

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

in relation to

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Dr. Voth

Medical Arts Building

356

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Dr. Voth

A.B. Voth, B.A., M.D., L.M.C.C.

356 Medical Arts Building
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

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I. Introduction

May I extend to all who are assembled here at this Theological Conference the warmest and sincerest of Christian greetings. I certainly consider this opportunity to be here and to address this group today as one of the greatest privileges of my Christian and professional experience. The need for a conference of this nature has been apparent to me for some time, and I am sure all of us feel much the same way. We as practising physicians have for some years looked for some definite expression of opinion or formulation of policy from our churches but to my knowledge none has been forthcoming to date. We have often been at a loss to know what to say and advise - our own opinions and convictions may by now have become defined and crystallized but often we have not known for a certainty as to whether we would be at liberty to inform, guide and counsel our Christian patients accordingly. A good deal of excellent literature on both the medical and theological aspects of our problem has recently come to our attention - but here again widely divergent points of view are often expressed. What I will have to say today will be somewhat of a mixture of my own personal experiences in fifteen years of family counselling and a review or digest of the available literature on the subject today. I sincerely hope and pray that this will be a palatable mixture out of which some constructive ideas may come to us. I shall close my paper with statements of policy and doctrine which have been published recently by Church and lay organizations.

II. Definitions - Planned Parenthood - Christian Ethics

"Christian Responsibility in Relation to Planned Parenthood"

this then is the nature of the subject material that is of concern to us this afternoon. It appears immediately evident to all of us, I am sure, that we are dealing here with two very specific areas - and we shall limit ourselves exclusively to them - "Planned Parenthood" - and "Christian Ethics" as this relates to planned parenthood. Let us carefully define both of these concepts at the outset so that we shall have perfect clarity as to what we mean and what we don't mean. Among the several definitions found, the best, I believe, is that given by Alfred Martin Rehwinkel, Professor of Christian Ethics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. "The emphasis is on 'planned'. To plan means to give thought to, to have a purpose, to select a method, to consider and weigh all the implications and consequences, that is, to apply to an action intelligence, experience and judgment. By 'parenthood' is meant the begetting of children, the conception and birth, the propagating of offspring, the bringing into being of what is comprehended by the term 'family'. Planned parenthood, then, means to apply to the function of begetting children and the establishment of the family the same intelligence, experience, judgment, and careful weighing of all the consequences for those concerned as man would normally apply to any other life situation where an important decision must be made."

III. The Needs for a Study Conference of This Nature

1. The needs in our church communities

It must be understood from this definition that we are not speaking of abortion - therapeutic or otherwise - as a means of limiting the number of possible offspring. This is a subject entirely by and for itself and I am consciously and deliberately deleting it from our present discussions. We are therefore speaking of what is popularly referred to as "birth control" or "contraception" - and this within the framework of Christian ethics. And with this we come to grips with the real issue before us - can the practice of contraception as we have defined it above, ever be considered right and permissible for a Christian - or is it wrong and sinful in its very essence. Is it possible for a dedicated Christian husband and wife to set a voluntary limit on the number of offspring they will have, and yet remain true and devoted disciples of Jesus? Or, are they then living in known and mortal sin and consequently outside of the will of God for their lives? I trust that as we move along this afternoon, answers to this question will be forthcoming. For us as Christians this consideration must take precedence over every other, when the matter of birth control is being discussed. That a tremendous need for illumination and clarification in these areas exists in our brotherhood can hardly be denied. Seldom a day goes by in our offices as practising physicians and family consultants that this problem is not met with in one form or another. It is not an exaggeration to say that probably 90% of all young couples coming for their premarital examinations eagerly bring this matter up for urgent consultation. Many young

couples live in basic insecurity, their sexual lives embarrassed by ignorance, indecision and conflict. Relatively few have come to find an acceptable answer to these difficult problems - and relatively few couples have consequently come to the point where the desire to limit the number of children born to them, is in perfect and holy harmony with the uninhibited sexual enjoyment of each other as marital partners. We still have with us many sincere and devoted couples who are of the considered opinion that every form of contraception is wrong and sinful, and always a compromise with evil; and always a concession to the flesh. Their philosophy is accurately expressed in the words of one who said recently, "Ich hab lieber zwölf auf dem Kissen, als eines auf dem Gewissen". ("I would rather have twelve on my pillow, than one on my conscience".) Unfortunately, we also have those of the exact opposite persuasion - those who do not wish to have any children under any circumstances. This to me is obviously wrong, and I have only sympathy for them, but not with them. Then there is the vast number of "in-betweeners" - people who honestly don't know, but who earnestly desire to have their whole life, including their sex life, conform to the will of God. It is to these that our thoughts are directed today, it is for these, I trust, that we can give, as a result of this conference, a measure of guidance, direction and assurance.

2. The population growth trends of the world

I beg your indulgence at this point if I digress for a while - for a very definite reason and with a definite purpose in mind. We would do well to consider briefly now the reasons for active contraceptive programs commonly advanced by lay organizations concerned with

of technological and scientific progress, we have had many good things and many bad things. The bad things have been the result of man's pride and self-centeredness. That is, we have allowed man's pride and self-centeredness to lead us into "materialism" and "secularism". We have allowed man's pride and self-centeredness to lead us into "atheism" and "atheistic materialism". We have allowed man's pride and self-centeredness to lead us into "atheistic materialism". We have allowed man's pride and self-centeredness to lead us into "atheistic materialism".

family planning, by economists perplexed by the phenomenon known as the "population explosion" - by sociologists who are grappling with the problems of vice and crime, poor education, substandard housing and venereal disease. We as Christians are in a very real sense "in the world" and an integral part of it, and we cannot really divorce ourselves from the problems and perplexities of the world. We need to be thoroughly conversant with them, but we need to interpret them in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and apply to their solution the recommendations of the Word of God and the teachings of our Master.

