

For more information

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References

1. *Letter to Families from Pope John Paul II*, 02 February 1994, n. 12. This theme forms the basis for *Sex and the Marriage Covenant* by John F. Kippley (CCL, 1991, 2001).
2. Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n. 14.
3. Kippley, John F., *Birth Control and Christian Discipleship* (CCL, 1985, 1994), pp. 5-9.
4. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 13, 25 March 1995.
5. See "The Arithmetic of Abortifacient Birth Control" in *Birth Control and Christian Discipleship*, by John F. Kippley, p. 14.

From Contraception to Abortion ...to Columbine

There is no question that abortion and contraception are totally different realities. Abortion kills a baby. True contraception prevents conception. Everyone agrees on this. There are, however, a number of connections between contraception and abortion. Some forms of birth control have the potential to cause very early abortions; call that the medical connection. There are also legal, attitudinal, and religious connections, and all of these combine to form the Columbine connection.

The Norm for Human Sexuality

This leaflet takes it for granted that the reader already believes that the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" applies to abortion. Many, however, need to understand more fully the norm for human sexuality.

God does have a plan for sex. God's plan honors marriage and the honest marriage act. Scripture praises marriage as an image of the mystery of the union of Christ and his Church (Eph 5:21-33). Within marriage the sexual union of the spouses ought to be a true marriage act. In his *Letter to Families*, Pope John Paul II clearly teaches, "In the conjugal act, husband and wife are called to confirm in a responsible way the mutual gift of self which they have made to each other in the marriage covenant."¹ This is the divine norm for human love.

On the other hand, adultery, fornication, masturbation, and sodomy all contradict this norm. So does contraception.

Renewal of the marriage covenant. When a couple marry, they promise before God and man to take each other in good times and bad times until death do they part. They make a total gift of self to the other. No reservations. For better AND for worse. When they unite in the marital embrace, they are at least implicitly renewing their marriage covenant of faith, love and unselfish gift of self to the other. "We take each other again for better and for worse."

Contraception, however, falsifies the marriage act. Actions speak louder than words, and the body language of contraception speaks clearly: "We take each other for better but definitely **NOT** for the imagined worse of possible pregnancy." Marital contraception, therefore, does not renew the total gift of their marriage covenant but instead contradicts it. This helps to explain why Pope Paul VI called the marital embrace marred by contraception "intrinsically dishonest."²

The Religious Connection

Contraception is nothing new. Unnatural forms of birth control were certainly practiced in the Roman culture into which the Church was born in the first century. Gradually Christian morality prevailed, and so strong was anti-contraception belief that none of the leaders of the Reformation suggested any changes. In fact, for over 400 years Protestant leaders denounced contraception.

In 1873, the strength of American Protestant opposition to contraception was demonstrated by the Comstock laws against the sale of contraceptives. It was further demonstrated by anti-contraception decisions by the Church of England in 1908 and 1920.

The immorality of the Roaring Twenties, however, encouraged contraception and trial marriages. As a result of internal pressures, the bishops of the Church of England capitulated on birth control, and on August 14, 1930 they accepted marital contraception as permissible. On December 31, 1930 Pope Pius XI responded and strongly reaffirmed that marital contraception is "a grave sin." On March 21, 1931 the Federal Council of Churches (the forerunner of today's National Council of Churches) also accepted marital contraception. Conservative Protestants strongly opposed this decision at first, but the liberals won the day.³

The religious connection between contraception and abortion can be seen in the unhappy reality that every major Protestant body that accepted contraception has

also accepted abortion. Pro-life groups in various denominations are admirable, but they also point out that they are outside the mainstream of each denomination.

The general Protestant acceptance of contraception and then abortion illustrates the truth of the words of Pope John Paul II: "Certainly, from the moral point of view contraception and abortion are specifically different evils ... But despite their differences of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree."⁴

The Legal Connection

In the 1960s a white liberal Senator noticed a black illegitimacy rate of 23%. White liberals decided to "help" the black community by getting the government into the contraceptive birth control business. (Incidentally, with such help, the black illegitimacy rate rose to 68% by the end of the century.)

