

The Logic, Ideology, and Ascendancy of Child Prevention

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There is no doubt that child prevention, usually achieved by contraception (euphemistically called “birth control”), has become universally accepted and is an integral part of modern man’s thinking. But universal access to effective contraception and its legality are relatively new in the U.S. However, a low birth rate due to preventing the life of children is not new in the history of the world.

All advanced, successful cultures have dealt with the societal problem of citizens avoiding children. Only a wealthy society has the means, leisure, and moral plasticity to frustrate God’s natural working. Recently, though, it has become incredibly easy and most innocuous to not have children. But we can be sure that like the “oldest profession,” the attempt to prevent children is as old as society itself. Along with various physical means still used today, “the idea of a chemical means for birth control is thus as old as the surviving medical records.”¹ This was a problem in ancient China, Egypt, Greece, and Rome (childless couples were common at the time the New Testament was written).² When a civilization prospers and advances, the emphasis of sinners always turns to increasing pleasure and limiting the suffering found in bearing and raising children. This is where we find ourselves now: children are contrary to a life of ease that our culture has bequeathed to us.³

¹John M. Riddle, *Contraception and Abortion from the Ancient World to the Renaissance*, quoted in: David S. Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom* (Missoula, MT: Neofita Eleon, 2014), 2.

²The Greek historian Polybius writes about 150 B.C.: “*In our own time the whole of Greece has been subject to a low birth-rate and a general decrease of the population, owing to which cities have become deserted and the land has ceased to yield fruit, although there have neither been continuous wars nor epidemics. If, then, any one had advised us to send and ask the gods about this, and find out what we ought to say or do, to increase in number and make our cities more populous, would it not seem absurd, the cause of the evil being evident and the remedy being in our own hands? For as men had fallen into such a state of pretentiousness, avarice, and indolence that they did not wish to marry, or if they married to rear the children born to them, or at most as a rule but one or two of them, so as to leave these in affluence and bring them up to waste their substance, the evil rapidly and insensibly grew.* *The Histories of Polybius*, Loeb Classical Library vol. VI (1922-1927); XXXVI:17; (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/36*.html), 384-85 [emphasis added].

³“If I say that those people who promote family planning programs accelerate this natural process [of the

Early Christians spoke against contraception, along with the twin issue of exposure, the murder of babies by their abandonment.⁴ Until the twentieth century, any prevention of the conception, birth, and life of a child was universally condemned by Christians,⁵ on the basis of Onan⁶ and God’s ordinance to be fruitful and multiply. Despite the fact that its use has become an ingrained practice, the mere historical record and previous Christian opposition beg us to ask why their thoughts on family seem so foreign.

To “be fruitful and multiply” is not simply a rule or regulation to obey—it is a gift the Lord bestows like rain. This divine word instituted the on-going reality of God’s creation of new life. “Be fruitful and multiply” is an active word still at work through the marital act and the human desire for it. It applies to male and female today, Christian or not. In this natural order of family, “God is not so much a lawgiver as a creator and [currently active] ruler.”⁷ The creation of life and the multiplication of the race is God’s work, not man’s.

Rank pagans don’t need to be told to reproduce—God works through even the most unwholesome sexual desires to cause fruitfulness. The blessing of fruitfulness is that it has little to do with us or our will. “It pleases [God] to conceal himself in marriage, in which he lets men and women think they bring forth the children into the world, ‘but it is he who does so, hidden behind these masks.’”⁸ God spoke the same *blessing* both before and after the fall: “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it’” (Gen 1:28; Gen 9:1). This is not a command or law we can choose to obey, but a divine operation

decline of the civilization] and do not act in the interest of their people, that suspicion turns into hate and contempt.” Angelo Bertolo, *The Imminent Collapse of America and of the Whole Western Civilization*, (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2012), 169-70.

⁴See Hasselbrook, *Contraception and Christendom* for an overview of that history.

⁵See chapter 28, “The Blight of Birth Control” in Walter A. Maier, *For Better Not Worse: A Manual of Christian Matrimony*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935; 3rd ed., 1939), 377-421.

⁶“And Judah said to Onan, ‘Go in to your brother’s wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother.’ But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother’s wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also” (Gen. 38:8-10). Luther comments on these verses: “Onan must have been a malicious and incorrigible scoundrel. *This is a most disgraceful sin. It is far more atrocious than incest and adultery. We call it unchastity, yes, a Sodomitic sin.*” *Lectures on Genesis*, LW 7:20 [emphasis added]. It was not only Onan’s disobedience, but the way in which he disobeyed that displeased the Lord. He chose to partake of the pleasure of sexual union, but prevent its working and fruition—and ultimately God’s aim of new life. He did not want a child to result from their union.

⁷Werner Elert, *The Christian Ethos*, trans. Carl J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), 77.

⁸Quoting Martin Luther, “Psalm 147 ”(1531), LW 14:114, in: Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Evansville, IN: Ballast Press, 1999), 138.

that God works in us as He chooses, regardless of whether we want it or not.

God has implanted in us the desire to procreate so strongly, that even those who do not want children cannot refrain from the one act that He uses to create them. It is as strong as the desire to eat and drink. Intention, planning, or choosing has nothing to do with fruitfulness, as if we could make ourselves fruitful or create life by our own decision. Even those who hate life and despise children and marriage are compelled to the marital act, which often leads to a child despite contraceptive precautions. God uses our natural attraction and sinful lust in His creative activity of fruitfulness, which is His work, not ours.