We are all very grateful for the tremendous advances made by medical science in the last half century or so. The blessings that have come to us through these achievements can hardly be over estimated. But they have brought in their wake also a number of serious problems which we are only beginning to realize. There has been a tremendous reduction in infant mortality, the life expectancy of children has been greatly extended, so that we have a much larger number of people living for a much longer period of time. The relationship of birth rate and death rate is described by scientists as the "demographic gap"¹. It is a simple concept which represents the difference between the figure of the world birth rate and the figure of the world death rate. The world birth rate stands at 40 today, the world death rate at 19 - the

¹ Demographic gap

- a. Birth rates are defined as X number of births per 1,000 population - world average is 40 today.
- b. Death rates are defined as Y number of deaths per 1,000 population - world average is 19 today.
- c. Difference is the "demographic gap" - stands at 21 today.
- d. This means that the ratio of births to deaths is 2:1.
- e. This in turn means that the world population will double in 33 years.

demographic gap therefore is 21 - or 2.1%, which means that the world population doubles every 33 years. Would you consider this for just a moment, what this means. It has been stated that to produce the first one billion people living on this earth at one time took several hundred thousand years. To produce the second billion took only 115 years, the third billion 35 years, the fourth billion 20 years and the fifth billion will take only 13 years. If we project this into the future this means that by the year 2220 the population of the world will be 136 billion people - a catastrophic situation to say the least. These are not the dreams of visionaries, but they represent the considered opinion of the best brains of our day.

3. The "unwanted" pregnancies

But let me show you the other side of the coin which is equally depressing, if not more so. It took me about 30 seconds to read the last paragraph of my speech. In those 30 seconds 100 babies were born. It is reasonable to assume that very few of the conceptions that led to their births were actually planned - but most of these infants will be accepted into the family units. But to speak of all of these babies as welcome additions to the family is to ignore completely the facts as we face them from day to day. Statistics carefully gathered indicate that a great number of these were not only unplanned, but they are also completely unwanted. And let us never deceive ourselves into believing that this same situation does not apply to many, many Christian couples as well.

"Unwanted pregnancies" - how many are there in a single year in the United States of America - in Canada - in the world? The figure

undoubtedly runs into many millions every single year. Dr. Alan F. Guttmacher, head of the Family Planning Bureau of New York, classifies "unwanted pregnancies" in the following manner and attaches some significant figures. Unwanted pregnancies ending in criminal abortion - probably 1,250,000 annually in the United States alone. Illegitimate births - 275,000 a year. Unwanted babies born to pregnant brides, married couples who give their unwanted babies up for adoption, and the thousands upon thousands of mothers who keep their children but who confess openly and frankly that they were unwanted and are very unwelcome in the home. Fifteen per cent of all babies adopted are those relinquished by married couples.

The terrible tragedy of this situation was recently outlined by James V. Bennett, testifying before Senator Gruenings committee - "In all of my experience in dealing with the disadvantaged and the underprivileged, no case is sadder or more baffling than that of the lonesome, unwanted child." Conservative figures indicate that probably 2,000,000 unwanted babies are born annually in the United States - in a country where most couples use some form of contraception, and where the pregnancies result from lapses in vigilance or from the use of imperfect methods. In countries such as India, China, Japan - contraceptive information is not readily available and consequently the number of unwanted pregnancies must reach staggering proportions. One economist reports that the total number of unwanted pregnancies in the whole world to be 50,000,000 annually. There may be those in my audience today, who feel these things may be so or otherwise, but why bring them up in the present context. I have done this deliberately for the simple reason

that much of what I have said applies very definitely and specifically to situations that Christian married couples find themselves in and discussion relative to these situations is therefore very much in order.

4. The world food problem

One other factor needs at least to be mentioned before we finish our little diversion. In a series of 3 articles entitled "The Crisis is Now", written recently by Lewis C. Frank Jr. for the Newspaper Enterprise Association, he states in part, "In less than eight years we will embark on a new age - an age of widespread and disastrous famines. Nothing will avert this crisis. In the new age it won't be the possession of atomic weapons that will have the greatest strategic value, but the possession of food. These are the premises of a new book, "Famine, 1975", by a leading agronomist and a retired State Department official. He says that it is now already too late for birth control and mammoth agricultural programs to avert the crisis. He urges that the United States write off as hopeless cases a number of underdeveloped and developing nations. He suggests that American resources be used in the fashion of military logistics so that they can be used in the time of famine as a catalyst for a new period of American greatness."

The governments of the major world powers are all very conscious of the fact that world food production is lagging sadly behind the rapidly increasing world population. Greatly expanded programs are envisaged but they will at best decrease the intensity of

the famine situation but they will not in any sense of the word obviate it. It is highly imperative that all governments, including the governments of the United States and Canada, develop new perspectives on the magnitude of the population problems.

I have now come to the end of my digression. I sincerely hope that it has accomplished its intended purpose - namely to make us all aware as never before that a serious world population problem exists, and that a social responsibility, if not indeed a Christian responsibility, rests upon all of us. We must recognize its intensity and grapple with it as best we know how.

