

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

A Layman on the Development of the Church's Doctrine on Contraception

Vitaliano R. Gorospe

Philippine Studies vol. 14, no. 2 (1966): 310–325

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

*A Layman on the Development of the Church's Doctrine on Contraception**

ONE of the new insights bequeathed to us by Vatican Council II was that into the indispensable and active role of the layman in the Church in the modern world. Addressing the Council on the "Responsible Layman in the World," Bishop Mark McGrath, Auxiliary Bishop of Panama said:

Fifty years ago the editors of the Code of Canon Law barely mentioned the layman in it. But now in the Council we are speaking about him at great length to find the right place and manner of speaking about the layman within the principal Constitution, on the Church. This surely makes it clear that progress on the question of the layman is an essential part of the whole renewal (*aggiornamento*) of the Church which everyone looks forward to so eagerly. I think that this is a source of joy for us all.¹

It is indeed a source of great joy to all of us that a layman, John T. Noonan, Jr., has written his history of the Catholic teaching on contraception. That this monumental survey and evaluation of the teaching of moral theologians and canonists was ably accomplished by a layman is a signal triumph for the Church in the modern world. For it bears significant witness to the fact that the layman has begun to come again into his own in the Church. A layman has done a distinct service to the Church and has made a lasting contribution towards the development of a new theology of Christian marriage. Reviewers of Mr. Noonan's book have been most lavish in their praise.² This review article can hardly do justice to this original, scholarly, and historical-critical study of the growth of the Church's doctrine on contra-

* CONTRACEPTION: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists. By John T. Noonan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965. 561 pp.

¹ Quoted from *Council Speeches of Vatican II* edited by Hans Kung, Yves Congar, O.P., Daniel O'Hanlon, S.J. (Glen Rock, N. J.: Deus Books, 1964). p. 264.

² One exception is Fr. Francisco Del Rio, O.P., "This Problem of Birth Control", *The Sentinel*, October 24, 1965, pp. 8-9, who cites Mr. Noonan's book in not too favorable a context.

ception "from the first century to the present, the forces shaping it, its potentiality for development" (Publisher's note).

Now that the Church is taking a hard look at its traditional stand on contraception, Noonan's timely study may well turn out to have a crucial and lasting significance. Will the Church change its position concerning what Pope Paul VI calls "the problem which everyone is talking about, that is, birth control"? As a historian, Mr. Noonan is not the Church, but in his introduction he states: "My function is not to prophecy what further mutations may occur. But marking the circumstances in which the doctrine was composed, the controversies touching upon it, the doctrinal elements now obsolete, the factors favoring further growth, this study may provide grounds for prophecy" (p. 6).

From the vantage point of almost two thousand years in retrospect, Mr. Noonan shows that the so-called traditional position of the Church on birth control is not marked by universal conformity without conflict and variety but by "tension, reaction, option and development". His book is the first work which offers really convincing evidence that the Catholic viewpoint on contraception could radically develop towards a more liberal view in accord with the renewal of the Church envisioned by Vatican II. It is not surprising therefore that both Pope Paul VI and the Council in its last session left the birth control controversy undecided, leaving the question "open" for further study and development.

The author is very well qualified to write this definitive work on the history of contraception. For this book he was awarded the 1965 John Gilmary Shea Prize by the American Historical Association. Mr. Noonan is Professor of law at the University of Notre Dame and Director of the Natural Law Institute. He is the author of *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, published by Harvard University Press in 1957. This year he will use a Guggenheim Fellowship to study the disposition of matrimonial cases in the courts of the Catholic Church. The fact that he was invited in March of last year to address the Vatican Council Commission on Birth Control is recognition by the Church of his competency

on this subject. As a scholar, Noonan brings together an immense amount of background material, much of which has been hitherto untapped, to show that "the recorded statements of Christian doctrine on contraception did not have to be read in a way requiring an absolute prohibition" (p. 532). As a lawyer, he exposes assumptions that have never been questioned, shows loopholes in the arguments for theological positions taken, and raises questions that would embarrass many moral theologians. The knowledge, thoroughness, and mental acumen of Mr. Noonan is evident on every page of the book.