While the advice to avoid children is often unabashedly given by complete strangers, it is still a delicate topic to navigate. That is not because of contraceptive technology or because people are not really Christian. It is due to simple ignorance and worldly patterns of thought. While it is easy to demand that people trust God and be “open to children” (euphemistic language for not actively preventing them), that cannot change the heart, the source of sins. Contraceptive technology is not the problem, though it is easy to place blame there. The origin of the problem is that we do not think according to God’s Word about children. Our hearts are also evil and do not fully appreciate God’s blessings—whether they be eternal blessings in the Gospel or temporal blessings in children. This sinful will which does not love God haunts all, no matter how many children are conceived or raised. The theological issue with preventing children is dissatisfaction with God’s work, that is, a lack of knowledge and faith. Man boasts of being divine in “choosing” or destroying life. But control over human life is not something the Lord has ceded to man.

Of course, to demand and insist that all people accept a great blessing is counter-productive and wrong-headed. It is a matter of biological reality and natural law in society, which do not create love for God or constitute the Gospel. But for the Christian, who confesses that all life is intrinsically valuable and redeemed by Jesus, contraception is a problem. Beneath the assumption of control and choice are many contradictions for modern Christians. They see life as from God and simultaneously a decision of their fickle will. Fruitfulness is and will remain God’s work, but only in Christ, who died, is God known as loving and forgiving.

It is assumed today, even by believers, that all people want a certain number of children and

can achieve it fairly accurately. But a child, that is, the creation of life itself, is a preeminent work of God. Christians, who have God revealed as gracious Father to them, should see children as His good work. God's word active within us is too strong for us to nullify. "Be fruitful and multiply" "still controls us; and we cannot separate ourselves from it."⁹ As experience often shows, there are no good alternatives to allowing God to work unhindered. Every form of child prevention has practical, ethical, and moral problems.

The Christian alternative must not be about the outward work of having many children. That is not a Christian or religious work, but a worldly one that does not grant forgiveness of sins. Being fruitful is not a moral law we can apply ourselves to, is it something God works outside of our choices or intentions.

The Christian who is spiritual is called to trust God to work good in all things, even in what seem to be curses to our sinful hearts. The Christian is called to lose His life for Christ's sake in all things. A cross is a duty or tribulation God lays on His children, not a voluntary choice. Since true Christians cannot fully hate life or children, many must be seen as inconsistent and weak as they make a poor or even contradictory confession by preventing children.¹⁰ The culture incessantly tells us that it is an indispensable right and duty to prevent children. Therefore, changing views is impossible to do with a head-on offensive, because it is the default position and the only way to live for those who have accepted this worldview. Sound teaching is required.

This paper seeks to analyze and expose the hidden assumptions and murky logic lurking beneath the acceptance of the prevention and murder of children. Biblically, conception, children, sex, and marriage are intricately connected in a way that seems completely foreign to modern man with his technology, lifestyle, and language. Cultural "progress" has unalterably modified prevalent thinking and heretofore "facts of nature." Therefore, this biblical teaching is difficult and counter-cultural. Yet the Christian is not of this world. To condemn without giving understanding, to moralize without enlightening, or to use God's earthly blessings to demean the weak

⁹Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 84.

¹⁰Luther was a realist: "But if you cannot avoid being joined to a woman without sinning, use the remedy shown by God [marriage]. And if you do not seek the function of bringing children into being, at least seek the remedy against sin, in order that fornication and adultery may be avoided as well as pollution and promiscuous lusts." *Lectures on Genesis*, LW 5:190.

is not edifying for God's people. However, in whatever way the Lord gives light to His design, blessings, and truth, we are bound to receive it with thanksgiving in Christ.

The Shaky Bedrock of Our Culture

It has taken a meteoric rise of pagan ideology to promote contraception "to its present status as an indispensable social given of the American ethos."¹¹ Today, opposing contraception is the "Catholic position," though *all* protestants opposed it before the progressive Anglicans first condoned it in 1930.¹² Modern culture effectively marinates people in pagan assumptions about God's working in sexual union. Legalistic statements decrying the practice of "birth control" will not be effective, because their use has become a way of life and the fundamental premise of advanced society.

"American society is not geared to very large families."¹³ A large family is considered an anomaly and unnatural today only due to advanced medical technology and its universality. But it is by far the more "natural" occurrence, if those practicing intercourse are not diligent to avoid children. Without relatively recent medical advancements, the modern "normal" sized family would be very difficult to achieve (without murder).

There is still an obligation to be honest about what "birth control" really is, how it came about, and what is the underlying moral philosophy which drives its use. To clearly define these will be a step in the right direction. A critical analysis of contraception and its history will show what it is and what it actually does.

Linguistic Twists and a Common Aim

Margaret Sanger is the modern day messiah of child prevention and abortion rights. From 1910 to 1960 she campaigned, fought, and rallied for both contraception and abortion. Her

¹¹Robert Marshall and Charles Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren: The Social Policy of Planned Parenthood* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 36.

¹²Even Catholics changed their position around the same time with the allowance of natural family planning in 1932, to prevent children. Some protestants are rethinking this issue. Charles D. Provan, *The Bible and Birth Control* (Monongahela, Penn.: Zimmer Printing, 1989).

¹³Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 169.

statements are helpful in understanding the roots of child prevention. From the beginning she led “Planned Parenthood’s program of the Pill, sterilization, and abortion on demand.”¹⁴ The logical connection between all these were obvious to Sanger. At Planned Parenthood locations both abortions and contraception may be obtained—not coincidentally. To her they were a panacea for the world’s ills, such as poverty and war. “Birth control, family planning, and population limitation are most important in any effort to bring real peace to the world. Less population will bring less war. Fewer people brings more peace.” They are “essential for world peace.”¹⁵

Language is powerful, and in the procreative arena it has been misused and made dishonestly vague and misleading. First, “birth control” is not about controlling birth. “Sanger’s pet phrase ‘birth control’ is a euphemism. It is the birth of people, after all, that is in question, and human beings, not ‘births’ per se, are the entity to be controlled.”¹⁶ To equate the temporary, painful act of giving birth with the precious life of a child is the first underhanded tactic of “birth control.” Children should not be reduced to the curse of pain in childbirth. Also, “control” implies putting structure on a chaotic situation. “Birth control” does not allow control or choice. It has only one goal: to prevent human life, which is to frustrate God’s work.