IV. Ethical Principles and their Application to Planned Parenthood

We come now, therefore, to a discussion of the aspect of the problem which concerns us particularly today - namely, the ethics of contraception or family planning, and since we have relatively more theologians here today than medical men, perhaps it would be wisest for me to limit my remarks to a theological view of the moral issues involved. Also, since I make no pretense at being a theologian, I will try to condense some of the more recent views on the subject by eminent theologians of our day. I shall conclude this section with a discussion of some of the moral implications from a medical point of view.

1. Ethical principles from

a. The Theological Point of View

Let me first say a few words about ethics in general because I believe this will help us in the end to see the problem and its suggested solution in a proper context. Is there really and truly a

"distinctive ethical code" for the Christian, if so, where is it stated and defined. I believe there is, but it is not an ethical code which has specific and easy answers for all the puzzling perplexities and problems encountered in the day-to-day Christian experience. "We must always resist the ever present temptation to reduce the Christian ethic to a set of rules and regulations. Goodness does not consist in automatic compliance with commands. The method employed by Christ Himself is to give us a principle: love God, love your neighbor, then He tells us to go ahead and work it out, and He will help us as we go along."¹ Christian ethics are therefore not the maintenance of a certain status quo defined by some previous individual or group of individuals, but rather it is the working out (in our individual and collective lives as Christians) the revealed will of God - in our own day and in our own present situation. Christian ethics are therefore in a constant state of flux and tension. In saying this I do not subscribe to the thesis that "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." I believe very sincerely in a "revealed" ethic, God has spoken to us through His Son, His Word, His people, but He has also spoken to us, and is speaking to us through history, including current scientific, technological and political realities, and it is in this historical sense that I believe He expects us to be cognizant of the problems of our own day and to formulate our ethical obligations accordingly.

¹ Ideals in Medicine - a Christian Approach to Medical Practice - Vincent Edmunds & A. Gordon Scorer.

2. Ethical principles from

b. The Medical Point of View

I made brief reference in the preceding paragraph to the distinctive ethical code of the Christian. Perhaps this could be defined or delineated a bit further. I believe the Christian ethic is distinctive in several ways from ethics in general, or perhaps better stated, natural ethics. The Christian ethic is concerned primarily with motives, i.e. it is not so much a question of what a Christian does or does not do, but rather what motivates him to do so. Unless in our obedience to Christ we are motivated by His love, the moral value of that obedience is lost. A second distinctive is the fact that the Christian ethic is always concerned with our relationship to people. The basic tenet of the Christian ethic is this - what is good and right for me must be basically the same as what is good and right for my neighbor. Both were created in the image of God. A third distinctive is one which I believe concerns us here most vitally - the moral demands of natural ethics can be satisfied to the letter, but the demands of the Christian ethic are limitless.

Matthew 5:40 is a case in point, "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also." Not your best friend who has forgotten his coat on a cold and rainy day, but your enemy, who has brought you into court.

Now all of this sounds rather good and challenging. But the situation is even more complex than this, I believe. Most of our moral choices are made in two spheres or areas, the personal and the social, i.e. there is an individual ethic as well as a social ethic. We have

previously stated that we believe in an absolute ethic - the will of God as revealed to us - the eternal verities about which we have little or no argument. And then finally there is the contextual or situational ethic which demands that we make our moral choices in the light of certain contexts or situations. All of this, no doubt, leaves us somewhat confused and without that simple and all-inclusive answer we might have hoped for. No such simple answer to fit every situation is possible. Only basic principles can be laid down to guide the conscience of a Christian. The application of these principles in each case must remain the responsibility of the individual or individuals concerned. What we as a brotherhood or as a local church community can do is to guide and direct, but this is really all. In the pages following I would seek to give such direction and guidance.

I was asked by one of my consultants to include also a brief discussion of the moral issues as we see them from a medical point of view. I welcome this opportunity, because I firmly believe that the problems involved in family planning cannot be solved by the clergy or the medical people working alone, but our co-ordinated efforts are required as perhaps never before. This is somewhat difficult, since the medical profession is composed largely of non-Christians - we have those who are agnostics, atheists and very nominally Christian. But in this study conference we are largely concerned with the co-operation of our Christian medical personnel. Might I say at this point that the medical profession is overwhelmingly in favor of very substantial programs related to family planning.

The Christian physician has three main areas of responsibility.

1. He must be fully aware of the medical effects of the methods he prescribes, and of their proper application in each specific case.
2. He must be aware of the Church's teachings on the acceptability of these methods. In this area he must be familiar with the religious beliefs of his patient, and if he cannot prescribe in a fashion that will not conflict with her religious persuasion, he should refer her to a physician of the patient's own faith who can conscientiously counsel and prescribe.
3. He must know how the law regards the various methods that he prescribes. This is for most of us a very touchy point indeed, since all of us realize that we are breaking the law every time we write a prescription for "the pill". Personally I have no particular problem in this area and I write a number of such prescriptions every day.

Many of the Christian physicians do have a problem of conscience with the IUCD (intrauterine contraceptive device). There has been a great deal of discussion with regard to its mode of action, but up to the time of this writing there is little or no consensus of opinion. Several theories I would simply wish to mention since they do have a very direct bearing on the moral issues involved. The one theory holds that the IUCD increases the intensity of the peristaltic action of the Fallopian tubes and that consequently the fertilized ovum reaches the uterine cavity before the endometrium is sufficiently prepared for its nidation. The conceptus is therefore lost or expelled

with the exception of the first few days after ovulation, and it is at this time that the egg is most vulnerable to damage. The IUCD is inserted during this period.