Although the author himself claims that it would be presumptuous to try to summarize his book, we shall attempt to highlight a few of his more significant conclusions. Mr. Noonan divides the history of the Church's theology on contraception into four periods. The first period (50-450) traces the Christian prohibition of contraception to its Roman, Scriptural, and Stoic roots. It was a response to the social phenomenon of contraception in the Roman empire that the Church first shaped its doctrine. This doctrine was molded by the Gospel teaching on the sanctity of marriage, the Pauline condemnation of unnatural sex behaviour, the Old Testament emphasis on fertility, the desire to extoll virginity, and the Stoic ideal of rational procreative purpose. The Gnostic opposition to all procreation and the pagan indifference to human life led to the position adopted by the Church in the first three centuries—the Alexandrian rule that procreative purpose was required for lawful marital intercourse.

The man who dominated the theology of the Church on marriage, sexuality, and contraception for a thousand years was St. Augustine. In his battle against the Manichean attack on all procreation, Augustine synthesized his own sexual experience, the teaching on original sin and concupiscence, the need to protect human life, into the Augustinian rule on contraception. Since the good of marriage was procreation which was the sole justification for marital intercourse despite the presence of concupiscence, contraception was necessarily condemned in absolute terms. It is almost unbelievable how the rule of one man became so deeply entrenched in the thinking

of the Church that not even Pius XI's Encyclical on Christian Marriage could break away completely from the Augustinian tradition which centered on the procreative requirement in marriage.

The second period (450-1450) shows how for centuries the Augustinian prohibition of contraception continued to be ingrained in the penitentials of the medieval monks and in the decretals of the canonists as well as in the teachings of the theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a reaction to the renewed attack on all procreation by the Cathars. For six centuries the monks established a code of sexual conduct which condemned oral or anal intercourse, the dorsal posture for the male, and contraceptive potions that had magical associations. Catharism was an ideology that flourished contemporaneously with the troubadours of France whose theme was courtly love expressed by extramarital relations short of intercourse. The Church's response to this ideological challenge was canon law which reaffirmed procreation as an absolute value in intercourse and condemned the avoidance of children as fornication, adultery, or homicide. The condemnation of contraception by the theologians of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries inherited from the penitentials of the monks and the decretals of the canonists was due to the prevalence of means and dissemination of contraceptive techniques in the high middle ages and as a reaction against the Cathars. The theological arguments against contraception were based on the rationale that contraception was homicide, unnatural, and destructive of marital relationship, but there was a failure in theological analysis to offer arguments based on the demands of marital love.

However the principal sanctions against contraception, the spiritual condemnation of it as mortal sin and the social discouragement of it by pejorative description, were not sufficiently communicated to the faithful. Hence the doctrine of contraception could not have been fully, freely, and generally known and accepted by the Catholic laity between 1150-1450. It was destined for development both by a more instructed and self-conscious future laity and by theologians who were more aware of the value of love than that of procreation.

The dominant theology which required that the purpose of lawful intercourse be procreative did not altogether remain unchallenged. Counter ideas, values, and practices current during the period showed that medieval scholastic theology preferred the perfection of existing persons, the common good of the Church, the spiritual good of the children to the value of population and the procreation of new life. Moreover, the scholastic synthesis began to accept the "return of the marital debt" as an established purpose of intercourse, that marital intercourse had a sacramental value, that it was lawful for the sterile, and that sexual pleasure was a value in itself. Some authors even approved the practice of intercourse without insemination (*amplexus reservatus*) and did not criticize the use of anaphrodisiacs as unnatural. All these "counter approaches", values, and practices could have favored some contraception but the medieval balance of a whole set of competing values was weighted as to exclude contraception.

The careful reader of this book sometimes cannot help but be severe in his criticism of the *a priori* abstractions of early theologians and canonists whose views, both official and unofficial, seem to us moderns so absurd and perhaps scandalous. For example, in the Alexandrian-Augustinian tradition, it was held that marital intercourse during pregnancy and menstruation, or that sexual pleasure "mixed" with intercourse, or that intercourse other than the "natural" position (i.e. the man on top of the woman) were grave sins; or that contraception was homicide, or that "the emission of the female seed" was equivalent to orgasm. These are some of "the doctrinal elements" Mr. Noonan refers to as "now obsolete". The ignorance of the ancient medieval theologians due to a faulty biology and theology was excusable, if seen in the context of their times, but the fact that the experience of married couples seemed of no relevance to the theological abstractions of celibates was a serious mistake modern theologians cannot afford to repeat.

One cannot mention the medieval scholastic analysis of contraception without mentioning the Thomistic theology of marriage. True forerunners of the advocates of change were St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas. In Albert,

Augustinian sexual ethics was undermined. St. Thomas was a faithful disciple of Augustine but against the erroneous condemnation of contraception as equivalent to homicide and as unnatural, he countered by stressing the conscious procreative and educative purpose of marriage. St. Thomas' distinction between grace and nature, his insistence on the value of nature, his application of reason to the data of revelation, and his Christian adaptation of Aristotle—prepared the way for later innovations. Yet not even the great Angelic Doctor succeeded in breaking off completely from the Augustinian traditions which prevailed for fifteen centuries.

