

Honored Brethren and Co-workers in Christ,

BIRTH CONTROL AND ABORTION: PRESENT TRENDS IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE is the subject which has been assigned to me about a year ago, if not longer. It is an interesting subject to study. As one delves into it, an awesomeness touches you because of the many problems that introduce themselves, problems which most likely will be experienced by the members of our flocks. I can see the need for this paper in that general discussion, over a cup of coffee, cannot begin to touch on the many facets dealing with the privileges and responsibilities of marriage, with the sanctity of life and the legal destruction of life, with the rights of mothers at the expense of the right to live of an unborn child. Furthermore, the alleged problems, such as overpopulation, etc. which have been the basis for abortion legislation, seem to command one's attention if for no other reason, to have the opportunity to personally evaluate the problems.

The problems that do introduce themselves are nothing new. They are as old as sin. Medical research in biological reproduction along with the introduction of new methods to avoid conception suggests that Satan has introduced new avenues of mischief to confuse the hearts of God's people, along with bringing to ruin large segments of society in general.

We will attempt to touch on the different aspects of birth control which includes family planning and the destruction of the fetus when deemed necessary or expedient. We want to do this in the light of God's Word which must at all times be our guide. Drawing our perspective from the cross, the empty tomb of Christ, and heaven itself, it is our hope and prayer that this paper will assist you in becoming aware of the different developments in thought, law and medicine, the blessings and/or problems they introduce, and finally assist you in shepherding your flock through preaching and counselling in such subjects with which this paper deals.

BIRTH CONTROL AND ABORTION: PRESENT TRENDS IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

When I sat in my English class while attending a university course, the lady instructor introduced what she described as a most delicate but practical matter; namely, the control of anxiety by means of copulation with the opposite sex. She went on to say with emphasis that in addition to discretion, it was most practical to practice birth control with the simple purchase of a condom at the local pharmacy.

The Lord advises youth to practice birth control as well. He understands better than all of us what it means to be healthy, strong, virile at an age of development that provokes one's curiosity to an extreme degree. At no time, however, did the Lord advocate a permissive behavior in order to overcome the problem. The command is clearly expressed, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." It is written in Scripture, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart," 2 Ti. 2:22. Knowing the evil nature of the human heart, we can do no less than what Jesus admonishes us to do: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Mt. 26:41.

Birth control, however, is not limited to the chastity of youth in our society. The interest expressed today for controlling birth arises out of a number of social problems with which the world is unable to cope.

One of those problems which many knowledgeable men feel is overpopulation. Dr. Paul Ehrlich, author of the book "The Population Bomb," is very sensitive to overpopulation. The book commands your attention throughout. There are truths which he introduces which cannot be ignored by responsible men who are concerned about their neighbor's welfare. His first chapter introduces the problem in a dramatic way. Permit me to share it with you.

"I have understood the population explosion intellectually for a long time. I came to understand it emotionally one stinking hot night in Delhi a couple of years ago. My wife and daughter and I were returning to our hotel in an ancient taxi. The seats were hopping with fleas. The only functional gear was third. As we crawled through the city, we entered a crowded slum area. The temperature was well over 100, and the air was a haze of dust and smoke. The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people. As we moved slowly through the mob, hand horn squawking, the dust, noise, heat, and cooking fires gave the scene a hellish aspect. Would we ever get to our hotel? All three of us were, frankly, frightened. It seemed that anything could happen - but, of course, nothing did. Old India hands will laugh at our reaction. We were just overprivileged tourists, unaccustomed to the sights and sounds

of India. Perhaps, but since that night I've known the feel of overpopulation." P. 15.

There is no need to support Dr. Ehrlich's report. It is factual. But for added interest, Mr. Theo. Sauer wrote enroute to Africa this note:

"Nairobi sure has changed from a little town-like city to a large lovely place. We especially appreciate it here after what we saw in Bombay. So many poor people. Just masses of people all over."

In India alone, which is the 2nd largest country in the world for population, China being first, one million people are added to their total population figures per month. Possibly there are those of us who cannot become emotionally moved because of the desperate and dismal dilemma of overcrowded India, but anyone who has Jesus Christ as Savior must feel a pain in their heart for those precious souls we are not reaching with the Gospel of Jesus.

In the article "How Many Babies is too Many?" (Newsweek, 1962), we are warned:

"The current rate of growth, continued in 600 years, would leave every inhabitant of the world with only 1 square yard to live on. By the year 3500, the weight of human bodies on the earth's surface would equal the weight of the world itself. By the year 6000, the solid mass of humanity would be expanding outward into space at the speed of light. 'The world has cancer,' a top Rockefeller Foundation official has said, 'and that cancer cell is man.'"

