

# THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

## Part 1: How Christians Came to Accept It

by John F. Kippley

The Sexual Revolution is sometimes viewed as if it started with the oral contraceptive pill (OCP or the Pill) in 1960. That was an important milestone, but both the ideas and the practices of the sexual revolution have been with us for centuries. This is not to say that sexual behavior is no worse now than in previous centuries of the Christian era. It is not only worse, but the decline in sexual morality has led to such a widespread acceptance of abortion, contraception, and euthanasia that Pope John Paul II rightly called our era a culture of death.<sup>1</sup>

An immediate question arises: how did our culture slide from what might have been loosely called a culture of life to a culture of death? While certain events are more important than others in tracking this shift, it is the combination of a shift in attitudes along with certain historical events and persons that has brought us to our current situation.

The primary attitude of the sexual revolution is that “modern man” can take apart what God Himself has put together in the order of creation dealing with the all important areas of love and life, marriage and sexuality. The proponents and participants may not state it so bluntly, but that’s the reality. The practices that constitute the sexual revolution as we know it today consist of contraceptive behaviors, fornication, adultery, divorce and remarriage, sodomy and abortion. I exclude incest and rape because these are not yet legal or socially acceptable.

Since all of these behaviors date to prehistory, what is revolutionary about them? The revolutionary aspect is the acceptance of these behaviors by a world that was once Christian and was united on biblical grounds in teaching that these behaviors are seriously immoral. The only interesting question, at least from my perspective, is how and why Christians by and large came to accept behaviors that they once thoroughly rejected.

Christianity took root in two cultures. The Jewish culture accepted divorce and remarriage but rejected adultery, fornication, incest, prostitution and sodomy. The teaching of Jesus about divorce and remarriage was revolutionary. The Jews of his day quoted Moses to justify the practice of divorce and remarriage. Indeed, to limit the practice of a man verbally divorcing his wife and then claiming her back, Moses required a man to give his divorced wife a written document by which he renounced all further claims on her. By the time of Jesus, that was interpreted as permission to divorce. The only dispute was whether a man needed a serious reason such as adultery or could put her

aside “for any cause” whatsoever (Mt 19: 3). When Jesus taught that marriage is permanent and that divorce-and-remarriage constitutes living in adultery, he rejected both interpretations. His disciples were so shocked that they said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry” (Mt 19:11). The Lord did not back down, and the permanence of marriage became a mark of the Christian Way.

The pagan culture of Rome and Greece accepted divorce and remarriage. I am no expert in these matters, but from what I have heard and seen, the pagan culture of the first century A. D. followed a doctrine of “anything goes if there is mutual consent,” at least among free people. Corinth was known as the sin city of the Mediterranean, and St. Paul thundered against incest (1 Cor 5), prostitution (1 Cor 6), and sodomy (Romans 1). Little, if any, of contemporary behavior would have seemed strange or revolutionary to the pagans of the first century of the Christian era. What was revolutionary in that century was the rejection of those behaviors by the Christians, and what has been revolutionary since the 16<sup>th</sup> century has been the gradual reacceptance of the old pagan immoralities by people who keep insisting that they are Christians and are acting in a Christian way. Thanks to photography and mass communication, contemporary immorality includes pornography while the old pagans had to be content with dirty jokes and plays. Aside from that, there’s nothing new about sexual immorality.

Today we see various efforts by Christians to stop the growth of the culture of death, notably the serious and persevering efforts against abortion and pornography. I applaud these efforts, but what is almost always missing is the realization that the evils they oppose are attitudinal and logical consequences of other immoral behaviors that many anti-abortion and anti-pornography promoters have already accepted as part of their personal and ecclesial morality.

In describing some of the milestones in the sexual revolution, I will also include certain events that could have played an important role in slowing down the downward spiral of the culture but didn’t. Any successful efforts to rebuild a culture of life certainly will have to make use of these discoveries and teachings. While it is sometimes argued that certain economic and social conditions “forced” people to adopt immoral sexual practices, the record shows that God has always provided a way for people to live virtuously without demanding heroic virtue of everyone.

### **A sixteenth century disaster**

When Martin Luther praised marriage so much that he abandoned his priestly promise of celibacy and took a wife, no one accused him of setting up marital bliss as an idol or starting a revolution in sexual morality. But when he denied that matrimony was a sacrament, he laid the groundwork for the sexual revolution.