“G. K. Chesterton wrote that he despised birth control ‘first because it is a weak and wobbly and cowardly word . . . they dare not call it by name [child prevention] because its name is very bad advertising.’”¹⁷ When called by its true intent, child prevention, “birth control” takes on new meaning. Many things prevent children, including abortion. While the individual acts are clearly different, the logical motivation, underlying philosophy, and earthly result, from man’s perspective, are nearly indistinguishable. Historically and ideologically these two have always been linked. It has only been recently that people have attempted to separate them by calling one “good” and one “bad.”¹⁸

¹⁴Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 40.

¹⁵Margaret Sanger, Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1960, quoted in: Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 160-61. But two may be too many for peace.

¹⁶Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 211.

¹⁷Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 211.

¹⁸“St. John Chrysostom talked in a sermon of *atokia*, contraceptives, . . . ‘Indeed something worse than murder. I do not know what to call it. For it does not only destroy what is conceived but prevents it from being conceived.’” Keith Hopkins, “Contraception in the Roman Empire,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 8,

From the world's perspective (not necessarily God's) there is no difference between a baby not conceived and one killed before he is born. In either case, there is no little crying thing to feed and clothe!¹⁹ For the unbeliever, both remove the "curse" of children. Man in darkness sees life (potential neighbors to love), not as created in God's image, but as a debilitating curse and choke on their living. If the worldly pagan naturally links contraception and abortion together, why does the average Christian put them so far apart? A fuzzy way of talking about these issues has prevented serious consideration of the true nature and purpose of contraception.

What Sanger Has Joined Together, Let Not Man Put Asunder

Contraceptives and "birth control" language began to be widely used and accepted in 1920's in America.²⁰ But legally, contraception was allowed *only* for married couples (without a doctor) in the 1965 case, *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which "remains one of the most discussed and controversial Supreme Court decisions of all time."²¹ It was only on March 22nd, 1972 that contraceptives

no. 1 (Oct. 1965), 137.

¹⁹These are logically equivalent to the pagan. Christians who hold one and not the other are inconsistent, though God tolerates our inconsistencies. Not fulfilling God's entire will due to weakness is forgiven in Christ. Christians are justified by faith, not their actions. Christians may prevent children for many false or superficial reasons and not hate God's creation of children. However, active and premeditated murder is flaunting God's will and role in life and is an entirely different matter, even if the intended earthly result (no child) is the same. Due to false assumptions and simple ignorance, preventing children is often done with a clear conscience that does not drive faith out. A good parallel is polygamy among the patriarchs, which was tolerated by God, though wrong. Condemnation is not a cure for weak or feeble faith. "And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (I Cor. 8:11-13). But that does not mean these things should be defended or promoted as good, though patience and gentleness should reign. One must first determine if the primary cause is a hatred of children or a weak trust in God's promise to provide daily bread. Faith cannot rest on law or coercion, but only on a promise fulfilled in Christ.

²⁰"The birth rate in America declined 20 percent between 1920 and 1930, primarily due to increased use of birth control." "Birth control movement in the United States," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Birth_control_movement_in_the_United_States (accessed September 26, 2014).

²¹It was "the Court's eventual declaration of a new constitutional right in 1965. ... *Griswold* nevertheless specifically recognizes an independent and fundamental right to privacy under the U.S. Constitution. Because *Griswold* failed to articulate what specific rights (other than the right of married couples to use contraceptive devices) were to be included under the umbrella of privacy, the justices spent much of the remainder of the twentieth century debating the matter." Richard A. Glenn, *The Right to Privacy: Rights and Liberties Under the Law* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 12, 143. The result of this "privacy doctrine," found in the shadows of the Constitution, has been abortion, decriminalizing sodomy, euthanasia, and changing the legal definition of marriage.

became legal for the unmarried.²²

Contraception and abortion have always been connected, though many modern Christians unwittingly accept one and condemn the other.²³ The infamous *Roe v. Wade* case (January 22nd, 1973) was decided ten months after contraception was legalized for all. Is there a connection? Planned Parenthood said so in their brief: “The right to an abortion must be viewed as a corollary of the right to control fertility.” In 1992 the Supreme Court expressed that “the abortion decision is of the same character as the decision to use contraception . . . for two decades . . . people have organized intimate relationships . . . on abortion in the event that contraception should fail.”²⁴

Child prevention fails, allowing children to be conceived. If it did not would there be much of a clamor for the right of abortion? God’s creative word works despite man’s evil will and attempts to control Him. The failure rates of contraceptives are somewhat surprising.²⁵ Failure is defined as pregnancy (of a living child) over the course of a year.²⁶ The Pill, as typically used, has the horrible failure rate of 8.0%. Condoms typically fail at over 15%. That means that over the course of a year 1 out of 6 women using them will become pregnant. What happens when these failures occur? Of course, the goal of “birth control” is the same as abortion, to prevent children, never to allow them. Therefore, “abortion is an essential support to other family planning services,” including contraception.²⁷

²²The court stated that the right granted was “the choice as to whether or not to conceive and bear a child” (*Eisenstadt v. Baird*). Conception and birth are linked—it is not possible to have a birth without a corresponding conception. The legal and logical implication of allowing the prevention of conception (the beginning of life) was laid down: “Deciding whether to bear a child already conceived clearly meant abortion.” Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 328.

