total process of love making. It is the suspicion of this marriage counselor that there is a relationship between spontaneous sex and the increased incidence of impotence and premature ejaculation. As a result of spontaneous sex, men are not accustomed to maintaining an erection.¹¹

Sexual Emancipation

In the fourth stage, intercourse is not reserved for married, committed, or even opposite-sexed couples. The unitive and procreative meanings are completely eliminated and sex for recreation is the commonly accepted notion. We begin to notice that formal marriage is viewed as passé. Not only is serial monogamy looked upon as very mod, but people question whether even temporary commitment to each other is necessary. At stage three, people believe that intercourse should be engaged in only by those who truly love and are committed to each other.12 However, at stage four, intercourse is not viewed as an expression of love. As long as it is fun, it is OK. Extramarital affairs and premarital sex can now be defended with vigor and justified as being a part of a new morality. We begin to appreciate that the sexual relationship devolves from re-creative to recreative to wreck-reative.

Stage four is exemplified by the cartoon in a Playboy magazine depicting a guy and gal in bed together with the guy saying, "Let's not talk about love at a time like this." As extramarital affairs become rampant and as marital break-up becomes commonplace, many a wife is heard to comment, "That (expletive deleted) Pill! If it weren't for that, Tom would have never felt free to be involved with another woman and would have never drifted away from his family."13

As people permit themselves to be treated as canisters of flesh, respect for the individual diminishes and the Supreme Court feels free to condemn to death millions of unborn little ones.¹⁴

As long as sex is only for the fun of it, people can begin to talk about free sex. Only a few seem to notice the high price being paid for that which is "free." Some realize that those involved in the free love movement begin saying, "I hate people, men are worse than animals, I detest sex, and I hate myself." The unfortunate followers of this mentality arrive at the painful realization that the search for the meaning of sexuality cannot be carried on effectively in a series of non-committed encounters. Some face the fact that intercourse can only be understood within the procreative confines of a faithful, loveinspired marriage. It is distressing to hear the free love advocate explain, "I made love to five women last week." One realizes that he may have "had sex" with five women last week, but he did not make love to anyone.15

The concept of free sex implies that any sexual deviations including homo-sexuality are acceptable.16 Since sex is for the fun of it and since God has nothing to say about the exercise of our sexuality, one can do as he or she desires. At this point, some look back at stage two of this cycle wondering whether or not contraception was the camel's head.17 We must appreciate that sexuality is a mystery. We react to a mystery in one of three ways: (1) Surround it with taboos (the risk in Stage 1); (2) Treat it as trivia (as happens in Stages 3-5); or (3) Pray to the Holy Spirit to help us understand that which God wants to reveal to us.

Degenerative Sex

The fifth stage in this cycle is that of degenerative sex in which the individual is only a canister of flesh. He is stripped of any meaning as a temple of the Holy Spirit who has dignity and worth as a God-created individual. To appreciate the impact of degenerative sex, one need only enter a go-go or strip joint. After the initial fascination, one is overwhelmed by the realization that no one is watching. Someone is literally "letting it all hang out" and no one cares - no one gives a damn. We begin to realize the impact of spiritual ecology.18 Some bars which began as topless joints later thought they could make more money if they also went bottomless. They then thought business might be even better if performers had intercourse on stage. It was only a short step from this to beastiality. Of course, to the free sexist, that is also all right.

Satanic

The final stage in this cycle is that of Satanism, in which we may find a nude woman lying on the Satanic Altar. As we lose sight of ourselves as God-created individuals, we gradually devolve to the point of giving ourselves over to evil influences. stages have been depicted in the form of a cycle because of a belief that one historically sees the repetition of this cycle. As we go from one extreme to the other, we are often like the drunk who only crosses the middle line as he is going from ditch to ditch. As the meaning of sexuality becomes increasingly perverted, there is the danger that we will overlook the true meaning of sexuality and embrace only a repressive view which depicts sex as dirty, ishy, awful, bad. This over-correction (super-sacerdotalization) has historically been made in order to preserve the meaning of sexuality.

The Dilemma

The question faced by the responsible professionals (clergy, health personnel, and counselors) is whether or not they would do their clientele a service by recommending the reassessment of their commitment to contraception and inviting them to explore the advantages of Natural Family Planning.