The most famous words of Jesus about marriage are these: “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mt 19: 6). In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul develops this teaching further and explains why this union of husband and wife is unbreakable: it is the representation of the unbreakable union between Christ and his Church (Eph 5: 21-33, especially v 32). Paul joined Christology, ecclesiology and matrimony. He used the mystery of the union of Christ and his Church to explain the mystery of the union of husband and wife.

By the time Paul wrote, it was obvious that there were human problems in the Church, just as there had been problems among the apostles. Jesus certainly knew this; yet he chose to build his Church not on angels but on human persons who would have to struggle, with his help, to overcome their personal sins, weaknesses and foibles. He rejected the idea of starting over with a new Church, a new “spouse,” every time he found sin, weakness, foibles and even corruption in his Church.

Catholic doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage—the unbreakable bond of the marriage covenant—is based both on the teachings of Jesus and Paul about marriage and about the union of Christ and his Church. These teachings are themselves unbreakable—they cannot be separated. No one who understands and believes that the sacrament of matrimony entails the unity of Christ and his Church can argue successfully for divorce and remarriage. The only morally correct way to become separated with freedom to remarry is to determine that there was no real marriage in the first place and thus no sacrament of matrimony. All that the Church can do is examine the conditions of the marriage as it took place; if it finds that a key element was lacking, it is then obliged to issue a decree of nullity stating that there was no marriage in the first place. That this process is open to abuse is evident to every informed observer of annulments in the Catholic Church in the United States today, but that does not destroy the principle that a marriage can, in fact, be invalid from the beginning.

Luther and other Protestants were certainly aware of the teaching of Jesus and Paul about marriage. They responded by denying that Matrimony was a sacrament instituted by Christ. This is not the place to examine their rationale for these denials. What counts for us at this point in history is that they denied the sacramentality of marriage and then denied the permanence of the marriage bond. In effect, they taught that while permanence might be the ideal, it is not the moral norm. At first, the grounds for divorce were very limited and divorces were few. Still, the seeds had been sown, and one of the reformers, Martin Bucer, developed the doctrine of divorce by mutual consent.<sup>ii</sup> It was widely rejected at the time but eventually became the model for modernity—when one or both of the spouses are unhappy and want to divorce, they can take apart what God had joined together.

The reformers themselves did not apply this attitude or logic to the issue of birth control. In their commentaries on the Onan account (Gen 38:6-10), Luther called

Onanism (withdrawal and ejaculation) a form of sodomy, and John Calvin called it a form of homicide.<sup>iii</sup> By teaching that man and wife can take apart what God put together in their marriage covenant, however, the reformers sowed the seeds for the later idea that man and wife can take apart what God has put together in the marriage act, the act intended by God to be a renewal of the original marriage covenant. If it is not immediately clear what God has joined together in the marriage act, this question may help. “Who put together in one act what we commonly call ‘making love’ and ‘making babies’?” To the theist, the answer is self-evident.

### **Fear and birth control**

St. John wrote that “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). I submit that the history of the contraceptive birth control movement may illustrate the opposite, namely, that all-consuming fear casts out love.

The element of fear was the first salvo in what would become a centuries-long battle about birth control. Thomas Malthus, an Anglican priest and also an economist in an age when economics was rightly called the dismal science, wrote in his 1798 *Essay on Population* that population would increase exponentially and that food supplies would increase only arithmetically. Therefore, at some point there would be mass starvation. This was an early and classic example of zero-sum economics. The pie is only so big; it can’t get any bigger. The solution offered by Malthus was to delay marriage and to practice total self-control after your family reached its desired size. In this, his thinking appears to have been molded primarily by the economic theories of the day instead of the Bible, but at least he abided by the universal Christian tradition against unnatural forms of birth control. His conjectures in economics were most agreeable to the dominant employer class who were quite ready to believe that they should hold wages to a mere subsistence level. According to the prevailing school of English economics, if a worker started feeling a bit prosperous, he would have more children, thus hastening the day of their starvation. How convenient to be able to rationalize your near starvation of your workers as necessary to prevent their complete starvation while piling up profits and wealth yourself.