The third period (1450-1750) was the period of innovation and preservation of the Church's rule against contraception. The first really significant breakthrough came with the new theory of pleasure as a value introduced by a University-theologian, Martin Le Maistre. Both he and John Major cut the Gordian knot which tied procreative purpose and lawful intercourse. These two innovators were far ahead of their times. Most leading theologians rejected the Augustinian view that intercourse may be initiated only for procreation; some recognized that the education of existing children was a good reason for not wanting more; others gave some support to the interruption of intercourse short of insemination; the leading moralist of the eighteenth century, St. Alphonsus Liguori, did not treat voluntary permanent incapacitation for procreation for the sake of an economic benefit as undeniably sinful. All these new developments demanded a re-thinking of the assumptions underlying the condemnation of contraception.

That the Church made a complete about-face with regard to its doctrine on usury is Mr. Noonan's main thesis in his book, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*. Why then, one might ask, did the Church's prohibition of contraception not undergo a similar evolutionary change? Mr. Noonan points out that the answer lies in the different structures of the doctrines and the different degrees of pressure for change. The pressure for a modification came from the adoption by the laity, in their desire to avoid large families, of one of the possible alternatives to contraception—continence, *amplexus reservatus*, and postponement of marriage. Why the rule against contraception

was preserved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is explained by several limiting factors. First, unlike usury the Church was not institutionally involved and the celibate clergy was not personally concerned with the practical interests of married people. Second, the married laity were silent and there was no organized group or effort to give them public representation or to spearhead a movement for change. Third, science and technology had not yet developed new contraceptives like the "pill" which were substantially different from those already condemned. Fourth, the absence of change in doctrine among the Protestants helped to keep the Catholic position rigid. Fifth, there was no such thing as a serious "population problem" in Western Europe at that time. Lastly, whereas the usury doctrine affected only one small sphere of human conduct, the prohibition of contraception was tied up with a vast range of human sexual behaviour. Today, in the birth control controversy, all these limiting factors are no longer present and their conspicuous absence may, in the words of Mr. Noonan, "provide grounds for prophecy" and give hope to the married laity of the twentieth century.

Contraception in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was unmistakably condemned as homicide, or as a violation of the order of nature, or as excess in sexual pleasure, or as destructive of the purposes of marriage. The sanctions against the sin of contraception were better organized than in the thirteenth century, but they were softened by the development of two doctrines: the teaching that couples acting in good faith should not be disturbed in the confessional, and the teaching that a wife may be permitted to cooperate in *coitus interruptus*. But by the end of the period 1450-1750, the reasons for opposing the contraceptive act, and the application of sanctions against it, lost the urgency and vitality they had had in the previous two periods.

Perhaps it is the fourth period (1750-1965), especially the last chapter of Noonan's book, that will probably appeal most to the modern general reader. This period describes the spread of the birth control movement, the Church's vigorous reaction and response, the rapid development of the Church's theology on sex, love, and marriage, and the contemporary

birth control controversy. This new period in the history of the doctrine on contraception was marked by the decline in the birth rate of France, and the open advocacy, especially in England and the United States, of birth control as a socially desirable practice. The birth control movement began in France as a widespread individual decision to limit births chiefly by *coitus interruptus*. In the beginning, the directives from Rome showed some tolerance of good faith, but in the pontificate of Leo XIII the Church tightened its attitude. Inquiry in confession was urged and cooperation with the condom was strictly forbidden, but Pius IX felt the problem of contraception had better be left to the local Bishops. The arguments against "onanism" were perfunctory and undeveloped and the legal measures to check contraception were neither vigorous nor many.

When the birth control movement became an international movement in the twentieth century, the Church hierarchy reacted vigorously. The series of actions by five national hierarchies culminated in 1930 with the issuance of Pius XI's Encyclical on Christian Marriage. *Casti connubii* was the most solemn, complete, and authoritative presentation of Catholic doctrine on contraception and it guided action for the next thirty-four years (1930-1964). The modern church had come into open hostility with the birth control movement. Inasmuch as *Casti connubii* was the last ditch defense of conservative theologians and moralists, it might be well to quote Mr. Noonan's incisive and objective judgment on the problem posed by the Encyclical.