The second theory is that the IUCD acts as an irritant to the endometrial lining, and that therefore, the embedded fertilized ovum finds the conditions rather unsuitable to its continued presence there, and an abortion occurs. In either case we are dealing with a fertilized ovum which is the initial stage of a new individual and presumably a new life. Personally I have for conscience reasons been unable to insert any such device to the present moment. I have made a number of referrals but never without giving the patient the information I have given here. The moral choice is hers, not mine, under these circumstances.

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Another method of contraception employed very occasionally is that of sterilization - either of the male or the female. Many centres are now resorting to sterilization of the male, some on the rather mistaken premise that this is a reversible procedure. Ligation of the Fallopian tubes is occasionally done, but with increasing frequency in recent years. I have myself done a half dozen or so, and I believe my judgment in these cases was morally sound. Removal of the uterus for the same reason only is probably always wrong. I am referring in this paragraph, of course, only to voluntary sterilization - compulsory sterilization is a field entirely by and for itself. So much then for the medical aspects of the ethics or morals involved.

And yet, in the last analysis, the problem does not lie in the theological or theological-legal aspect. The problem lies in the practical application of the principles. And here we find ourselves in a difficult position. We have, on the one hand, the commandments of God which are absolute and unchangeable. We have, on the other hand, the commandments of man which are changeable and subject to interpretation. And here we find ourselves in a difficult position. We have, on the one hand, the commandments of God which are absolute and unchangeable. We have, on the other hand, the commandments of man which are changeable and subject to interpretation. And here we find ourselves in a difficult position.

How then can we best apply these ethical principles to the problem of family planning? I agree in part with Dr. John Charles Wynn, of Rochester, New York, when he says, "A theological view of moral issues does not start with the issues and work back inductively to principles, but the theologian is disciplined to think, 'What does the Lord require of me?'". But I also agree with my consultants who suggest that the deductive process cannot be entirely dismissed. A careful and reasoned blending of the two is the course that we would do best to follow; and this is what we now purpose to do.

Here I would wish to follow fairly closely the procedure of Dr. Alfred M. Rehwinkel in his book "Planned Parenthood", because I believe his approach best conforms to the definitions of our problem given earlier in this paper. Three questions shall now occupy our attention:

1. What does the Bible teach concerning marriage and its purpose in human life?
2. What is the meaning of sex in God's creation order?
3. What does the Bible teach about birth control or planned parenthood?

Now then to Question No. 1, and this shall occupy somewhat more of our time. "What does the Bible teach concerning marriage and its purpose in human life? While the Scriptures are more or less silent on the matter of contraception, they speak with authority and perfect clarity on matters pertaining to marriage and the functions of sex. The Bible plainly teaches that God is the author and originator of marriage, He created them male and female. He endowed them with

characteristics and desires that would make a marriage possible, and all of this intentionally, it was His design and purpose from the beginning that it should be so. Marriage is not the end result of a long process of social evolution as many would have us believe. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be of one flesh." Gen. 2:24. In a few simple words, most of which are monosyllabic, the divine order of things is established for all time. "They shall be one flesh". This is the very centre of this unique relationship and undoubtedly refers to the bodily and spiritual union that occurs between husband and wife at the time of sexual union. This idea is expressed with equal clarity in numerous other passages both in the Old and New Testaments. The Song of Solomon is probably most explicit in its detailed description of what should constitute the normal love relationship between husband and wife.

Now I quite realize that there are many other interpretations of a private nature among Christian couples. I have been sort of amazed at the gross ignorance and the misinterpretation of sex in marriage among our Mennonite people. Yes, we too have the ascetics who have been influenced in their early years by the puritanism and pietism which characterized our earlier concepts of marriage. To them any mention of sex in public is taboo, and to do so is to place oneself into the society of indecent people. Some years ago I asked a young woman who was a Christian, why, after five years of marriage, no children had arrived. Her answer was typical of many, "Why, if we had any children, people would immediately know what we had done." They

interpret sexual union as an inherent moral weakness, a concession to the desires of the flesh and a fostering of the sensuous and carnal in man. I believe it was St. Augustine who sincerely wished that God had ordained some other method than sex by means of which the human race was to be perpetuated.

These are undoubtedly in the minority. Most people who have adopted some aberrant philosophy about sex have gone to the opposite extreme; it has been brought so much into the open, it has been glorified almost to the point of deification. It has come to be the major theme of song and dance, our literature and music have become fully impregnated with the philosophies of sex, but this is hardly the Christian or Biblical view. We are neither ascetics nor sexual libertines. What then constitutes the Christian view? The Christian couple realizes and firmly believes that their entire bodies were created by God, including the sex organs, the Christian couple realizes that the sexual urges are normal and within the will of God; they realize too, that the sexual act in wedlock is in perfect harmony with God's plan and design for them, and is in no wise a concession to our fleshly weakness.

Shall we turn to 1 Corin. 7:2-5 — and while I read from my text a very free translation, would you follow in your Bible this very familiar passage. "Because of the strong nature of the sexual drive, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. The husband should regularly meet his wife's sexual needs; and the wife should regularly meet her husband's sexual needs... In marriage, just as the wife's body belongs to her husband, and he rules

over it, so in marriage, the husband's body belongs to his wife and she rules over it. Do not refuse to meet each other's sexual needs, unless you both agree to abstain from intercourse for a short time in order to devote yourselves to prayer. But because of your strong sexual drive, when this short period is passed, continue to meet each other's sexual needs by coming together again in sexual intercourse."