The traditional morality affirmed by Malthus was quickly eliminated by the neo-Malthusians who promoted the practice of contraception along with the dismal and fearful economics of Malthus. Within 25 years, an article by James Mill in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* advanced the neo-Malthusian principle. In 1823 there was active propaganda in favor of contraception, and the ensuing public debate brought it to the attention of all England.<sup>iv</sup> The Christian churches, especially but not only the Catholic Church, continued to oppose contraceptive practices. Walter Lippmann, a secular humanist writing in 1929, credits the churches “for recognizing that whether or

not birth control is eugenic, hygienic, and economic, it is the most revolutionary practice in the history of sexual morals.”<sup>v</sup> Pandora’s Box had been opened. While withdrawal had been known and practiced to some degree from time immemorial, condoms made from animal intestines and skins would have been the method of contraceptive choice among the neo-Malthusians and their followers. In 1839 Charles Goodyear discovered how to make latex, and this eventually may have given the contraceptive movement a technological boost somewhat akin to the Pill a little over a century later.

The controversy in England eventually crossed the Atlantic where it met an America undergoing a religious reawakening. In 1873 Thomas Comstock, a Protestant reformer, persuaded Congress to legislate against the sale and distribution of contraceptives, and the federal law was soon followed by similar state laws giving the country a body of legislation known collectively as the Comstock laws. At this point in American history, Catholics had almost no influence in legislative bodies. There is no question that the anti-contraception laws were passed by Protestant legislatures for a largely Protestant America. These laws remained on the books in some states until *Griswold v Connecticut*, a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1965.

That the Catholic Church was not opposed in principle to the idea of conception control through self control is demonstrated by events in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. French researchers dealing with domestic animals discovered a relationship between certain bodily discharges and fertility. Scientists and others quickly wondered whether this was likewise true in humans. They speculated that a woman was fertile during her menstrual flow and infertile thereafter. One wonders how they could have disregarded the purity laws of Leviticus that forbade the marriage act during menses and for a week thereafter and the consequent great fertility of the Jewish people, but they did. The speculation raised a controversy about the moral use of periodic abstinence to avoid pregnancy, a controversy that eventually reached the Sacred Penitentiary, the curial department of the Vatican that handles matters related to the Sacrament of Penance. A ruling in 1853 declared that such a use of periodic abstinence was not immoral.<sup>vi</sup> The question flared up again, and in 1880 the same ruling was repeated.<sup>vii</sup> Thus, even though the scientific speculation was just the opposite of the reality, it engendered a Vatican decision on a moral principle that allowed the use of chaste periodic abstinence to avoid pregnancy.

### **Scientific discoveries—unused**

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were two scientific discoveries that, if developed properly, might have greatly altered the course of the sexual revolution, at least among Catholics and some other Christians. In 1855 W. Tyler Smith, a member of the Royal College of Physicians in London wrote detailed anatomical observations of the vagina, the cervix, the cervical os, and cervical mucus.<sup>viii</sup> He noted that cervical mucus

affords a vehicle for sperm transport and that the most fertile time of the cycle appeared to be when cervical mucus was at its most fluid state. That observation is at the heart of modern systematic natural family planning. Other researchers in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century repeated this observation especially for efforts to achieve pregnancy.

In 1877 Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi discovered the postovulation upward shift in temperatures that plays an important part in the sympto-thermal version of systematic natural family planning.<sup>ix</sup> Jacobi was a suffragist interested in showing that women could work just as well as men. To show that menstruation was not a sickness accompanied by fever, she had a group of women record their temperature every day during the menstrual cycle. What she discovered was that about mid-cycle the temperature rose slightly and remained elevated until the next menstruation. She duly recorded this; it satisfied her purposes; but she did not attempt to explore what caused the temperature elevation or its relationship to fertility. She was not alone in temperature-based research, but it was not until 1926 that a Dutch gynecologist, Theodore Hendrik van de Velde, finally realized that the approximately mid-cycle temperature rise was caused by ovulation.<sup>x</sup>

We shall see shortly that the American contraception wars started around the beginning of World War I. The points I wish to assert are 1) that God had revealed, in the loose sense of the word, the two most important factors in contemporary systematic natural family planning well before Margaret Sanger instigated the American culture wars and 2) that the Catholic Church had accepted the principle of using systematic NFP even before the discovery of these two crucial factors in modern fertility awareness.

### **The culture wars**

Outspoken proponents of the sexual revolution have traditionally not been content with their own decisions to practice sexual immorality but have wanted approval from the rest of society including organized religion. In England, they kept up the pressure on the Church of England whose eventual capitulation is revealed by the Lambeth Conferences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In these periodic conferences at Lambeth Palace, the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican bishops moved from complete repudiation of contraception to endorsing it, all within a period of 50 years.