The encyclical reverberated with classic citations. As a distillation of past doctrinal statements, the encyclical was a masterpiece. At the same time, *its composers were indifferent to the historical contexts from which their citations came, and uninterested in the environmental changes which differentiated the present context.* The encyclical was a synthesis, it was not history. (p. 427)³

³ (Italics Ours). Mr. Noonan mentions Arthur Vermeersch, the most influential moral theologian of the first part of the twentieth century, as the principal drafter of *Casti connubii*. Vermeersch's theological background explains partially why *Casti connubii* was Cartesian in language and excessively Augustinian in tradition.

A summary review of the permitted and disputed means of controlling conception prevalent in the twentieth century shows the rapid evolution of theological thinking on contraception and suggests good reasons for some change in the traditional doctrine. It was a capital event when "rhythm", once condemned by Augustine, approved in 1880 for cautious suggestion to onanists, guardedly popularized between 1930 and 1951, was finally fully sanctioned by Pius XII. The practice of *amplexus reservatus*, *copula dimididata*, and sterilizing operations presented difficult problems of moral analysis. It was against this background of casuistry and "hair-splitting" that the controversies of 1950's and 1960's over the "pill" arose. Mr. Noonan's section on the "pill" is perhaps the most up-to-date summary of the theological dispute which still rages today and which led to the summoning by Pope Paul VI of the Birth Control Commission.

The contemporary relevance of Mr. Noonan's brilliant historical analysis for the Church in the modern world is to be found chiefly in the concluding pages of the book. From 1880 to the present, the substantial changes in the teaching and discipline of the Church was made possible within "the context of a changed environment and an evolved theology of marriage." First, the social factors that demanded a rethinking of the Church's position on birth control were the so-called "population explosion", the changed status of women, the modern emphasis on the methods of educating children, the evolution of scientific and philosophical knowledge, and the new internal structures of the Church. Secondly, besides the impact of demographic trends, the new "climate of freedom" in the Church, the self-criticism by theologians themselves, the new voice of the Catholic layman in the Church, the contemporary emphasis on the personalist values in marriage, the growing consciousness of a "sense of history"—all these factors contributed in no small measure to the development of a new theology of love in Christian marriage.

Without a "sense of history", this new theology of sex, love, and marriage would not have been possible. A historical knowledge of the development of dogma, first of all, allows

theologians to distinguish between the essentials and non-essentials of Christian revelation; and, secondly, helps them to understand and to facilitate change. At the end of his book, Mr. Noonan states five essential propositions or permanent values that have been held by the Church through a variety of formulas. These permanent and absolute values are procreation, education, life, personality, and love. But from his study, Mr. Noonan unmistakably concludes that there is nothing in the documents of the Church which can be understood to require an absolute prohibition of contraception. That is why the author ends with the optimistic note: "About these values a wall had been built; the wall could be removed when it became a prison rather than a bulwark" (p. 533). A change in the Church's stand on birth control shocks the unhistorical theologian, but the new very rarely shocks the historical theologian who is well acquainted with the old and knows that change is possible. In order that the theology of marriage be brought up to date and made relevant to the contemporary world, theologians should be creative and free to experiment. This accounts not only for the present theological controversy on the "pill" but also for the very recent self-criticism by theologians of the traditional arguments against contraception that have merely been repeated for ages even after they have ceased to be relevant. A reexamination and criticism of the arguments such as injury to particular populations and to the human race, to the family, to self, to nature, and as an offense to God, reveals that they are not as invulnerable as older theologians in the past have been led to believe.

What is the significance and relevance of this unparalleled book on contraception to the Philippine context? The recent theological developments in the teaching of Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council on marriage and the family touch the Church in the Philippines on two levels—the theoretical and practical. First of all, in the spirit of *aggiornamento*, there is undoubtedly need for renewal of the traditional theological thinking on sex, love, and marriage. This means concretely that the present seminary, university, and college courses on marriage and the family must be up-dated and revitalized in accordance with the guidelines set forth by Vatican II in its

"Constitution on the Church in the Modern World". Not only must the new data from revelation sources, the findings of science, the testimony of married couples, but also the context of Philippine culture must be brought to bear on a new theology of marriage.⁴ In moral theology, a more dogmatic, positive, and inspirational approach to marriage and the family is highly desirable. The Christian meaning of "responsible parenthood" and the personalist values of "life-partnership", "sexual-fulfillment", and "conjugal love" must be made available in terms that are meaningful to our people and culture. In the new theology of love in Christian marriage, it is not a question of emphasizing love over procreation and the rearing of children to maturity, but rather, in the words of Cardinal Suenens, a question of centering on the reality of "love and life."⁵ In pastoral theology, much more account than has been done in the past must be taken of the actual experience of the married Catholic laity.