A few very interesting facts emerge from this simplified and yet amplified version.

1. Husband and wife both have definite, and strangely enough, equal needs that are to be met in marriage. The primitive concept that sexual expression is the privilege and prerogative of the male is hardly in keeping with the teaching of Scripture. The wife is not to remain passive, submissive and silent, but she is to share in regular sexual experiences in marriage that are meaningful and satisfying to her. Here in deed we come to the very crux of the problem when we talk about contraceptives; In fact without this consideration of "mutual fulfillment" in marriage, a solution to the ethical problem of planned parenthood is impossible. Marriage was intended for companionship and mutual aid. This has been called the social and psychological purpose of marriage. Is it not interesting and instructive to note that when God, Our heavenly father, contemplated this matter early in the Creation story, He said to Himself, "It is not good that man should be alone. I will make an help meet for Him." Gen. 2:18. Therefore, before fixing the moral law that man should reproduce and replenish the earth, God saw the need for close companionship and provided for it in this wonderful manner. This made man a social being -

and we have seen that God's original design was that man and woman should be joined together in a close and intimate relationship. This is the first function of marriage. It is the function of companionship. This is the primary purpose of marriage. It is the most intimate of all relationships. It is the relationship of man and wife in marital union. This is the first function of marriage.

Now then we come to the second function of marriage and I firmly believe I have them in the correct order of importance. Eve had now been created, primarily for the sake of companionship to Adam. Then God was pleased to look upon this first gracious couple and to pronounce the blessing of procreation upon them, "Be fruitful and multiply". The order is of great importance. Adam and Eve were now endowed with powers to reproduce, to bring offspring into existence, to create new individuals who had never existed before, and with them they were to become masters and lords of all creation. This double privilege of companionship and procreation is then to be the purpose of every marriage relationship. It is within the confines of this blessed relationship that God continues His work of creation and this will be His intent to the end of time. Almost every couple we meet and deal with accept this as a privilege and responsibility that God has given to them. Only a few perhaps somewhat selfish people embark upon a marriage relationship which they hope will be childless. To shirk the responsibility of parenthood for selfish reasons is to degrade the purpose of marriage. Every married couple should desire to have children, the number determined by many factors, not only their biological capacities. "The responsibility of parents is a total responsibility. It is more than a biological process. It concerns the whole child, including his physical, emotional, mental, moral and spiritual life, and no parent who has brought children into the world can absolve himself from this responsibility and before bringing them

with the need for fellowship, the most intimate of which is the sexual relationship of man and wife in marital union.

into the world he must be willing and able to meet these obligations.¹

May I conclude this section with a short excerpt from the writings of Dr. H. Davinck - reputedly one of Holland's greatest men. "Children are the luxury of married life, the treasure of parents, the wealth of the family. Their presence develops a greater number of virtues in the parents, the father and mother love, devotion and self-sacrifice, the care for the future, interest in the community, the art of education. Children check selfishness in parents, reconcile the contrasts, soften the differences, bring the hearts of the parents ever closer to each other, gives them a common interest which lies outside of themselves, and open their eyes and hearts to their surroundings and posterity. They uphold to the parents as if in a mirror their own virtues and defects, force them to reconsider their lives, soften their criticism, and teach them how difficult it is to rule a human being. Out of the family life there proceeds a reforming power toward the parents. Who recognizes in the sensible, industrious father of a family the boisterous youth of former days, and whoever suspects the lighthearted maid of being changed, through her first-born, into a mother who willingly makes supreme sacrifices with cheerful patience? Family life changes the selfish into servants, misers into heroes, coarse men into considerate fathers, and tender mothers into courageous fighters."

Finally, Christian marriages serve a third and useful purpose. The Apostle Paul deals with this in 1 Cor. 7:2-9, the first four verses of which passage we previously paraphrased. This can be

¹ Planned Parenthood, Alfred M. Rehwinkel - p 69

"...it is good for a man not to touch a woman. And I say this because of the present distresses concerning you. For many are Paul's epistles to the Corinthians. In this particular epistle he is writing to the Corinthian church concerning their sins and sins of the flesh. He says, "I would that all men were even as myself; but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and the widows: It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn." Even a casual study of this passage will disclose to us what a complete understanding the Apostle Paul must have had concerning the psychology of sex and marriage on the one hand, and the depravity of man's nature on the other. Because of the compelling nature of the sex drive in man, and the effect sin has had upon it, it has become increasingly difficult for man to live a morally decent life in conformity with God's Will. The Apostle therefore takes not an idealistic view of the situation but rather a realistic view, and advises his readers as he does. At first glance it might seem that he advises marriage as a necessary evil to offset an even greater evil, but this is hardly the case. He is simply taking an honest look, making a careful and realistic appraisal, and then gives this advice as an effective method of preventing uncleanness and fornication.

To summarize then, marriage has three distinct purposes, as taught in the Word of God, 1) companionship and mutual aid, 2) the procreation of the human race, and 3) the prevention of indecent and immoral sexual practices. It is imperative that all these three be constantly kept in mind, otherwise the problem of birth control and contraception can never be satisfactorily solved. But when we consider

described as the moral prophylactic purpose, the prevention of sexual irregularities and promiscuity in society. Only the last virtue has direct application here. "For I would that all men were even as myself; but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and the widows: It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn."

the total picture of God's purpose in endowing man with the gift of sex and marriage, then planned parenthood may easily be harmonized with God's perfect will.

Question No. 2. "What is the meaning of sex in God's creation order?"