At the Lambeth Conference of 1908, the Anglican bishops completely rejected pressures to allow contraception as morally licit.<sup>xi</sup> At their conference of 1920, they faced increased pressure because Margaret Sanger was having a certain degree of success in the United States, so they emphasized the purposes of marriage including that of procreation of children, and they noted that “to ignore or defeat any of these purposes is a violation of God’s institution.”<sup>xii</sup> The “Roaring Twenties” must have been hard on these

bishops in terms of the pressures they received because at Lambeth of 1930 they capitulated.<sup>xiii</sup> Despite warnings by Anglican Bishop Charles Gore and others that the acceptance of marital contraception opened the door to the acceptance of homosexual sodomy, the majority of the Anglican bishops voted to accept marital contraception.<sup>xiv</sup> To be sure, they wanted to limit its use to hardship cases and condemned the use of contraception for “motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience,”<sup>xv</sup> but they went on record as being the first Christian body in history to accept marital contraception as morally permissible. By the next Conference in 1948, the Anglican acceptance of contraception had grown more positive, and by the Conference of 1958 there was a general acceptance of marital contraception as a normal part of Christian marriage.<sup>xvi</sup> Within the next 50 years, the Church of England demonstrated how logical and foresighted Bishop Gore had been, for the Anglican bishops have not only accepted homosexual sodomy as morally permissible but have even accepted the idea that an openly practicing homosexual priest can be ordained as an Anglican bishop. The chief opposition to this in the Anglican communion is currently coming from Africa, and the last word on this issue has not been written.

In the United States, Margaret Sanger was the standard bearer for the sexual revolution. She began to challenge the Comstock laws and gladly accepted arrest and short jail sentences as a way to get publicity and public sympathy. She started her American Birth Control League around the beginning of World War I, and her ideas were widely accepted during the Roaring Twenties. Contraception became a way of life. The so-called progressives built their ideas about “companionate marriage” on the use of contraception. Marry, have contraceptive sex, divorce when you get bored with each other, and then start over again with someone else. The combination of childless marriage, divorce, and remarriage was promoted as the progressive way of life. Secular humanist Walter Lippmann in 1929 said it as well as anyone: “In the discussion which has ensued since birth control became generally feasible, the central confusion has been that the reformers have tried to fix their sexual ideals in accordance with the logic of birth control instead of the logic of human nature.”<sup>xvii</sup>

The Lambeth decision to accept contraception occurred on August 7, 1930. In *Casti Connubii (Chaste Marriage)*, an encyclical dated December 31, 1930, Pope Pius XI replied on behalf of the Catholic Church and strongly reaffirmed the previously universal Christian Tradition against marital contraception and companionate marriage.<sup>xviii</sup> On March 21, 1931 in the United States, a committee of the Federal Council of Churches, the predecessor of the current National Council of Churches, gave its approval to the use of contraception. While this was only a committee that contained such theological stalwarts as the wife of John D. Rockefeller, the damage was done. Various denominational leaders protested in vain, but perhaps the most scathing criticism was an editorial in the *Washington Post* the very next day. “Carried to its logical conclusion, the committee’s

report, if carried into effect, would sound the death-knoll of marriage as a holy institution by establishing degrading practices which would encourage indiscriminate immorality. The suggestion that the use of legalized contraceptives would be ‘careful and restrained’ is preposterous.”<sup>xix</sup> Prophetic, indeed!

For many years I have been amazed at reports that the Pill introduced contraception to the masses. Because it had the aura of a recent scientific discovery, the introduction of the Pill made contraception a regular newspaper item, and that in turn gave it a certain degree of respectability. The early Pill users, however, were masses of contraceptors who were dissatisfied with the messiness and other aspects of contraceptive creams, jellies and barrier methods. Contraception was widely practiced in the 1930s. The American birth rate during the depression years of the Thirties was so low that if World War II had continued much longer, women would have been drafted to compensate for the lack of draft-age men.<sup>xx</sup> To be sure, some or many couples may have exercised complete chaste abstinence from the marriage act, and calendar rhythm was successfully practiced by many spouses of all religions during the Thirties and early Forties, but it is naïve to think that contraception was not also widely practiced. It takes a real stretch of imagination to think that any male in my public high school graduation class of 1948 did not know about condoms. Most of us knew the few students who were using them, and we joked about the guy whose condom had been found by his father, a well-known judge who looked in his son’s wallet one day. It was not an age of innocence.