It is a sad fact that the hierarchy, not only in the Philippines but also elsewhere, has for a long time been out of touch with the Catholic laity. Dialogue or communication between the clergy and the laity has been insignificant. But the times have changed and Vatican II has pointed out the way of reform. There is a young articulate generation of both the clergy and the laity who wish to dedicate their lives to the kerygmatic mission of the Church in their own fields of endeavor and competence. The Philippine hierarchy should help the Filipino lay Catholic come of age. For almost four hundred years the voice of the Catholic laity has been silent as in many countries. It is high time that their voice be heard and that they be given public representation in the Church. The spread and success of the Christian Family Movement in the Philippines bears witness to the great potentiality of educated Christian couples to contribute to the enrichment of the new theology of marriage. The age of the celibate-expert on marriage is over.

⁴ A helpful summary and a select bibliography on the new theology of love in Christian marriage will be found in the last chapter of Mr. Noonan's book, pp. 491-504.

⁵ Cf. Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *Love and Control*. Trans. by George J. Robinson (London: Burns & Oates, 1961).

More than ever the Catholic laity should be consulted in matters of practical interest and concern to them such as marriage, business, economics, politics, and government. Christian revelation and Catholic theology must be made relevant to their experience.

Secondly, the Church must come to grips with the problem of birth control or family planning as it exists in the Philippines today. We live in an age which will go down in history as the age of the "birth control revolution".⁶ One can hardly pick up a newspaper or magazine without finding something on birth control, family planning, or the "pill", and this indiscriminate bombardment from the press has resulted in a great deal of confusion among the Catholic faithful and even among some of the clergy. In view of the problem of population growth in an underdeveloped economy such as ours, it is not surprising that the birth control movement financed from abroad is beginning to gain a foothold in this Catholic country. Recently a cheap and easily available contraceptive, the intra-uterine device (I. U. D.), has been popularized and health centers in Manila and suburbs are freely dispensing it to the poor despite all opposition from the Catholic Physicians and Nurses Guild (*Manila Bulletin*, Feb. 27, 1966). Family planning has become a serious national problem and both the Government and the Church should take the necessary steps to cope with the situation.

What is the theological controversy on birth control which still rages despite the decrees of Pope Paul VI and Vatican II? As we mentioned earlier, in *theory* theologians are free to experiment and express their opinions but it is up to the Church to make the final decision. Fr. Gerald W. Healy, S.J., summarizes the current theological opinions on birth control under

⁶ A highly informative and up-to-date article which might be of interest to the general reader is Steven M. Spencer's "The Birth Control Revolution", *The Saturday Evening Post*, January 15, 1966. The author covers the effects of the birth control revolution on morals, the progress of science, the role of the Church, and the changes in U.S. legislation.

three main positions.⁷ The first position, which might be called the conservative opinion, maintains that nothing in the Church's doctrine on contraception should be changed. The second position is the most radical: it would leave the matter entirely up to the married couple to decide the problem for themselves in their own conscience before God. The third or liberal position advocates a change in the doctrine of the Church in as much as anovulants and similar nature-imitating aids may be allowed to couples who are justified in practicing rhythm.

It was because the birth control controversy had become a pressing issue that Pope Paul VI summoned the Birth Control Commission to study the question.⁸ We know now that the Commission was deadlocked and remains so today, not because of lack of unanimity among the moral theologians,⁹ but because of serious disagreement among the lay-experts (doctors, demographers, sociologists, psychologists, economists, and married couples). However, from the medical point of view, there have been reports circulated among the medical ex-

⁷Gerald W. Healy, S.J., "Contraception—On the Eve of the Council's Decision", *Philippine Studies* XIII (July, 1965), 670-686. For this section on Family Planning in the Philippines, this reviewer is also indebted to Fr. Healy's Address to the Eighth General Conference of the Christian Family Movement, Quezon City, December 5, 1965.

⁸The Commission on problems of population, the family, and natality was established under Pope John XXIII. Its membership was expanded from six to fifty two by March 1965. The Commission was international, representing 19 countries including the Philippines. Miss Mercedes B. Concepcion, one of the Philippines' foremost demographers was the Philippine delegate. Besides the 19 theologians, there were 15 demographers or economists, 12 doctors, 6 married laity, including 5 women.