There were still, however, some anti-contraception laws on the books. A trumped-up legal case was developed, and in *Griswold v Connecticut* the liberal majority of the U.S. Supreme Court engaged in judicial activism to make law where the Constitution was silent. In this 1965 case, the Court

ruled that a law that forbade the use of contraception by married couples was unconstitutional. It was an imprudent law because of the intrusion on marital relations involved in obtaining

evidence. The Court, however, could find no real constitutional basis for its ruling. Instead, the Court discovered its new right of reproductive privacy in "penumbras formed by emanations from" the Bill of Rights. A penumbra is the gray area beyond a shadow, a shadow of a shadow. But almost no one cared about this shady treatment of the Constitution because almost everyone in the ruling elite was using unnatural forms of birth control. In 1972 in *Eisenstadt v Baird*, the Court went on to ban laws against the sale and distribution of contraceptives. In *Eisenstadt*, the Court expanded its *Griswold* privacy



doctrine to singles by striking down a law forbidding the distribution of contraceptives to unmarried persons. There is, of course, nothing in the U. S. Constitution that prevents a state from prohibiting the sale and distribution of contraceptives, just as there is nothing to prevent a state from restricting the sale and distribution of alcohol or drugs.

The legal connection between contraception and abortion became clear the next year. On January 22, 1973 a liberal U.S. Supreme Court applied its judicial activism in *Griswold* and *Eisenstadt* to abortion. In the landmark *Roe v Wade*, the Court ruled that laws limiting access to abortion invaded the privacy of women and were therefore unconstitutional. The Court used precisely the same penumbra, shadow of a shadow, rationale to strike down all laws against abortion in *Roe* that it had used in *Griswold* to strike down laws against the sale of contraceptives. The legal connection between contraception and abortion could not be more clear and explicit.

The Medical Connection

Ever since the combination birth control Pill was first marketed in 1960, the manufacturers have stated that it has three effects. (“Combination” means that it contains both an estrogen and a synthetic progesterone called a progestin.) 1) It generally suppresses ovulation. 2) It thickens cervical mucus, making sperm migration more difficult. 3) It thins the lining of the uterus (the endometrium), making it hostile to implantation. This triple-threat action is what makes the Pill so effective as a birth control mechanism.

Even the higher dosage Pills of the Sixties still allowed “breakthrough ovulation” and some pregnancies. As the health problems of the Pill were observed, the manufacturers reduced the estrogen content, producing the “low dose” Pill. The progestin-only mini-Pill was also developed, and this appears to act primarily by preventing implantation in

the uterus. Implants such as Norplant® and injections such as DepoProvera® are progestin-only synthetic hormones that appear to work primarily by preventing

implantation of newly conceived babies in the uterus.

The bottom line is that every form of hormonal birth control may be achieving its effectiveness not by preventing ovulation (a sterilizing effect) or by preventing sperm migration (a contraceptive effect) but by preventing the implantation of a newly conceived human being in the mother’s uterus — an early abortion effect. Every form of hormonal birth control — Pill, implant or injection — has the potential to cause an early abortion in any given cycle in any given woman.

The intrauterine device (IUD) can also cause early abortions. Even if the IUD frequently acts as a contraceptive, it does nothing to prevent ovulation, and it has the potential to prevent implantation of a newly conceived life. Thus it also has to be labeled as an abortifacient.

How often are newly conceived babies thus aborted? Estimates vary. A Pill breakthrough ovulation rate of 4.7% has been reported. Applying that rate to 13.8 million American women using the Pill yields an estimated 1,945,800 Pill-caused early abortions each year.⁵ Add in the abortions caused by the progestin-only drugs and the IUD. The number of abortions caused by these birth control methods far outnumbers those killed by surgical abortions and other hormonal concoctions such as the “morning-after Pill” and the clearly abortifacient drug, RU-486.