The 1950s saw the nation enjoy unprecedented widespread prosperity, and this was accompanied by a birth rate that may have also been unprecedented. In the mid-Fifties it seemed to me, still single at the time, that my married workforce friends were having a race to fill up the biggest station wagon the fastest. Many moms were having babies within 11 to 15 months after the first one. The natural spacing of breastfeeding was almost non-existent because almost no one was breastfeeding. In fact, so rare was it that seven Catholic moms in Chicago were discussing this one day in 1956 around a picnic table and decided to form an organization to promote breastfeeding and to offer the support mothers no longer got from their families. La Leche League celebrated 50 years of service in 2007.

The advent of the Pill in 1960 may have had more radical effects on Catholics than on Protestants whose churches had largely remained silent about contraception. Among some Catholics there was an effort to justify the Pill while retaining traditional teaching against the barrier methods of contraception. In addition, the mid-Sixties saw a widespread effort in periodicals and parish pamphlet racks to convince Catholics that the Church could change its teaching on birth control without compromising its claim to be able to teach infallibly. The effort of the revisionists was inadvertently aided by several events and non-events at the Vatican. The mere existence of the Papal Birth Control

Commission encouraged some to think that change was possible. The lack of concrete affirmation of *Casti Connubii* during this time was not helpful. The June 23, 1964 statement of Paul VI that “we must say openly that up to now we have not sufficient reason to consider the rules laid down by Pius XII in this matter to be out of date and therefore not binding” was not helpful.<sup>xxi</sup> That kicked up a storm, so the Pope tried to clarify matters in 1966. Referring to the traditional norm mentioned in his 1964 statement, he said: “It [the norm] cannot be considered not binding as if the magisterium of the Church were in a state of doubt at the present time, whereas it is rather in a moment of study and reflection concerning matters which have been put before it as worthy of the most attentive consideration.”<sup>xxii</sup> These statements were and remain quite understandable in the context. I suppose something had to be said; my only point is that these statements added fuel instead of cold water to the work of the revisionists.

### **The Papal Birth Control Commission**

In October 1966, the Papal Birth Control Commission gave its various reports to the Pope. It was immediately clear to the Pope that the acceptance of marital contraception would logically and culturally entail the acceptance of every imaginable sexual behavior between consenting adults. The so-called Minority Report had pointed out that the acceptance of marital contraception entailed the acceptance of marital sodomy. The response of the so-called Majority Report was only a statement of their own preferences against sodomy, not a logical rebuttal.<sup>xxiii</sup> In fact, the Majority Report was forward looking in its own perverse way, for cultural-Catholic morality has become a morality of personal preference. “Well, I may not care for sodomy, but if somebody else wants to do it, I think that’s their own business and right. After all, who am I to judge what is right and wrong?”

It would have been helpful if after one week of prayer and reading the reports, the Pope would have made a statement something like this. “I have received the reports of the Papal Birth Control Commission. Their work is divided. However, it is clear that those who would like to see a revision of Catholic teaching on contraceptive behaviors operate from principles that cannot say a firm moral NO to any form of sexual behavior between consenting adults. It is therefore all the more clear that the teaching of *Casti Connubii* was prophetic and true in 1930 and that it remains so today. It is the authoritative and holy teaching of the Church, a teaching that cannot and will not change. In due time I will issue an encyclical reaffirming and explaining this further, but there can be no doubt. The Catholic Church has not and will not change its teaching on sexual morality, and this includes its teaching against the use of unnatural forms of birth control.”

Instead, he made no immediate response, and the subsequent leakage of the confidential Reports in 1967 created another crisis. An apparent majority of the members of the Papal Birth Control Commission wanted the Church to change its teaching to accept unnatural forms of birth control. The commission was strictly advisory and had absolutely no authority, and there had been no official vote. These things were either unknown to the media or were ignored. Further, the near idolatry of democracy in the West created a huge problem that was aggravated by poor catechesis ever since the beginning of Vatican Council II in 1962.

The leaked reports gave time to both sides to prepare for the reaffirmation they knew would be coming. The dissenters were clever. I think they knew that the arguments used by the revisionists did not hold water and could never persuade the Pope to change Catholic teaching, so they prepared a battle that would attack the teaching authority of the Church.