²³In the early twentieth century American “criminal laws outlawed fornication, adultery, sodomy, polygamy, incest, contraception, abortion, and other perceived sexual offenses.” “Traditional prohibitions against contraception and abortion have been held to violate the constitutional right to privacy.” This “right” is really a void that effectively removes social, natural, moral, and state intrusion upon sexual encounters and relationships, even between married individuals. “The marital couple is not an independent entity with a mind and heart of its own, but an association of two individuals, each with a separate emotional and intellectual makeup. If the right to privacy means anything, it is the right of the *individual*, married or single, to be free from unwanted government intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting the person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child” (*Eisenstadt v. Baird*). So the husband has no say in his unborn child’s conception or continuance, due to his wife’s individual right to privacy. John Witte Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012; 2nd ed.), 288, 289, 317.

²⁴*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 327-29.

²⁵Even sterilization typically fails 0.15% of the time.

²⁶Planned Parent brochure, *Facts about Birth Control* (2003), 2.

²⁷Ian Jones, chief executive of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, quoted in: Patrick Delaney, “Coddling Contraception: the Exceptional Consequences of Zealous Indifference,” 2001 paper for ALL conference.

“Birth control’s” only design is to prevent children. There is no choice in “birth control” itself—only its failure can lead to children. The only “choice” is in the user’s will to prevent God’s working, not in the medical technology. Logically, it follows that contraception goes with abortion, since it is the ultimate preventer and silencer of babies. They have the same goal, though one seeks to prevent children before or right after conception, and the other after a baby has grown in the mother’s womb. “In either case, the method being used is supposed to make it possible to have marital relations without a baby being the result.”²⁸ Both contraception and abortion assert the priority of sexual pleasure and man’s will and devalue children and God’s creative activity. They are a poor and negative confession of life itself.

Assuming the Right to Choose

The fundamental question is: does God have the right to choose children or does man? The supposed inalienable right to plan the number and spacing of children underlies modern thinking. Those couples who are not blessed with children as they wish, realize the futility of choosing or controlling life. Only a blessed woman is able to “plan” a family with any accuracy, but only by choosing to prevent children by default and then choosing not to prevent at times. This is not changing the “spacing” of children, as if a conception date can be slid back with a rain check. It is a “no,” followed by God’s own action. “Fertility” is not a natural, biological capability to create humans apart from God’s will. The right to predetermine one’s family is not given by God, as often shown by experience, leading to much heartache in some cases. But duplicitous language causes moderns to presume too much.

Likewise, the right of sexual pleasure without the possibility of children is not given by God, hence the quandary people find themselves in. Sex and children go together—man with all his technology still cannot separate these or completely remove the blessing of fruitfulness. God meant for them to be combined within marriage. Martin Luther, born over 500 years ago, had to deal with people avoiding children too:

²⁸ “Is Contraception the Cause of Abortion,” *Pro-Life Bulletin Board*, vol 12, No 12, Oct 2005 (American Life League).

For this word which God speaks, “Be fruitful and multiply,” is not a command. It is more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance [*werck*] which is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore. Rather, it is just as necessary as the fact that I am a man, and more necessary than sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, and emptying the bowels and bladder. It is a nature and disposition just as innate as the organs involved in it. Therefore, just as God does not command anyone to be a man or woman but created them the way they have to be, so he does not command them to multiply but creates them so they have to multiply. And wherever men try to resist this, it remains irresistible nonetheless and goes its way through fornication, adultery, and secret sins, for this is a matter of nature and not of choice. . . . For the Word of God which created you and said, “Be fruitful and multiply,” abides and rules within you; you can by no means ignore it, or you will be bound to commit heinous sins without end.²⁹

Luther stressed God’s design and ever present work in begetting children. Child prevention of any sort resists this. Luther predicted the futility in resisting our nature and the advance to even greater sins.³⁰

It is not surprising that some advocate the killing of infants even after their birth—how could the intent to relieve the burden of children stop at murderous abortion?³¹ This is the form of “abortion” that Christians were surrounded with in the early church. How will the church of today confront the real question? Are children a burden and severe choke on prosperity or a valuable blessing and divine work?

²⁹*The Estate of Marriage* (1522), LW 45:18-19.

³⁰Procreation, after the fall, is no longer an unqualified blessing. “Thus the power of procreation remained in the human race, but very much debased and even completely overwhelmed by the leprosy of lust, so that procreation is only slightly more moderate than that of the brutes. Added to this are the perils of pregnancy and of birth, the difficulty of feeding the offspring, and other endless evils, all of which point out to us the enormity of original sin. Therefore the blessing, which remains till now in nature, as it were, *a cursed and debased blessing* if you compare it to the first one; nevertheless, God established it and preserves it. So let us gratefully acknowledge this *‘marred blessing.’*” *Lectures on Genesis*, comment on verse 1:28, LW 1:71 [emphasis added].

³¹Princeton ethics professor Peter Singer states: “I use the term ‘person’ to refer to a being who is capable of anticipating the future, of having wants and desires for the future. As I have said in answer to the previous question, I think that it is generally a greater wrong to kill such a being than it is to kill a being that has no sense of existing over time. Newborn human babies have no sense of their own existence over time. So *killing a newborn baby is never equivalent to killing a person, that is, a being who wants to go on living.* That doesn’t mean that it is not almost always a terrible thing to do. It is, but that is because most infants are loved and cherished by their parents, and to kill an infant is usually to do a great wrong to its parents. Sometimes, perhaps because the baby has a serious disability, parents think it better that their newborn infant should die. Many doctors will accept their wishes, to the extent of not giving the baby life-supporting medical treatment. That will often ensure that the baby dies. My view is different from this, *only to the extent that if a decision is taken, by the parents and doctors, that it is better that a baby should die, I believe it should be possible to carry out that decision, not only by withholding or withdrawing life-support—which can lead to the baby dying slowly from dehydration or from an infection—but also by taking active steps to end the baby’s life swiftly and humanely.*” “Frequently Asked Questions,” <http://www.princeton.edu/~psinger/faq.html> [emphasis added]. A book of his writings is entitled *Unsanctifying Human Life: Essays on Ethics*.