The medical connection between these forms of “contraception” and abortion is so evident that about the only people who dispute it are certain doctors and others who want to call themselves “pro-life” and yet prescribe or use the Pill. They illustrate a classic case of being in denial.

The Attitude Connection

For many couples, there is no attitude problem regarding contraception. They have been led by the culture and its media to believe they should practice contraception until they have a good house and bank account, then have two children, and then resort to sterilization. In all of this they have never learned that birth control is a serious moral issue.

Many others are aware that the Catholic Church and some others teach that it is morally wrong to use unnatural forms of birth control, and react with an attitude. “I am a

good person. Whatever I do is good.” “No one is going to tell me what to do.” “It’s my right to figure out what’s right and wrong.” “Everything’s subjective. There’s no right and wrong. Whatever you think is okay becomes okay for you.”

The U. S. Supreme Court enshrined the attitude of total subjectivism in a 1992 abortion case. In *Planned Parenthood v Casey*, the Court explained its continued defense of abortion in these words:

“At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

This “mystery clause” incorporates all the attitudes listed previously. It makes morality radically subjective. It locks the person into her or his own subjectivism. It is without reference to God or any objective standards of morality. Furthermore, this statement by certain Supreme Court judges was written to explain why the Court continues to support the idea that mothers can kill their unborn babies at any moment from conception to full-term birth.

The attitude connection between contraception and abortion is clear. If people think that morality is simply dependent upon their own personal feelings and similar attitudes, they can just as easily apply such attitudes to abortion as to birth control. They do so in fact, and the U. S. Supreme court has provided them with the rationale of radical subjectivism.

The Columbine Connection

On April 20, 1999, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, two students in Columbine High School in Greater Denver, shot and killed 12 other students and one faculty member. The two boys then committed suicide. Two years later, similar crimes had occurred in a number of other public high schools. The nation and its media keep asking, “How can this happen?”

The real question is, “Why is this a surprise?” Two years after the *Planned Parenthood v Casey* rationale for killing unborn babies, Mother Teresa of Calcutta addressed the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. She asked, “If we accept that the mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?”

This is a very real question. If the highest court in the

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wealthiest nation on the planet tells mothers they can kill their own babies based on a radical subjectivism of freedom from any external restraints, how does that nation — with any authority — tell its teenagers that it is **morally** wrong for them to kill one another?

The answer is clear. The nation cannot and it does not teach young people that it is **morally** wrong to kill unborn babies or each other. It does not teach that it is morally wrong to kill oneself. The Supreme Court has forbidden the teaching of religion-based morality. Public school teachers can only appeal to a secular sense of decency that has not yet been totally erased, but such efforts are relatively fruitless in the face of severe temptation. We all need moral absolutes both for our own good and for the good of society, but the philosophy of total subjectivism grips America and its public education system.

The various connections between contraception and abortion have contributed to a radical subjectivism that was enshrined in the Supreme Court’s “mystery clause” defense of abortion. The fruit of such wanton abandonment of respect for God’s order of creation is clearly demonstrated in Columbine and its subsequent copycat killings.

Is there a way back to moral decency?

Most certainly. However, it requires personal effort and personal holiness, not a huge government program. It is both simple and difficult. American Christianity needs to return to its pre-1930 respect for God’s order of creation regarding human sexuality. Christians need to internalize the covenant conviction of marriage into their personal lives. They need to totally reject contraception and to adopt the use of natural family planning when they need to avoid pregnancy.

Catholics will have to lead the way because they have the great advantage of authoritative teaching that it is always seriously immoral to use unnatural methods of birth control. They need to be joined by great numbers of believing Protestants. When enough married couples are leading chaste lives, the pro-life vote will be sufficient to elect Senators who will in turn give us Supreme Court justices who reject *Roe v Wade* and its evil consequences. Then some serious work can begin to dethrone the reign of radical subjectivism and to build respect for the laws of God and the rights of others.

It can be done, but it will require both courageous leadership and a reborn sense of Christian discipleship.

—John F. Kippley

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