### ***Humanae Vitae* and the Rebellion**

Pope Paul VI finally issued his long-awaited decision in *Humanae Vitae*, dated July 25, 1968. Before the bishops or almost anyone else had time to read the short encyclical, arch-dissenter Father Charles Curran had organized an opposition composed of hundreds of priests and supposed theologians. (I have been told that he received a copy of the encyclical at least a week ahead of its publication and was thus able to use the time to organize the dissent blitz.) The laity were told by the dissenters that they could follow whatever seemed best to them—the thinking of one man in the Vatican or the majority of his advisors that included theologians. The revisionists had been arguing for a “magisterium of theologians,” and this was their test case. The American bishops issued a pastoral letter titled *Human Life in Our Day* on November 15<sup>th</sup> in which they nominally supported the papal teaching but undercut it with a section titled “Norms of licit theological dissent.” While this section contained excellent words of qualification, the recognition of dissent in this document gave it a degree of legitimacy even though the nature of the dissent contravened all the qualifications set forth in the document. Revisionists could say that the American bishops had formally recognized the liceity of dissent from official teaching, something that had never been recognized before. Furthermore, dissenting priests could say, and did say directly to me, that they accepted the position of the American bishops who apparently supported the theologizing of Fr. Curran because they kept him in his prestigious position at Catholic University of America. That is, those of us who were working to support *Humanae Vitae* were thus labeled as opposed to the policy and theology of the bishops! In fact, the American bishops allowed Fr. Curran to stay at CUA for 19 years until finally forced by the Vatican to remove him.

The numbers of Catholic married couples who followed the advice of the revisionists grew rapidly over the next few years so that their practice was soon indistinguishable from that of their secular neighbors. The divorce rate among Catholics followed suit. Diocesan tribunals became infected with a different spirit and came to be regarded as Catholic divorce mills. In short, the widespread acceptance of the theories of the Catholic revisionists entailed the embrace of the sexual revolution by the Catholic laity at large.

Most of the laity did not realize what was logically involved in the acceptance of marital contraception, but some did. Professor Michael F. Valente, a layman and chairman of the theology department at Seton Hall University promptly wrote his revisionist manifesto that was published in 1970 as *Sex: The Radical View of a Catholic Theologian*.<sup>xxiv</sup> As a dissenter, he thought that “to accept the revisionist position on the liceity of contraceptive use in marriage is not merely to find an exception to the natural law doctrine, but to destroy it.”<sup>xxv</sup> He immediately made it clear that this included the rejection of traditional teaching about marital sodomy and “masturbation, homosexuality and bestiality.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Michael Valente was logical, but he spilled the beans, and I never saw him quoted by other dissenters. Seven years later, the Catholic Theology Society of America and Paulist Press teamed up to publish *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* that drew a parallel between Catholic homosexuals doing sodomy and Catholic married couples using contraception.<sup>xxvii</sup> The gist of the book was that both are against the rules but that the rules are outdated. No one who was aware of what was being written by dissenting Catholics, including priests, in the Seventies could be much surprised when the great scandal broke in 2002.

Providentially I met with Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin the morning after he had spent the night reading the just-published *Human Sexuality*. I was visiting merely to make a progress report on how our NFP apostolate was faring, but he was clearly more interested in and quite upset by this book. He noted that Paulist Press was saying that they published it for academic discussion to which he snorted, “That’s why they hired a Madison Avenue marketing outfit?” I was surprised at his anger with the book because from what he was telling me, it was not much different from what I had heard was being taught in his own seminary. Archbishop Bernardin went on to lead the American bishops to condemn the book. I wish I could say he had cleaned house in his seminary.

The post-*Humanae Vitae* disarray in the Catholic Church enabled the more aggressive promoters of the sexual revolution to proceed without any fear of effective opposition from the Church in America. In 1965, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Griswold v Connecticut* had declared all laws against the sale and use of contraceptives by *married* couples to be unconstitutional. Two years after the dissent from *Humanae Vitae* marked a divided Church, Congress passed legislation to provide federal funding for birth control. In 1972, the Court removed any legal obstacle to the 1970 birth control

legislation by its ruling in *Eisenstadt v Baird* that laws against the distribution of contraceptives to the *unmarried* were also unconstitutional. In 1973, the Court applied its penumbra (shadow of a shadow) reasoning to abortion and declared that all laws against abortion were unconstitutional. The *Roe v Wade* decision paralleled the *Dred Scot* decision in that it denied legal personhood to living human beings. It was widely denounced as judicial activism and without basis in the U. S. Constitution, but it became the law of the land and contributed significantly to the sexual revolution. In its 1992 *Casey v Planned Parenthood* decision, the Court argued that abortion can't be made illegal because people have come to depend upon it to take care of the results of their sexual behaviors. Abortion had become part of the social fabric of the nation.