The problems of sex are, of course, as old as the human race, and during this long period man has tried many ways of solving them. Certainly the more recent history of man can be divided into periods or eras each with a particular and peculiar attitude to sex. The Victorian era solved the problems very simply, but hardly effectively, by banishing the matter both from the church and the home. The consequences of such an attitude eventually became apparent and the pendulum soon swung violently in the opposite direction, the "new Look" proclaimed loudly and long that if only sex were brought out into the open, if only the conspiracy of silence could be broken and young people taught the truth, then all would be well. But the facts of today as we see them belie such a prediction, we are living in an era of more or less uninhibited sexual expression, but this has not been the way out of the dilemma.

For us as Christians the Scriptures must again be the final arbiter. To even the most casual reader of the Bible it must be immediately obvious that Scriptures deal with this subject in a fearless and open manner. God has never been ashamed of, or hesitant to speak frankly and freely about His handiwork and this includes the sexual nature of man and of woman, with all that this entails. When God pronounced the final "very good" upon His creation, He included man

and woman, He undoubtedly had in mind the fact that they were sexually attractive to each other, and that in the sexual act they would complement each other and become in fact what he would want them to be - "of one flesh". It was God who placed into their being the desire or instinct to mate, the desire for and love of offspring, the desire for sexual union and the physical and emotional pleasures associated with it. Upon all of these and more He pronounced His gracious blessing and found them all indeed, to be "very good". And because of this most gracious endowment we as Christians must never consider sex as being anything else but divine in its origin, good and perfect in its very essence, and holy in its intended purposes.

That God intended sex to be a major force in the life of His Creatures is obvious from the fact that the sexual instinct, urge or drive is second in strength only to the urge to preserve life. The strongest drive in man is the urge to preserve self, the second strongest is the urge to perpetuate self. This is not evil, it is holy and good because it is God-given. "God wanted the human race to increase abundantly and to take possession of the earth, and so He planted in man this drive and made it strong and urgent and enriched it with pleasure and enjoyment in order that man would carry out His will."¹

But sex includes so much more than mere procreation. It is quite impossible to separate sex from the whole personality of man, it affects every area of his being, it determines not only his physical development, but in a very real sense also his mental and emotional

¹ Planned Parenthood, Alfred M. Rehwinkel.

well-being. It is one of the most powerful driving and motivating forces in the lives of both men and women. Certainly from well before the time of puberty to old age, much of what we feel and do is determined by the sexual urges operating within us. Our hopes and aspirations, our thoughts and our feelings, our striving and pursuing, our planning and creating, are largely motivated by this mysterious driving force within us.

This is indeed the ideal concept of sex, but unfortunately it has been affected by sin as much as any other area of our being. And while it can ideally be one of the most potent influences for good in our lives, sin has affected the sex instinct to the degree that it has become one of the greatest influences for evil as well. It is today one of the major sources of crime, it has been responsible for the moral decay of individuals and of nations, it is at the root of much personal and marital unhappiness, many emotional and mental disturbances find their origin here. But to the Christian it must still remain noble and good - we must learn better to understand its nature and function and we must allow it to exercise in our lives its influence to good, in keeping with the injunction of the Apostle Paul, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God". 1 Corin. 10:31.

Question No. 3. What does the Bible have to say concerning the rightness or wrongness of birth control?

This consideration is of paramount importance to us, because we are really not interested in human opinions, in dictums of church or lay organizations, but only in Scriptural authority, and here is exactly where we run into a major difficulty - for no amount of searching in the

Holy Scriptures will give us any great amount of light and direction with regard to this problem. The Bible is strangely silent on this matter, certainly with regard to any direct teaching. Whatever there is of information comes only by inference and implication, but even this is something we cannot and must not ignore. The Bible teaches that God is the Author of all life - He is the one who upholds and preserves all life; He has ordained that by the begetting of children we have a real share in His creative activities; the Bible teaches that all children are a gift of God and must always be so considered; the Bible teaches that all life is precious in His sight. But these are all such rather vague generalities, we would so much wish to have specific answers to specific questions:

1. Should every man and woman marry?
2. Should all married couples assume the responsibilities of parenthood?
3. How many children should each couple have?
4. Should every couple have as many children as it is biologically possible for them to have?
5. Is it wrong for couples to engage in repeated sexual relationships when the begetting of offspring is not the intended purpose and motive?

To these questions there are no specific answers and this is in conformity with our previous definition of the distinctive Christian ethic. Principles are stated and these with perfect clarity - the related problems we are expected to deal with in their contemporary context. This is the historical ethic in operation.

I would now wish to deal briefly with a few passages of Scripture which some theologians and moralists have advanced as being Biblical proof against the practice of birth control. There is first the rather sordid story of Onan as recorded in Genesis 38:9,10. "And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord; wherefore He slew him also." A careful analysis of this passage, I believe, will disclose the following facts:

1. Onan's act was here judged on the basis of the "lex leviratus" - the law which required a man to marry the widow of his childless brother in order to raise up an heir for him. It was not truly a part of the Mosaic legislation but seems to have "crept in" as a part of the social heritage that Abram brought with him when he came from Ur of the Chaldees.
2. The sin of Onan was really a sin against the will of his father and his brother, the context of the story would indicate this.
3. When reading about incidents of this nature in the Bible it is very important to realize that we cannot always take the experiences of certain individuals under specific circumstances and make them of universal application. This was not necessarily the intent when they were put into the sacred Scriptures - this is an exegetical axiom that hardly needs emphasis in a Theological Conference.
4. His act was also a sin against Tamar by refusing to raise up a child for her and thus remove from her the sorrow and stigma of a childless widowhood.