Duplicitous Words

“Family planning” is a misleading and deceptive phrase. In current thought, to not use contraception is not to ‘plan’—to be thoughtless or careless. The acceptance of this terminology is prevalent. The 1996 Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s Committee of Theology and Church Relations’ (CTCR) document, *Christians and Procreative Choices: How do God’s Chosen Choose?*, shows this. In reality, we have no choices to choose from. Babies are not picked out of a buffet line like fried chicken. Life requires a miracle—one that transcends male and female and comes from God Himself. Barren couples may not choose to conceive in sexual union, no matter how much they will to conceive. Parents may not choose the sex or health of their child or even how long the child lives. To imply choice and accept it as a moral right is simply dishonest. Man is not God and cannot create life.

God has appointed certain means for the conception and birth of children. A single person alone cannot conceive, no matter what choice is made. The only choice that can be made is to prevent a child—the natural working of God in the coming together of male and female. The word “choice” implies alternatives, whereas “birth control” only allows people to frustrate God’s normal working within sex. No one may “choose” to be pregnant. God’s finger is required to spark the miracle of life, so “family planning” and the right of choice are logically incoherent.³² The choice of having sex (naturally linked with children)—is the only choice that people have to make. Within marriage, intercourse is not a God-given choice—it is a marital duty.³³ Biblically speaking, the human choice is either marriage with the potential for children or single, chaste, and childless. The Scriptures recognize only one valid, infallible choice to be without children, but it requires the divine gift of celibacy (I Cor. 7:6-7). We are created to be married and God makes mankind fruitful. There is no safe way around this will of God. It is “truly a divine ordinance” which “cannot be removed by statutes or vows” (Ap 23, 7).

³²Jer. 1:5: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

³³“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (I Cor. 7:3-5).

“Apart from openness to children, sexual relationships ‘become a profound form of play, undertaken for the joy of the thing alone.’”³⁴ Sex, theoretically closed off to children, is what “birth control” promises. God intended sex to occur in marriage and for it to be the sole means of producing new life. The spread of contraception is a major contributing factor to the disintegration of the family in society at large. Marriage without the blessings and trials of children is far weaker than marriage with these crosses. Maybe God was not cursing us after all by linking sex and children.³⁵ Without children born and cared for, there will be no people and no church—which God graciously will not allow to happen.

If successful, “birth control” only prevents life from starting. The presumption of “choice” in family planning is to arrogate the position of God. We cannot be “good stewards” of fertility, since creating life is entirely God’s work. We have dominion over the earth and animals, but not life—that is the Lord’s prerogative. The use of contraception (that which works against the conception of a human being) impedes the only way humans have been given to produce new life. “Birth control” seemingly empowers the individual by removing the decision from God’s hand and always answers “no” to God’s work. It allows no choice, only a failure in its intended purpose would allow life to occur. A flawed ideology does not have to end in murder to be wrong.

How We Speak of Children

Many things prevent birth according to Planned Parenthood literature: oral and anal sex acts qualify as “birth control.” Also, emergency contraceptives are listed which are actually abortifacients. Though classified as contraception, they (i.e., RU-486 or Plan B) actually cause abortion. None of these things should be condoned by a Christian.

The Roman church allows certain methods to prevent children collectively called “Natural Family Planning” (NFP). It has some popularity among conservative protestants too. While it

³⁴CTCR, *Christians and Procreative Choices*, 24.

³⁵There has been a loss of defined gender roles and family structure. “We enjoy freedom from hordes of children, but we are constrained even more by the few we have.” Matzko McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home: A Theology of the Household* (London: SCM Press, 2001; 2nd ed., 2004), 232. “Children too, it is agreed, are a bond between the parents—which explains why childless unions are more likely to be dissolved.” Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* 8:12, quoted in: Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 19.

doesn't use technology to prevent children, it is "morality by technicality." It is theologically weak and directly contradicts Scripture in a way other contraceptives do not. By various measurements and charts, the wife's fertile period is detected and intercourse is avoided by abstaining during that time. However, Scripture allows only one reason to not join together: prayer and only for a time (I Cor. 7:3-5). It turns the marital duty into something to be avoided, contrary to God's one flesh union. Rome defines marriage and its constitutive act in terms of procreation. But the marriage union is hurt and the two are allowed to be divided by NFP, making a purpose (procreation) higher than the intrinsic one flesh unity God creates. It allows for a mini-monastic period which sanctifies celibacy in marriage to avoid God's creative work.³⁶ NFP puts clinical preconditions on the marital act, which turns it into more of a scientific procedure, than a "knowing" and union. It is "open to life" only technically concerning the sexual act, but devalues marriage by negating the marital duty.

The only real "choice" and one that is perfect in preventing children is abstinence outside of marriage. But as a Planned Parenthood brochure puts it, it has the disadvantage that "people may find it difficult to abstain for long periods of time."³⁷ Preventing birth is quite easy—but its corresponding lack of sexual satisfaction makes it undesirable. God's work, including marriage, cannot be easily avoided.