At first glance, the answers of the secular world (artificial birth control) appear so practical that one cannot expect to win a popularity contest by encouraging acceptance of the total meaning

of the conjugal embrace. It is also recognized that the family planning question has been especially painful for Catholics whose church has consistently maintained that the two meanings cannot be separated from the act of intercourse. Over 80% of the Catholic population has concluded that the Pope has no business in the bedrooms of married couples - "If he doesn't play the game, he shouldn't make the rules!" These people feel that married couples are best advised to consult their own consciences and make a personal decision regarding the morality of contraception. Many priests believe we should get away from the birth control question, exclaiming that the dust has settled and very few even consider birth control a moral problem. They explain that it's seldom brought up in confession and younger couples (eighteen to twenty-three) don't even know the Catholic Church objects to the use of contraceptive birth control.10

Because of the pragmatic ramifications, this has been a deeply painful question for priests and physicians (in their professional roles) as well as for married couples. Many a Catholic physician stood solidly behind the teaching of his Church. However, as his patients became increasingly vociferous in their requests for the Pill and as they brought notes from priests supporting their requests, his faith began to waver. Also, many priests sought

to impart the teaching of the Church to the faithful. However, when they found they were being ridiculed by their own colleagues who would "give permission to take the Pill," they began to think their silence was the best policy. One must sympathize with the dilemma faced by the priest. In the 1960's our world began to turn to natural means in order to find answers to supernatural problems. Consequently, we began to "ordain" the psychologists and psychiatrists, looking to them to provide answers that would give meaning to life. So, the priest, thinking people did not want spiritual direction, traded in his S.T.D. for a Ph.D.20

As a result of these and several other pressures, it has been extremely difficult to find Catholic physicians or clergymen who are willing to publicly support Humanae Vitae or talk about the evils inherent in contraception. Some physicians hold the line on mini-doses of the Pill, as well as I.U.D.'s, believing they both work as abortifacients. They believe that since the popular theologians have dispensed with the moral implications of birth control, they need only be concerned with the medical implications of the question.

As we entered the 70's, there was hardly a place where one could learn about the teaching of the Catholic Church in the area of family planning. Most marriage courses (under Catholic auspices) talk about contracep-

tion and concern themselves with the teaching of the Catholic Church only to the extent that one can conscientiously dissent from a teaching with which one disagrees. Some instructors are blatently dishonest. They explain, "In the area of birth control, we stand with the Papal Commission." The ill-informed engaged couples think the Papal Commission22 and the Papacy are synonymous. Thus, they naively believe they are being told the true teaching of the Church. When a woman goes to her physician explaining that she is going to marry, he generally places her on a Pill explaining neither the option of Natural Family Planning nor the risk inherent in taking the Pill.23

During the past half decade, some married couples have become increasingly disenchanted with contraception. With very little encouragement from clergy, physicians, or community leaders, they have turned to Natural Family Planning.²⁴

If the beautiful meaning of an inseparable connection and the positive features of Natural Family Planning could be fairly presented, it is possible that people would opt for this as a way of living their married life. Unfortunately, such a statement brings forth a cry that one is moralizing. It seems odd that little voice of dissent is heard if one talks about the glories of contraception. In fact, one begins to think he is morally obliged to contracept.

Some conscientious physicians and clergy would be willing to cast their lot with this teaching if they could be assured that their people would not be led down the "primrose path." That is, they may be willing to endorse Natural Family Planning if they could be offered some reassurance that it will not earn for itself the same reputation as Rhythm.³⁵

The physician's and clergyman's willingness to reassess an earlier rejection of this teaching will also depend upon the extent to which he agrees with the implications of fifteen years of unbridled contraceptive practice. If one does not agree that our general society is at point three on the previously described cycle, that significant portions of the population are at stages four and five, and that there is some indication that some people are at stage six, they may be inclined to reject the message inherent in these remarks.26 Those who are willing to reassess an earlier rejection of Humanae Vitae are invited to consider that the Natural Family Planning of the 70's is not the same as the Rhythm of the 50's. They are also invited to consider that a true awareness of the meaning of sexuality (this evolves from the practice of Natural Family Planning) helps couples become involved in a style of life which enhances rather than detracts from life's meaning.27

A Better Way

An effort has been made to explain God's intention in giving to us the gift of intercourse. It has been mentioned that until 1930, Christendom seemed to agree that there was an inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meaning of intercourse. It has also been recognized that the implications of this teaching have been difficult to accept. However, following certain principles of spiritual ecology, it has been suggested that the ramifications for rejecting this teaching have been severe.

Many persons, at stage two in the cycle depicting an evolution or devolution of sexuality, made painful and reluctant decisions to dissent from the teaching of their Church. However, the "price being paid" for rejecting the traditional teaching of Christendom calls upon us to reassess our decision.