Rushdoony reports other statements such as -

London. (UPI) Jot down on the calendars for Nov. 13, 2026: Doomsday.

And don't plan on heading for the hills then. An American scientist says there won't be any room.

Dr. Robert White-Stevens, an American expert on fertilizers and insecticides, predicted here yesterday that, at present growth rates, the world by Nov. 13, 2026, will no longer be able to feed its population; and will be stumbling all over itself.

Dr. Paul Ehrlich is, indeed, a prophet of doom that paints a picture so bleak for the future that if made into a movie it would possibly receive an "X" rating. But are the prophets of doom like Ehrlich correct in every sense of the word? Rousas J. Rushdoony does not think so in his book titled, "The Myth of Over-Population." In defining overpopulation, Rushdoon says that it "is an imbalance between the number of people living and their food supply, which results in hunger and even famine because the available production of food cannot match the population's needs." P. 1. On the basis of this definition, he points to all the famines this world has experienced both past and present as times and eras in which the world has known "overpopulation."

An article in the Green Bay-Press Gazette titled "The Population Explosion - Is It More Than Just Explosive Rhetoric?" by Thomas C. Jermann, dated March 7, 1971, concurs with Rushdoony that too much attention has been given to the "overpopulation drama. Jermann points out that the birth rate in the U.S.A. has been declining since 1957 to the present date. "The birth rate has declined every year from a high of 25.3 per 1,000 in 1957 to a low of 17.4 in 1968. The latter figure is lowest in U.S. history."

Reduced birth rate is not only experienced in the United States, but elsewhere in our world.

"In East Europe also, we are told there is a declining population. In Romania, the declining birth rate led officials to decree that abortions, previously promoted, be illegal, and, within a year, officials were claiming a "baby boom."

Although there is a birth rate decline, it does not mean that there is a population decline. The broad base of humanity which now inhabits the world is responsible for an ever-expanding population figure. If we accept the definition of overpopulation as Rushdoony gives it to us, we have to admit that there is an overpopulation problem in certain areas of our world. The problem of overpopulation then would be local rather than universal. Knowledgeable people state, however, that if we do not want to admit the problem today, it will be only a matter of time before this problem is heaped upon us in such a way that we will be beyond the point of no return. Pollution is also pointed to as an excrement of overpopulation. We will be swallowed up in our own waste eventually. We are warned of intense civil strife in areas of high density population which will affect country after country.

Scare tactics on the basis of numbers, however, will soon lose its sharp edge. The problems such as pollution and civil peace along with any other problem will still be before us. These problems will have to be solved on the basis of a moral and spiritual issue, not on scare tactics basis using numbers.

Because of the fear of having too many people for our world, science has introduced solutions to curb the population growth. If they can encourage people to have no more than two children each, they will have accomplished what the conservative men in science wish to accomplish; namely, "zero growth" population rate. In order to accomplish their goal which they feel is the salvation of the world, certain devices, pills, and theories have been introduced to assist the control of births as well as to avoid the possible conceptions.

Methods of birth control are nothing new. They have been practiced throughout the ages. The most common methods employed have been infanticide, sterilization, coitus interruptus, abstinence, and abortion. And to this have been added in our day the various contraceptive devices by which conception is prevented. Rehwinkle in his book "Planned Parenthood" remarks that -

"From an inscription discovered it was found that the Greeks were familiar with contraceptive drugs as early as 100 B.C. and from other sources we know that as early as the 2nd century after Christ mechanical contraceptive devices for women were used." P. 16

Infanticide was well known in the ancient world. We note that it was practiced in Egypt to curb the number of births among the Israelites in Exodus 1:15 at which time God spared Moses that He might raise him up to be a leader among his people. The Greeks and Romans are known to practice infanticide in order to develop a strong people as well as reduce the problems of overpopulation. God forbade infanticide in Leviticus 18:21.

Sterilization is another age-old practice which is exercised only among the male population by means of castration. The reasons for this practice were varied. Today sterilization is not quite so crude and it is also extended so as to include the female. There is given legal sanction to sterilization of such persons who are mentally feeble, insane, and epileptic. This is for all the states of our country except one. The male which was sterilized during biblical times was referred to as an eunuch. According to Deuteronomy 23:1, a eunuch was excluded from the congregation of the Lord. Sterilization also excluded the sons of Levi from the priesthood whereas all other deformities such as blindness, lameness, etc. did not. God looked upon sterilization with disfavor. However, we would want to evaluate this in the light of passage Matthew 19:12 which reads: "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

Coitus interruptus is the expression used when speaking of Onan. Although God looked upon Onan with disfavor it was not because of the method employed, but the reason for which he refused raising up seed upon his brother. For all practical reasons it would have to be a method that would be termed as unnatural and by all means a most ineffective one as history itself reveals.