Sexual pleasure for all is not a God-given inalienable right. God intended life (children) and sexual pleasure to go together. But today, sexual gratification when and with whom one desires is considered a right.³⁸ Contraception provides the "promise of sex without tears and

³⁶It is even suggested to be an "unbloody sacrifice," as if not knowing one's spouse and pretending to be single is pleasing to God. Simcha Fisher, *The Sinner's Guide to Natural Family Planning* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor), 2014), 77. The fact that some people think they are more righteous by avoiding children in such a burdensome and sacrificial way is truly pharisaical and of the Anti-Christ. It is a self-chosen cross, contrary the basic ordering of God within marriage.

³⁷*Facts about Birth Control*, 3.

³⁸Supposedly inherent freedoms are spelled out in various sexual bills of rights. "8. The recognition by society that every person, partnered or unpartnered, has the right to the pursuit of a satisfying consensual sociosexual life free from political, legal or *religious interference* and that there need to be mechanisms in society where the opportunities of sociosexual activities are available to the following: disabled persons; chronically ill persons; those incarcerated in prisons, hospitals or institutions; those disadvantaged because of age, lack of physical attractiveness, or lack of social skills; and the poor and the lonely." "Basic Sexual Rights," The Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, <http://www.iashs.edu/rights.html> [emphasis added]. Does this advocate a socialistic redistribution of sexual pleasure? Only in God's institution of marriage can man and women enjoy each other without immorality.

consequences,” so it can mean nothing at all.³⁹ “Mrs. Sanger intended birth control not simply to reduce the suffering of the poor and the number of the unfit [eugenics], but also to increase the quantity and quality of sexual relationships.”⁴⁰

It might not be an exaggeration to say that Sanger has felled the institution of marriage in the minds of most Americans. Sex and children have been irrevocably severed from marriage by her efforts, turning it into a pure romantic relationship. The end result is found in the homosexual “marriage,” based solely on love without possibility of conception. The best counter to it, that it is “against nature,” has already been defeated in separating nature (children) from heterosexual relationships by contraception (Rom. 1:26-27).⁴¹ Indeed, due to contraceptive assumptions and practices, even marriage for heterosexuals is often defined “without any inherent connections to bodily union or family life.”⁴² But children do not conflict with the marital act. In fact, the former does not occur without the latter, excepting significant medical intervention. Without allowing the possibility of children, intercourse is turned into meaningless gratification, while understanding that God brings life through it adds a profundity that actually enhances the God-given sexual act. Sex, as God intended for marriage, is the deepest act of giving, to spouse and later to child, if God so blesses. Unity leads to multiplicity in God’s hand.

³⁹One young woman once described sex with strangers as meaningful as shaking hands.

⁴⁰Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 45, 69. In Sanger’s own words: “Sterilization is a health measure, a preventive health measure which can avert many of the tragedies of our families. Few people would deliberately encourage the reproduction of such unfortunates as now fill our hospitals and institutions. Yet it is as bad to permit their reproduction by our indifference or neglect of positive preventive measures. It should be the duty of government not only to supply the facilities which will enable these unfortunates to be sterilized, but to protect them afterwards.” “Sterilization: A Modern Medical Program for Health and Human Welfare,” (unpublished paper, 1951; <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/webedition/app/documents/show.php?sangerDoc=239501.xml>). “The United States was the first country to concertedly undertake compulsory sterilization programs for the purpose of eugenics. The principal targets of the American program were the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill, but also targeted under many state laws were the deaf, the blind, people with epilepsy, and the physically deformed. . . . Native Americans, as well as African-American women were sterilized against their will in many states, often without their knowledge while they were in a hospital for other reasons (e.g. childbirth). . . . In the end, over 65,000 individuals [including children in the state’s care] were sterilized in 33 states [Nebraska: 1917-1963] under state compulsory sterilization programs in the United States [from 1907-1981].” “Compulsory sterilization,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Compulsory_sterilization&oldid=626046519 (accessed September 27, 2014). Lutz Kaelber, “Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States: Nebraska,” <http://www.uvm.edu/~lkaelber/eugenics/NE/NE.html>.

⁴¹“In short, the modern home has been freed from the social and economic dominance of family and its economic and political authority. The household is no longer a necessary conveyance of land, wealth, and social function. It has been freed, so we moderns believe, for a reformation of love.” McCarthy, *Sex and Love in the Home*, 21.

⁴²Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense*. (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 8.

How We Speak of Children Not Intended

The terminology of “unwanted child” is problematic.

Contraceptives did not prevent or cure diseases, the result in the Stone case⁴³ represented an important turning point in the medicalization of birth control: The mental sufficiency, family size, and relative poverty of generally healthy people all instantly became the province of the physician and the property of his clinical judgment. As a consequence, the re-interpretation of child-bearing also began, with the logically certain result that children—particularly “unwanted” children—could be reclassified as either a disease or its most dysgenic function.⁴⁴

Do the desires or affections of parents determine the value of life? No, the worth of life is not based on the feelings of others, any more than taking one’s own life through suicide is justifiable because it is not wanted.⁴⁵

This is where abortion and contraception originate and lead: the devaluation of children created by God and redeemed by Christ. Neither is entirely welcoming.⁴⁶ Christians who adamantly oppose abortion but use contraception are in a predicament when it fails.⁴⁷ What is the result? This child is often called an “accident” and is raised, but perhaps grudgingly, since the next logical step, murder, is decidedly wrong. The overriding thought is not what a precious gift the child is, but possible disappointment over the failure of child preventing technology. Children have become a paradox to the modern Christian: they are good in theory, but only very selectively “good” in their own personal lives. What other blessings do most Christians actively promote and confess publicly, but carefully plan to avoid privately the majority of the time?