But, the argument for reassessment has not been based only on consequences. It has been suggested that a different sociopsychological environment and a more sophisticated ability to predict ovulation provides couples with the means to implement a teaching which maintains an inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative dimensions of the conjugal embrace. An internalized acceptance of the theology and philosophy supporting this teaching enables couples to come to grips with the very serious problems which beset modern spouses. If this teaching is enthusiastically embraced, couples will have an opportunity for a marriage which transcends that presently known to most moderns. To paraphrase one of Chesterton's oft repeated statements, it would seem that in recent times *Humanae Vitae*²⁸ has not so much been tried and found wanting, but has been conceived of as difficult and therefore left untried.

In order to accept the challenge to reassess an earlier rejection of this teaching, one will need to agree with the basic premises contained in this article. They will also need to wrestle with that old demon pride which makes it difficult to say, "Maybe I was in error."

Acceptance of a new position will be especially difficult for the clergyman whose popularity may suffer if he accepts and reintroduces a teaching which has been soundly rejected. He will need to recognize the very tender feelings involved and gently urge those he serves to involve themselves in their own process of reassessment. Although many of his married couples are at stage two in the cycle, he may find that many engaged are at three or four. A genuine service can be performed for engaged couples if a clergyman discovers the pallatable doses in which this teaching can be introduced to the young.

Acceptance of this teaching presents a myriad of problems for the conscientious physician. He will need to inform his patients of the dangers inherent in contraception, encourage them to become aware of the positive

features of this teaching, and refer them to groups that teach the art of Natural Family Planning.24 Since it is much easier for couples to fail Natural Family Planning than it is for them to fail the chemicals and mechanical devices, the physician may find himself "blamed for a pregnancy." Again, to have the courage of his convictions, the physician will have to believe that if properly used, Natural Family Planning is as effective a means of birth regulation as is the Pill or the I.U.D. Beyond this, he will have to believe that internalized acceptance of the principles inherent in this method can enhance the lives of married couples.

If he truly believes that contraception is evil, he must decide if he will continue to write prescriptions for contraceptive pills, fit diaphragms, and insert I.U.D.'s. Some physicians fully explain the dangers of the contraceptive pill to their patients and if the patient still insists, they prescribe it believing that if there are any complications, they want to be immediately available to help the patient counteract the side effects.

People who are superenthusiastic about Natural Family Planning and Humanae Vitae need to appreciate the trauma that has been experienced by those who have found themselves in disagreement with the Papacy. It is also necessary to realize the full implications inherent in changing one's position. One must be patient with those who resist what

seems so logical. Time must be allowed for people to assess the need for change, to explore the possibility of change, and to overcome the resistance to change.

One has to admit that this is a way of life that is contrary to that of the world. However, Christians have frequently been called upon to be "oddballs" in a world which is alien to the teachings of our Lord and Saviour. This teaching does not represent a nice ideal toward which people can strive. This is a very practical and pragmatic teaching which holds real answers to the problems of modern day spouses seeking a deeper union with each other as well as with their Creator.

REFERENCES

- The Encyclical written by Pope Paul VI in 1968. This is the most recent Encyclical directed to the subject of family planning.
- According to this tradition, artificial contraception is considered immoral.
- 3. Secular society establishes these requirements for an ideal means of birth regulation: (1) 100% effective; (2) no side effects; (3) completely reversible; (4) as completely removed from coitus and interference with the spontaneous sex act as possible; (5) requires the absolute minimum of patient remembrance and motivation.
- Devolution, as contrasted with evolution, implies a deterioration rather than a higher form or greater good.
- The author does not intend to deny that God has attached a great sense of pleasure to the marital emembrace, but recreation was not intended as the primary purpose of intercourse.
 - 6. The man possibly felt as bad, but

the John Wayne model of masculinity did not permit him to cry.

- One also begins to notice an increased tolerance for a priesthood which embraces celibacy.
- 8. This is not to imply that the patients' use of contraceptives prompts their children to begin at stage three. It only implies that the effect contraception has upon the larger society establishes the type of mental attitudes toward marriage and sexuality which prompt the children to begin at stage three. Yet, it must also be recognized that some Catholic parents are obstacles to the effective transmission of the value of the traditional teaching. Because of their own disillusionment, their own decision about contraception, or because of their anger at the Catholic Church, some parents do not hesitate to tell their sons and daughters to ignore anyone who's foolish enough to suggest that this traditional teaching has any value.
- A term suggesting that people are polluting the earth.
- Telephone calls, crying or inquisitive children, a ringing doorbell, leaking roof, etc.
- 11. It is realized that there are various and sundry explanations for this phenomena such as men being "turned off" by the aggressiveness of their wives.
- This implies that intercourse can be engaged in outside of marriage.
- 13. Many a husband is also heard to lament that his wife would never have become involved in an affair if she had had any concern about pregnancy. In saying this, I do not want to imply that sexual mores should be based upon the premise of the triple terrors. However, it is important to recognize that the elimination of the procreative meaning causes us to lose sight of the true meaning and value of sexuality. It seems that consequences that complicate cause us to think more clearly.
- Referring to the United States Supreme Court pro-abortion decision of January 22, 1973.

