

Introduction

Over the centuries, techniques for birth control have been greatly improved, especially in recent years. But from the earliest times, man has always attempted to control conception for his own purposes. There are three Major Views Regarding Birth Control: Roman Catholic, Secularism, Neo-Romanism, (Conservative Protestantism).

Section I - History of Birth Control

Secular History

"An Egyptian papyrus dated 4,000 years ago mentions a plug of "crocodile's dung" used as a primitive type of diaphragm - which was alkaline and therefore spermicidal"

In ancient Greece abortion and infanticide were used as a means of family limitation

Thomas Malthus, an Anglican curate was the unwitting founder of the modern birth control movement by means of his famous *Essay on the Principles of Population*. This essay started the thought toward contraception.

By the post-Second World War period, birth control became both generally accepted in the United States and big business. In December 1970, Congress passed the *Family Planning Services and Population Research Act*, which authorized a three year budget of \$236 million.

The biggest item to be used were grants to non-profit organizations to establish and expand family planning clinics. These clinics would offer medical advice and provide contraceptives on demand.

Roman Catholic History

Much of the Roman Catholic view from a historical perspective is built upon the teachings of the Church fathers. For example Tertullian, in his zeal to refute Gnosticism, all but condemned intercourse in any marriage.

Augustine, who himself was riddled with guilt believed that the act of marriage could not be experienced apart from lustful expression which is evil. This led to belief that a husband would be committing adultery with his wife if he desired her.

The most important voice in the history of the Catholic Church after Augustine was Thomas Aquinas. He believed that just as right reason proceeds from man, so the order of nature proceeds from God Himself. Therefore, when sins are committed which are contrary to nature (the prevention of conception would be considered contrary to nature) injury is done to God, the ordainer of nature.

By 1588 the control of birth by any means meant ex-communication and the parties would be treated as murderers.

Protestant History

Protestant history begins with two of the most able theologians, Luther and Calvin. By 1520 Luther concluded that marriage was not a sacrament, in that it is not grounded in redemption but in creation.

Calvin never treated the topic of human reproduction in a definitive way. Both Luther and Calvin refused to be bound where the Scriptures were not explicit and thereby kept the channels open for further study on this subject. This constituted a radical departure from Augustinian thought.

Protestants seemed satisfied that it was man's prerogative under God to control human reproduction.

Section II - The Substance of Each View

Secular View of Birth Control

The secular view of birth control has no moral implications. They see a paradox in human thinking.

"If it is alright to interfere with nature to prevent deaths; when this overcrowds the planet, why is it wrong to interfere radically with nature by preventing births.

Reasons for birth control included: 1) unwanted children (which might lead to abuse of them). 2) Humans using up natural resources, 3) Fear of government dictatorial morality.

Roman Catholic View of Birth Control

It has been decreed that artificial birth control for Roman Catholics is wrong. The sinfulness of artificial birth control is rooted in the assumption of the right to separate the actualized love union in marriage from a possible conception.

Roman Catholic Church theology states that the primary purpose for marriage and intercourse is the conception and education of children. This is based on a mis-interpretation of Genesis.

Neo—Roman View of Birth Control

Much of the discussion surrounding the problem of contraception deals with the creative intent for marriage - pro-creation or companionship. The majority of the Protestant population would say that companionship is equally important to procreation.

Other Considerations: 1) Completeness; that within marriage, man achieves his unity. (Gen. 2:24) 2) God instituted marriage in order to give pleasure; not merely sensual pleasure but enjoyment of company. (Eccl. 9:9). 3) God gave marriage to illustrate His love for Israel.

The fact is that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament speaks of procreation as the end of sexual union. This at least does not close the door on some birth control practices.

Section III - Methods of Birth Control & Responses

Folk Methods:

- Coitus Interruptus (Withdraw)
- Prolonged Lactation (Prolonged Breast Feeding)
- Postcoital Douching
- Rhythm

Traditional Methods:

- Condom
- Spermicides
- Diaphragms

Oral Contraceptives

- Progesteronic and Estrogenic steroids (The Pill)
- Intrauterine Devices (IUD)

Sterilization

- Vasectomy
- Tubal Ligations
- Tubal Cauterization

Abortion

- Drug induced (Morning After Pill)
- Intramuscular Injections
- Surgical

NOTE: Faith is not a method of birth control.

Views on the Ethical Issues of Birth Control

There is no limitation to the exercise of birth control from a secular standpoint.

In the Roman Catholic Church today, the only acceptable form of birth control is rhythm. All artificial forms of contraception are considered sin because it goes against natural law.

In the Conservative Protestant camp certain birth control can be accepted, much should be rejected.

Acceptable methods of Birth Control to be without ethical conflict for the Christian are: Coitus Interruptus, condoms, rhythm, spermicidal creams, diaphragm, vasectomies, tubal ligations, (cauterization not advised, due to non-reversibility). The use of the Pill is questionable due to evidence it may cause the uterus to be a hostile environment for a fertilized egg. It also has negative health implications including cancers.

The following methods are rejected; IUD's (any type), abortions, morning after pills, intramuscular injections. In summary, anything that leads to or may lead to the direct or the indirect cause of death of the fetus must be rejected.

Reasons for Birth Control

- 1) Pleasure from marriage without fear of pregnancy
- 2) Help time the arrival of children in the family

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