Do parents who willingly prevent children and those who abort children see life in a similar light? Under God’s law, which only accuses sinners, no loophole is made for Christians who

⁴³In 1936 Dr. Hannah Stone won a court case concerning her reception of contraceptive devices from overseas (with Sanger’s involvement). In the process part of the federal Comstock Act, which forbade the transport of child prevention materials, was evaded by the medical loophole. It was reasoned that these devices could save life, not just prevent it.

⁴⁴Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 12.

⁴⁵Our worth and dignity comes from being made in the image of God. This is true even after the fall into sin: “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind” (Gen. 9:6).

⁴⁶“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me” (Mark 9:37).

⁴⁷“Half of pregnancies among American women are unintended, and four in 10 of these are terminated by abortion.” “Induced Abortion in the United States” (July 2014), http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html

are inconsistent in their values. But in Christ's forgiveness, weakness and sins of ignorance are covered by Christ's precious blood. Even parents who have many children sin against God's law by not always rejoicing in God's gift of life (in their hearts). It is a sin to grumble about God's blessings and not love one's neighbor. Only a hypocrite would try to justify his actions and will as being truly holy or pure. One's justification must only come from Christ and His holy works. It cannot be said that contraceptive materials are evil themselves. Only people sin and are guilty before God. Is a child really an evil to be prevented and not desired, but not to be killed after conception? May God cure our schizophrenic thinking and not let us speak of children as both "good" and "evil."

Superficial Reasons Behind a Serious Matter

What reasons do people have for preventing children? Very rarely is health, in the true sense, a factor. Children do not usually harm a mother's health, especially in this age of advanced medical technology. A large family may be tiring and difficult to manage, but it is not detrimental to health. Mental health often is inferred, though this cannot be mathematically measured. Blessings do not always make life easier, but they do make it better. Besides reasons of comfort, the primary motive for preventing children is economic.⁴⁸ Many couples' income, life style, occupations, and standard of living are directly dependent on not having children. It is not the cost of feeding and clothing children that is most troublesome—it is maintaining an expected style of living for parents and children alike.⁴⁹ The expectations of success in our developed and affluent society are based on having few to no children. It is not the actual cost of children that burdens potential parents, but other worldly concerns that pull greater on their finite resources. To have and care for a large family means being counter-cultural in almost all areas of life.

⁴⁸Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 13, 19.

⁴⁹"But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (I Tim. 6:8). Giving children the essentials is not usually the overwhelming economic concern. Outfitting children with the latest technology, hip clothes, and an expensive education is prohibitive.

Children as Good Works

The underlying cause of the popular acceptance of contraception and abortion is pure selfishness and sin. Abortion advocates say: “We think that having an abortion is more moral than bringing an unwanted child into the world.” What confession to the world does child prevention give concerning children?

“The development of the Pill (a powerful drug whose contraindications required that it become something of an anomaly: a medication prescribed for perfectly healthy people) fueled a rapid expansion of the field of contraception as a medical practice.” “Consider that women take a powerful drug, the Pill, not to cure a disease, but to prevent babies, a natural, physiological occurrence.” In the early 1960’s, before the pill was developed, an activist wrote: “We have yet to beat our drums for birth control the way we beat them for polio vaccine, we are still unable to put babies in the class of dangerous epidemics, though this is the exact truth.” “Pregnancy may be defined as a disease . . . and treated by evacuation of the uterine contents.”⁵⁰ Here is the ideological root of contraceptives—the same hatred of children that led to abortion.

The reasoning of most modern Christians regarding contraception is quite hazy. According to the CTCR, “But in the absence of Scriptural prohibition, there need be no objection to contraception within a marital union which is, as a whole, fruitful.”⁵¹ This is not sound biblical interpretation. Does the Bible forbid every variation of an immoral activity? Do we expect it to forbid a 20th century invention (safe, easy contraception) when it was written so long ago? No, Scripture does not spell out every detail of God’s law in modern terminology, but the tenor of Scripture and the importance of children is clear. The root of this sloppiness is that we have been conditioned to talk only euphemistically about these issues as Sanger taught us, so that we also think as she advocated. We have swallowed the lie that “the most serious evil of our times is that of encouraging the bringing into the world of large families. The most immoral practice of the day is breeding too many children.”⁵²

⁵⁰Marshall and Donovan, *Blessed are the Barren*, 70, 181, 182.

⁵¹CTCR, *Christians and Procreative Choices*, 25.

⁵²From the chapter “The Wickedness of Creating Large Families,” in Margret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (New York: Brentano’s, 1920; <http://www.bartleby.com/1013/5.html>).

“But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety” (I Tim. 2:15). Having children does not save in regard to sin, faith in Christ does. But raising and disciplining little ones in a godly way saves mothers (and diligent fathers) from the worst of their own sinful nature. It restricts the flesh and is the true self-mortification God desires for women.⁵³ It not self-chosen or pompous like the “good works” man often volunteers to do. “Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (I Tim. 5:14). To produce children is not that difficult, but caring for them in Christ’s love, making them Christian, and providing for their needs is a great challenge for sinners. Faith sees children not as a curse, which they appear to be to fleshly reason, but as creations of God. Caring for them becomes the most holy earthly activity that can be done. The fact that more people are required for church growth has escaped many Christians. But witnessing about Jesus to strangers, in contrast to having children, permits lengthy and leisurely breaks from one’s “good works” and expanding God’s kingdom.⁵⁴

We must focus on the fundamental questions: Does contraception speak of the value, blessing, and gift of life in light of the holocaust occurring today in abortion?⁵⁵ How does it reflect on the divine gift of sex? Who ultimately makes babies and gives daily bread? These are the theological questions the Bible does answer.