- 15. Some of this material was previously discussed in the January, 1975 issue of *Our Family* magazine which carried a special issue containing the author's monographs, "The Family Planning Dilemma Revisisted" and "One Couple Comes Full Circle."
- 16. The Diagnostic Nomenclature of the American Psychiatric Association no longer recognizes homosexuality as a sexual deviation.
- 17. The camel head theory of theology suggests that once the camel gets his head in a tent, it is not long before he takes over the entire tent.
- 18. The concept of spiritual ecology refers to the notion that as one interferes in one area, consequences occur in related areas. The term derives from environmental ecology where one finds that interference in one area of the environment affects another area. Spiritual ecology implies that as we make a compromise or interfere in one area, other areas are going to be affected. Essentially, it means that failure to follow God's laws is self-destructive. One begins to realize the impact of the statement, "Nature bats last."
- 19. Is it possible that the rejection of Natural Family Planning is based upon some fallacious premises? seems that contraception is accepted because of a firm conviction that Natural Family Planning does not work, that the Pill and I.U.D. are medically safe, and that neither the Pill nor I.U.D. work as abortifacients. Another fallacious premise causing people to reject Natural Family Planning is the notion that the sex drive cannot be controlled (or at least that control would be dangerous to personal and marital health) and that it must be spontaneously satisfied. It is hoped that the reader will recognize that the Natural Family Planning of the '70's is different from the Rhythm of the '40's and '50's. It is hoped that the reader will be open to the idea that Natural Family Planning presents a new hope for marriage in that it places couples in a position in which they

- must come to grips with the impact of a double standard in marriage, that they must come to a fuller understanding of love and sexuality, and that they must come to understand the meaning of a spiritual relationship. This idea is further developed in the previously referred to article by the author appearing in the January, 1975 issue of *Our Family*.
- 20. Presently, there seems to be a renewed interest in a deeper spiritual life. Now the perplexed priest turns about and hears a Bible thumping layman all wired up for Jesus telling him that people desire a personal relationship with Our Lord.
- 21. One of the very difficult issues to be faced by the pro-life groups is whether contraception is a solution to abortion or if it is simply another part of the same problem. That is, does contraception ineffectually treat a symptom of a problem? Does it complicate the problem? Or does it truly solve a problem? It is my belief that contraception complicates rather than answers the problem of abortion. The fundamental challenge is to help people responsibly accept and understand their sexuality. Contraception seems to interfere with that effort.
- 22. A papal commission was formed by Pope John XXIII and expanded by Pope Paul XI to study the entire area of sexuality and family planning. This Commission voted in favor of a revision of the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. Although Pope Paul accepted some of the recommendations of the Commission, he did not accept their ultimate conclusion.
- 23. It is also recognized that many physicians have despaired in their efforts to explain the risks involved as many women do not want to hear about or pay attention to the warning carried in the enclosure accompanying their Pills.
- 24. In fact, many have done so in spite of derisive comments from clergy, physicians, and counselors. Many a married woman has found that she has been ridiculed by her

physician when she has refused to continue using a contraceptive. Others have been derided by the clergy for being "hung up on the Church." Several have been accused of being irresponsible when they have refused to continue contraception.

25. It is not the author's purpose to offer a complete explanation of Natural Family Planning. However, it is important to emphasize that it is this writer's opinion that if Natural Family Planning is accepted only as a means of conception control without the philosophical and theological principles which undergird it, couples may either fail the method or fail to avail themselves to the full advantages of this way of life.

 Of course, in a pluralistic society, these are many who fail to see anything morally reprehensible about stages three through six.

27. The author recognizes that extreme concern is often expressed about the difficult situation. For instance, concern is expressed about the couple who believes that, for a variety of reasons, they can have no more children and require an absolutely certain means of conception control. Concern is also expressed about the woman with an irregular cycle as well as the couple who are separated from each other for periods of time. In fairness, I ask that we consider that excessive emphasis is given to the difficult situation and that decisions based upon hard cases make bad law.

28. Chesterton says Christianity.

 A listing of these groups can be obtained through Rev. Paul Marx. The Human Life Center, St. John's University, Collegeville, Minn. 56321.

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