I believe these arguments are really sufficient in themselves to counter any suggestion that the story of Onan was placed into the Old Testament as an example of God's displeasure with those of His people who practice contraception. "Could we say that Onan's objective was contraception, but that his motive was being judged - his disobedience to a cultural norm was the sin? He would have been as remiss if he had refused to have intercourse with Tamar".¹

There is a second passage that affords a certain amount of difficulty for many people. This is Genesis 1:28. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth."

It will do us well to study very carefully the creative order described in Genesis chapter 1. It is interesting to note that God's formal review and evaluation of His creative work in the first five days resulted, if I may express myself in this way, in a certain degree of happiness and satisfaction - "it was good." But then came the creation of man and woman, the crown of all of God's creative works. They were made in His own image, with mental, physical and spiritual characteristics, with the potential of becoming concreators with God in His continuing creative ministry. He made them male and female - and blessed them with these reproductive capabilities, and then he took a "second look" at all that had been done, and found it "very good". May I ask you also to note the exact wording of Genesis 1:28. "And God blessed them."

¹ Dr. Dean Kliener

Here is the secret to the correct understanding and interpretation of this passage. God did not command them, nor order them, or compel them, or threaten them; but he blessed them, blessed them with what? He blessed them with the most exalted position in the universe, he made them lord of all the universe, he blessed them with the promise of offspring that would rule and dominate all the earth. So it becomes rather obvious that God was here not giving a command, he was not here imposing an obligation to have offspring, but he was rather pronouncing a blessing which has subsequently become the source of greatest happiness to millions upon millions of people.

What then does the Bible teach about birth control? Our answer must be that there are no clear cut and definite passages in the Bible which could form the basis of absolute rule regarding man's procreational functions and by which man's moral conduct and conscience could be bound and governed. "The Bible does not define the use of man's procreational functions in absolute terms. The individual Christian and the brotherhood of believers seem to be left to take responsibility for developing a code for accepted conduct in this area."¹

We have now come to the end of the assignment that was given to me. We have pointed out some of the reasons why such a study was necessary at this time. We have tried to define the problem and to discuss it in its many ramifications. We have attempted to stay within the frame of reference that was given to us. We have consulted the Bible to investigate its teaching on these and related matters. I

¹ Dr. Dean Kliener

trust that what I have presented has been orderly, informative, thought-provoking - and that those who have heard, and those who will read and study will be able to arrive at satisfactory conclusions regarding this matter of family planning in their own married lives.

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AD D E N D U M

I have prepared a short addendum to this presentation to which I am quoting excerpts from formal documents and statements given by various Church groups regarding the problems we have been discussing today. These may not in fact be the final recommendations given by these organizations, but they will suffice to indicate what the general trends are today.

The Catholic position on this question can be summarized in brief as follows:

1. Sexual function has only one purpose, that is, propagation of the race. Any other function is contrary to the laws of nature and therefore sinful.
2. Birth control by artificial means is directly opposed to the laws of nature and therefore cannot be tolerated morally.
3. Birth control exerts an evil influence on morality and religion and the common good and the personal welfare of the married couple.
4. In the encyclical on Christian marriage of Pius XI the practice of birth control is characterized as "shameful," a sin against nature, "a horrible crime," and intrinsically vicious.¹

In 1930 Father Daniel Lord, S.J., provided the young people of his church with a well-written tract on this subject. It is entitled Speaking of Birth Control. Father Lord summarizes his findings for the reader in the closing paragraphs of his tract found on pp. 43-45, where he writes:

1. Birth control destroys the difference between prostitutes and supposedly respectable women by eliminating the ideal of motherhood and substituting the idea of personal and self-gratification.
2. It leads to infidelity by destroying self-restraint and self-discipline. It is at the basis of much of modern immorality among unmarried people because it banishes the fear of consequences.
3. It is a perversion of a noble faculty and a refusal to co-operate with God in the creation of children. It substitutes pleasure for God's appointed purpose of that faculty.

¹ Five Great Encyclicals (New York, n.d.), p. 92.

- REASONS FOR BIRTH CONTROL
4. Birth control affects the whole future of the human race. Children cannot be born into the world unless men and women co-operate with God. And when they refuse, they prefer their own pleasure to the advancement of the race; they substitute self-gratification for children. They strike at the very source of human life.
 5. It leads to selfishness by substituting one's own pleasure for the good of the human race.
 6. Birth control is a crime and therefore no excuse is possible. It is a sample of the end justifies the means and everybody knows that that is out.²

In the textbook on principles of conduct for colleges and universities by Edwin F. Healy, S.J., doctors are told: "A doctor may under no circumstances recommend artificial birth control nor even hint at its necessity or advisability. To do so would be to encourage others to perform an intrinsically evil act. Moreover, he is not allowed to give patients information as to the best methods of artificial birth prevention, nor to purchase for them nor to insert such contraceptive devices."³

² Daniel A. Lord, Speaking of Birth Control (St. Louis, 1930), pp. 43 to 45.

³ Edwin Healy, Moral Guidance (Chicago, 1957), p. 306. This book has the imprimatur of the late Cardinal S.A. Stritch of Chicago.