⁹Ambrogio Valsecchi, Professor of Moral Theology, in the Milan Seminary Review, *La Scuola Cattolica*, made a survey of theological opinions on anovulant pills, covering all articles from 1937 to 1965. His conclusion is that only three European theologians reject the liberal position of L. Janssens, W. Van der Marck, and Bishop Reuss who advocate the use of the pill for family planning. Major theological opposition to the pill comes from American theologians like J. Ford, G. Kelly, J. Lynch who, according to Valsecchi, do not really deepen and advance the argument for contraception.

perts that due to the harmful side effects of the "pill",¹⁰ they themselves would not dare recommend the drug to their own wives and daughters. Furthermore, there is growing scientific evidence that the drug has an abortifacient effect.¹¹ If this be the case, and this is to be verified with regard to each pill, then its use would fall under the Church prohibition of abortion. From the medical point of view, what needs badly to be stressed here in the Philippines are the possibly harmful side effects of the pill and both the government and the medical profession should duly inform the public.

For many practical reasons, many predict that the I.U.D. will supplant the pill as a cheaper and more effective means of family planning. From the moral point of view, as long as the I.U.D. is even probably abortive it can never be approved by the Church. We cannot use a probable opinion when it is a matter of life or death of an innocent human life. Secretary of Health, Dr. Paulino Garcia, has confirmed the isolated report that the I.U.D. may cause cancer, but he adds that it is too early to pass medical judgment with the little evidence at hand.¹²

Although periodic continence or "rhythm" is approved by the Church as a moral means of family planning, there are many reasons and factors that make its practice in the Philippines very difficult. For rhythm to work, couples must be properly instructed and motivated. About eighty per cent of the medical profession are not capable of imparting correct information on the practice of rhythm and what is worse

¹⁰ Dr. Frank B. Walsh, Professor Emeritus at Johns Hopkins, and his colleagues published a report in *Ophthalmology* that the pill causes strokes and eye damage (*Pittsburgh Catholic*, December 2, 1965, p. 12). Blood clotting may also result if the woman has a history of thrombophlebitis or liver disease or certain other disorders. Pills also tend to decrease lactation so that mothers should not start too soon after childbirth.

¹¹ On the pill and abortion, cf. the debate between Dr. John Rock and Dr. Frank Ayd in *The National Catholic Reporter*, August, 1965.

¹² It appears also that the I.U.D. is not too successful with young wives especially those who have not yet had their first baby. Cf. Ann L. Southan, M.D., "What's New in Family Planning," *Parents' Magazine and Better Homemaking*, November, 1965.

many of them are not interested either because they themselves do not believe in it or do not find it financially rewarding. Fr. G. Healy mentions other practical difficulties peculiar to the Philippines. Both the government and the Church must face this problem of "rhythm" realistically. Fr. Healy mentions that some members of the hierarchy have started to establish Family Clinics where couples, especially the poor, can get much needed advice and help. It is our hope that Family clinics will be multiplied all over the Philippines as a partial solution to the problem of family planning (Cf. *Manila Bulletin*, March 6, 1966). It is needless to say that such a positive program cannot succeed without proper governmental support and aid. In this matter of family planning, a program of general education on the practice of rhythm, extra-legislative action by individual and concerted group effort, will be in the long run a wiser and more effective policy than any short-range kind of legislation against the sale of contraceptives.

The Church in the Philippines can no longer afford to be satisfied with a negative and condemnatory reaction to the birth control problem in this country. Its pastoral concern now is to try to solve the dilemma of the vast majority of poor and uninstructed but honest and sincere married couples in a Christian and practical way. It will do well to reflect on the statement made by Joseph Cardinal Suenens before the Vatican Council:

We are faced with the problem, not because the Christian faithful are attempting to satisfy their passions and their egoism, but because the best among them are attempting with anguish to live a double loyalty, to the Church's doctrines and to the needs of conjugal and parental love.¹³

Although Noonan's book is too detailed and scholarly for the general reader, it is indispensable for those who, be they of the clergy or the laity, have a serious interest in the new theology of Christian marriage and in the current con-

¹³ The dilemma in which honest and sincere couples find themselves is borne out by the testimony of thirteen Catholic couples in *The Experience of Marriage*, edited by Michael Novak (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

troversy on birth control. Acclaimed unanimously from all quarters as the most inclusive study to date of a subject that has become one of the Church's most controversial issues, *Contraception* is a book every bishop, theologian, or educated layman can read with lasting profit.

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE, S.J.