The Cure: Trust in God’s Goodness

The problem of contraception will not be solved by saying it is evil and condemning it—even Christians have been blinded in this matter. The Roman Catholic position illustrates the futility of making a binding law without changing people’s hearts and understanding.⁵⁶ A more helpful

⁵³ “Until women had access to safe and effective contraception that let them control when to bear children and how many to have, there was only so far they could go in reorganizing their lives and their marriages.” Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 253.

⁵⁴ “High fertility is a sign of the vital driving force of a country, of a civilization, of a large social group of people, of a social class. Low fertility precedes decadence and death of that community.” Bertolo, *The Imminent Collapse of America and of the Whole Western Civilization*, 2. It is a gradual, voluntary genocide.

⁵⁵ Estimates by the Guttmacher Institute put the total number of babies aborted in the U.S. at over 57 million.

⁵⁶ “The teaching of the Church regarding the proper regulation of birth is a promulgation of the law of God Himself. And yet there is no doubt that to many it will appear not merely difficult but even impossible to observe.

stance is to show the true nature of it and what kind of thinking lies behind its use. In contrast to a legalistic denial of contraception, we must promote the great blessing of children—instead of the avoidance of them. We should want more people forgiven by Christ, if we love the Gospel, and teaching them from birth is the most orthodox way to increase church membership. There are no adults who were not first helpless babies. Christians should view “procreation as an act of cocreation and coredemption with God.”⁵⁷ The answer is not to force children on people, but to make them want and desire them, because they are divinely created by our Father. We cannot cultivate faith in God’s providence by intimidation or God’s holy law, but only by God’s gracious promises founded on Christ. Trust in a gracious and good God is indispensable for viewing all life as a blessing from the Lord.⁵⁸

Most practical reasons for not having children expose a lack of trust in the Lord. According to Luther, in trying to avoid children “you are indicting your unbelief by distrusting God’s goodness, and you are bringing greater misery upon yourself by disparaging God’s blessing. For if you had trust in God’s grace and promises, you would undoubtedly be supported. But because you do not hope in the Lord, you will never prosper.”⁵⁹ Either God makes children and will provide for them, or God is not strictly the good Father. Lack of money, patience, time, or energy may be more appropriately labeled personal failings or a lack of faith in God. The answer to sin is Christ’s “yes.” He who rose for our justification has promised to feed and clothe us (Luke 12:22-26).

While health concerns of the mother are real, they are also not a reason to distrust God. Luther speaks stern words which highlight the gracious will of God in this fallen world with much suffering: “And even if [women] bear themselves weary—or ultimately bear themselves

Now it is true that like all good things which are outstanding for their nobility and for the benefits which they confer on men, so this law demands from individual men and women, from families and from human society, a resolute purpose and great endurance.” Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* of Paul VI (1968), 20.

⁵⁷Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract*, 126.

⁵⁸Luther states: “To sum up the matter: whoever finds himself unsuited to the celibate life should see to it right away that he has something to do and work at; then let him strike out in God’s name and get married. A young man should marry at the age of twenty at the latest, a young women at fifteen to eighteen; that’s when they are still in good health and best suited for marriage. *Let God worry about how they and their children are to be fed. God makes children; he will surely also feed them. Should he fail to exalt you and them on earth, then take satisfactions in the fact that he has granted you a Christian marriage, and know that he will exalt you there; and be thankful to him for his gifts and favors.*” *The Estate of Marriage* (1522), LW 45:48-49 [emphasis added].

⁵⁹*Lectures on Genesis*, LW 5:332.

out—that does not hurt. Let them bear themselves out. This is the purpose for which they exist.” These words were spoken at a time when childbirth was commonly a matter of life and death for the mother:

This is also how to comfort and encourage a woman in the pangs of childbirth: . . . remember you are a woman, and that this work of God in you is pleasing to him. Trust joyfully in his will, and let him have his way with you. With all your might bring forth the child. Should it mean your death, then depart happily, for you will die in a noble deed and in subservience to God. If you were not a woman you should now wish to be one for the sake of this very work alone, that you might gloriously suffer and even die in the performance of God’s work and will. For here you have the word of God, who so created you and implanted within you this extremity.⁶⁰

Luther’s words should shock and humble us, but also encourage us to accept God’s work in faith, knowing that in Christ all spiritual blessings are ours. With a different understanding, we should pray for what World Contraception Day advocates: “a vision for a world where every pregnancy is wanted,” since life is solely God’s glorious work.

Conclusion

A more holistic view of Marriage, sex, and babies, and their inseparable bond, is needed. Only a positive, truthful message will overcome man’s self-bent will and a society antithetical to children. Consumerism, a lack of financial discipline, and comfort-seeking laziness all militate against allowing God to work unhindered in marriage. Only when Christians see the full picture of the importance of life, understand the Gospel well, and trust in God, can they see which way God’s Word guides them.

God’s holy law should not be used to disrespect or bully a spouse in marriage. We are called to love and bear with the weaknesses of our spouses, especially wives (I Pet. 3:7). We can confess and hold the truth, while being unable to act on it. Only promises can change the heart, not law. Law can actually be misused to drive the weak in faith away from Christ and God’s generous blessings.

Above all, faith bestowed by the Spirit is most helpful to see every child as a blessing, not

⁶⁰*The Estate of Marriage* (1522), LW 45:46, 40.

just the ones desired. Without a clearly positive and consistent confession of children and human life in general, the anti-abortion rhetoric of Christians is somewhat hollow. But this will not be easy—a cross is death to the flesh, but life to God. May God clear our cloudy and darkened understanding on this important issue, so we may trust in Him, His choices, and His fatherly goodness.