The United Church of Canada expressed its feelings on the subject in a statement on the meaning and responsibility of Christian marriage, issued by the Board of Evangelism and Social Service in 1932 —

The church believes that the highest value can never be attained in the pursuit of selfish ease and pleasure at the cost of a childless home — nor can the church censure the renunciation of parenthood when it is reasonably certain that any offspring of the marriage will be in the form of a stunted humanity and a burden to society. Many a mother whose strength has already been seriously depleted by the demands of a rapidly recurring maternity experience, finds her continued ministry, her health, and perhaps her life in peril should another similar experience become imminent. Still others are perplexed about their ability to render highest services to the children already born to them. Should their number and frequency of birth be subject to caprice or random chance? ⁴

The Federal Council of Churches in the United States issued a statement somewhat similar to that of the United Church of Canada.

A majority of the committee holds that the careful and restrained use of contraceptives by married people is valid and moral. They take this position because they believe that it is important to provide for the proper spacing of children, the control of the size of the family, and the protection of mothers and children; and because intercourse between the mates, when an expression of their spiritual union and affection, is right in itself. They are of the opinion that abstinence within marriage, except for a few, cannot be relied upon to meet the problem, and under ordinary conditions is not desirable in itself.⁵

⁴ Voluntary Parenthood (Toronto, 1936), p. 1.

⁵ Moral Aspects of Birth Control (New York, 1938), p. 5.

The Commission on Social Relations of the American Lutheran Conference, in 1952, submitted this prepared statement on planned parenthood —

1. A Christian husband and wife know that children are the natural and desirable fruit of their marriage in fulfilment of God's command, "Be fruitful and multiply."
2. Every child born into the world should be a wanted child. To be unwanted by its parents is a fate more cruel to the child than is poverty, low social standing, or nearly any other handicap.
3. Married couples have the freedom so to plan and order their sexual relations that each child born to their union will be wanted both for itself and in relation to the time of its birth. How the couple uses this freedom can properly be judged not by man but only by God.
4. The means which a married pair uses to determine the number and spacing of the births of their children are matters for them to decide with their own consciences, on the basis of competent medical advice and in a sense of accountability to God.
5. No moral merit or demerit can be attached to any of the medically approved methods for controlling the number and spacing of children. Whether the means used be those labeled "natural" or "artificial" is of far less importance than the spirit in which these means are used.
6. Continence in the marriage relationship, when its sole purpose is the selfish avoidance of pregnancy, is equally wrong as is the use of contraception toward this same selfish goal. An overabundant production of children without realistic regard to the responsibilities involved may be as sinful and selfish as is the complete avoidance of parenthood.
7. Undue delay in beginning their families, or too great an interval between births, will be recognized by the Christian married pair as unwise for many reasons. The Christian couple also will realize the falseness of using economic and other materialistic excuses as the sole reason for limiting their acceptance of parental responsibilities.⁶

⁶ Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIV (April 1953), 296 -- 298.

The Augustana Synod of the Lutheran Church -- in 1956 made the following statement with regard to the use of contraceptives --

5. The means which a married pair uses to determine the number and the spacing of the births of their children are a matter for them to decide with their own consciences, on the basis of competent medical advice and in a sense of accountability to God.
6. So long as it causes no harm to those involved, either immediately or over an extended period, none of the methods for controlling the number and spacing of the births of children has any special moral merit or demerit. It is the spirit in which the means is used; rather than whether it is "natural" or "artificial", which defines its "rightness" or "wrongness." "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31) is a principle pertinent to the use of the God-given reproductive power.
8. An unrestrained production of children without realistic regard to God-given responsibilities involved in bringing them up "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4) may be as sinful and as selfish an indulgence of the lusts of the flesh as is the complete avoidance of parenthood. God does not expect a couple to produce offspring at the maximum biological capacity. The power to reproduce is His blessing, not a penalty upon the sexual relationship in marriage.⁷

⁷ Social Pronouncements of the Augustana Lutheran Church and Its Conferences, 1937 - 1956, ed. The Commission on Morals and Social Problems of the Church (Rock Island, 1956), pp. 23, 24.

The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

The Missouri Synod has not made any official pronouncement on the subject of planned parenthood. The unofficial and semiofficial position of the past, however, has been that birth control is a violation of God's creation order and must therefore be avoided by Christians.

The purpose of marriage is the procreation of offspring, and the frustration of this purpose or the limiting of the number of children by the use of artificial means, by drugs, or unnatural practices is sinful. Christian husbands and wives are advised to practice abstinence or resort to the rhythm method or the so-called safe period in cases where further pregnancies may endanger the life and the health of the mother.⁸

But a re-examination of the theological arguments in support of this position has given rise in recent years to some serious doubts as to the validity and adequacy of this position. It is argued in many quarters of the church that this view, which is essentially the same as that of the Catholic Church, fails to take into consideration (1) the full meaning of sex and marriage intended by the Creator; (2) that the question of parenthood is more than a biological process; (3) that the law of love cannot ignore the life and health of the mother involved when dealing with this problem; and (4) that the social problem growing out of an unlimited increase in population is a matter of legitimate concern of society and the government.

And it is a noteworthy fact that approximately 60 per cent of those who answered the questionnaire prepared by Rev. Paul G. Hansen of Denver, Colo., for the Family Life Committee of the Board for Parish Education of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (ca. 1953) favored a judicious practice of birth control, which seems to indicate that the position of the church is no longer convincing for a great many of its members.

⁸ Concordia Cyclopedie, eds. L. Fuerbringer, Th. Engelder, and P.E. Kretzmann (St. Louis, 1927), p. 84; John H.C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (St. Louis, 1945), pp. 160 - 166; Walter A. Maier, For Better, Not for Worse (St. Louis, 1939), p. 411.