For those who adhere to the bouncing ball theory—when things get too bad, reform will take place—2002 was a year of hope. The full extent of the depravity of the sexual revolution was made manifest in the Great Scandal of that year. It became known that hundreds of priests (thankfully a very small percentage of the thousands of American priests) had sexually abused minors, and the vast majority of these crimes were enacted by homosexual priests upon adolescent and pre-adolescent boys. Further, some bishops had participated in this degradation, and others had covered up the sins of their priests and transferred them around, thus exposing more children to these predators. The legal proceedings led more than one diocese to declare bankruptcy. It would seem that things couldn't get any worse, so maybe they might get better. But the bouncing ball theory, explained to me in 1969 by a bishop who wouldn't take any steps to promote *Humanae Vitae*, doesn't work. Balls bounce because there is something in their nature that makes them bounce. Depravity doesn't bounce. Rebounding from the full results of the Catholic acceptance of the sexual revolution will require hard work, prayer, preaching, and time.

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This is Part 1 of a two-part article. Please continue with “The Sexual Revolution: Part 2, How to Counter It.”

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)* 25 March 1995, n. 12 plus 11 additional uses.
- <sup>ii</sup> Roderick Phillips, *Untying the Knot: A Short History of Divorce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19).
- <sup>iii</sup> Charles D. Provan, *The Bible and Birth Control* (Monongahela, PA: Zimmer Printing). Provan provides quotations from 69 Protestant theologians' commentaries on the Onan account in Gen 38:6-10 to illustrate the Protestant tradition against contraception. Calvin is cited on p. 67; Luther on pp. 80-81.
- <sup>iv</sup> Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1982 edition; originally published by the Macmillan Company in 1929) 289.
- <sup>v</sup> Lippmann, 291.
- <sup>vi</sup> John T. Noonan, Jr. *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965) 439.
- <sup>vii</sup> Noonan, 441.
- <sup>viii</sup> W. Tyler Smith, *The Pathology and Treatment of Leucorrhoea* (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1855). Quoted by Jan Mucharski, *History of the Biologic Control of Human Fertility* (Oak Ridge, NJ: Married Life Information, 1982) 90.
- <sup>ix</sup> Mucharski, History, 63.
- <sup>x</sup> Mucharski, 65.
- <sup>xi</sup> John C. Ford, S.J and Gerald Kelly, S.J., *Contemporary Moral Theology, Volume II: Marriage Questions* (Westminster MD: Newman Press, 1964) 246
- <sup>xii</sup> Ford and Kelly, 247.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ford and Kelly, 246.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Ford and Kelly, 292.
- <sup>xv</sup> Ford and Kelly, 246.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Ford and Kelly, 248-252.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Lippmann, op cit, 306.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Pius XI, *Casti Connubii (Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XI on Christian Marriage)* December 31, 1930, especially paragraph 56. The translation first received in the United States and reprinted for years did not have numbered minor sections or paragraphs. It omitted what is now counted as paragraph 24.
- <sup>xix</sup> "Forgetting Religion," an unsigned editorial, *The Washington Post*, March 22, 1931.
- <sup>xx</sup> Thomas L. McFadden, "Availability of Defense Manpower," *National Defense* (vol. LXII, No. 347, March-April 1978), 462ff.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Noonan, op cit, 473.

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<sup>xxii</sup> Quoted by Leo Pyle, *Pope and Pill: more documentation on the birth regulation debate* (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 1968) 212.

<sup>xxiii</sup> John F. Kippley, *Sex and the Marriage Covenant: A Basis for Morality*, second edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) 307.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Michael V. Valente, *Sex: The Radical View of a Catholic Theologian* (New York: Bruce Publishing: 1970).

<sup>xxv</sup> Valente, 126.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Valente, 126.

<sup>xxvii</sup> The Catholic Theological Society of America, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*, a study commissioned by the CTSA and written by commission members Anthony Kosnik, chairman, William Carroll, Agnes Cunningham, Ronald Modras, and James Schulte (New York: Paulist Press, 1977) 216.