Abstinence, and this is understood within the framework of marriage, is to be favored only in certain instances such as Paul mentions in 1 Co. 7:5:

"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

The Rhythm Method of which the Roman Catholic Church makes much of is really not at all suggested in the Scripture but in the very reverse. Bruce Waltke in "Christianity Today" Nov. 8, 1968, states:

"Sexual intercourse was to be forgone by women only during their ritual uncleanness occasioned by menstruation. (Lev. 15:19-28; 18:19; 20:18) and childbirth (Lev. 12:1-8), and by men only for religious reasons (Exod. 19:15; 1 Sam. 21:4,5). On the basis of these passages, some have contended that continence should be practiced for birth control. But instead of limiting birth, these restrictions tend to increase fertility. Herman Wouk, in This Is My God, says: "The main practical result of this abstinence after the menses is that they rejoin at the time when the wife is most likely to conceive. It is the exact opposite of the rhythm system of birth control."

Contraceptives. Because of man's knowledge of the reproductive system, certain methods have been introduced to prevent conception. In no wise can this be looked upon as eliminating a human life, nor is it a form of abortion. A contraceptive can take the form of a device known as a diaphragm for which females are to be fitted by a qualified physician. Other than this there are jellies, foams, and douches which are available but not nearly so popular.

Oral contraceptives are usually in the form of a pill which introduces a hormone or hormones into the female to stop ovulation; and are usually called non-ovulatory medications. They are strongly recommended by physicians for a number of reasons other than for the purpose of preventing conception alone. There are side affects that are bothersome for some women and which in a few cases can have unfortunate results. It is for this reason that a number of debates are being constantly waged. The conservative physician states, however, that it will be several generations from now before we will know the results of the pill.

Upon investigation I learned that another pill is already developed that is not a non-ovulatory medication, but in reality is to serve as an agent to cause abortion for women who have missed their menstrual period. It is not marketed at this time. Its placement in pharmacies is pending legislation to permit such medication to be placed into pharmacies throughout the United States. For your interest, it is manufactured by the Upjohn Chemical Corporation, of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

This now leads us to the last method of birth control; namely, ABORTION. The medical definition of abortion is noted in the "An American Textbook of Obstetrics for Practitioners and Students":

"By abortion "in a general sense is meant the interruption and termination of pregnancy by the expulsion of the ovum before the end of the 28th week or 7th lunar month of gestation."

Rehwinkle in Planned Parenthood defines the various kinds of abortion in a most concise way:

Embryonic abortion = that which occurs before the fourth month.

Fetal abortion = that which takes place after the fourth month.

Spontaneous abortion = miscarriage or premature birth.

Therapeutic abortion = the removal of the unborn new life by competent physicians and in conformity with the existing laws of a state or country in order to save the life of the pregnant mother.

Criminal abortion = one which is produced voluntarily and intentionally in violation of the law in order to terminate an undesirable pregnancy by a married or unmarried woman.

We are all aware of the vast changes in laws dealing with the unborn child. Many of the stringent laws dealing with abortion have been liberalized or deleted entirely to the dismay of responsible citizens and God fearing people everywhere. To decide for a therapeutic abortion in order to save the life of the mother remains a difficult one to make.

There is only one instance in Scripture, insofar as I am able to determine, that a remark is made in reference to an abortion; namely, Exodus 21:22 which reads, "If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine."

According to this capital punishment was not imposed upon the guilty one who caused the miscarriage or abortion. From this verse there are those who are eager to say that the fetus has no soul, because capital punishment was not exercised, and, therefore, the practice of abortion is not in violation of the 5th commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." The miscarriage, however, in this particular case would have been by accident and not by intent, because a woman would have intervened between two quarelling men, which resulted in her injury and loss of the child she carried. To establish an arbitrary date at which time the soul is introduced into the fetus is simply to rationalize and thus justify a criminal, immoral act which if any one performs such will have to give an answer to God. The debate is going on to determine when the fetus is human. There are those who contend that life begins at the time the blood system develops, others when the nervous system develops, others when the child "quicken," as in the case of Wisconsin legislation. David in Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and sin did my mother conceive me." David acknowledges his responsibility before God even at the point of his conception. Animals, having no soul, are not responsible to God, but to man. Man with a living soul is responsible to God. Thus, if sin is a factor at the point of conception, then even the "zygote" is in need of a Savior, and the fetus is, indeed, a human being.