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"Vox Populi, Vox Dei" - A Discussion of Dissent Within the Modern Catholic Church

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Vox Populi, Vox Dei
A Discussion of Dissent Within the Modern American Catholic Church

Steven W. Suomi

Colby College, May, 1997

A Senior Honors Project Submitted to the Department of Religious Studies
"Vox Populi Vox Dei:"
("The Voice of the People is the Voice of God")

A Discussion of Dissent
Within the
Modern American Catholic Church

Steven W. Suomi
Colby College
May 1997

A Senior Honors Project Submitted to the
Department of Religious Studies
Submitted by Steven W. Suomi

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Introduction

"Christianity teaches only servitude and dependence. Its spirit is so favorable to tyranny that it always profits by such a regime. True Christians are made to be slaves and they know and they do not mind, this life counts far too little in their eyes."

-Jean Jacques Rousseau

"Vox populi, vox dei."
(The voice of the people is the voice of God.)

-Alauin
The Setting:

In the 1770's the territory that is now the United States was part of the then vast English empire. It was at this time when differing viewpoints on how America should be ruled began to surface with increasing frequency. Eventually these ideas led to action and the Americans started a successful revolution. Following the revolution, the United States was forged into a democratic nation where everyone's views could be voiced freely. Perhaps more importantly was that not only could these ideas be voiced freely, but supposedly, they would all be listened to. Because of this, the early leaders of this nation relied on point and counterpoint to make the rules and policies that made the United States what it is today. Differing ideas were essential to the construction of this country and are still essential in its day to day maintenance. Clearly, Americans have become enamored with the ability to disagree. These disagreements have served to form better ideas and situations within our country. Americans pride themselves on the fact that there are many views for each situation that arises. Through argument, Americans seek to arrive at effective solutions and informed opinions.

These are the ideals that make the presence of the Catholic church within the United States so interesting. Catholicism has had a relatively significant influence within the United States for a long time. What makes this strong influence strange is the fact that the conservative hierarchy of the church contends that most of the ideas mentioned above are not allowed within Catholicism. Church doctrine is not arrived at by point and counterpoint but is rather handed down from "on high". The American laity has a very minor influence on how the institutional church should be run or how it should think on a particular subject.
The conservative hierarchy seeks to present a unified front where everybody believes the same things. Unlike American secular culture, where argument is considered an effective tool in the discussion of controversial issues, the Church asserts that there is to be no argument. Catholics should put complete faith in their leaders. Far from being a democracy, the Church is a kind of dictatorship run by the Vatican. It is the Vatican and the pope that have the final say on doctrine. Despite what the masses may think, the Vatican has showed time and again that it will make final decisions based on what Vatican members think and not on how the laity may think.

The Problems of Co-Existence:

From these short explications of the two institutions, one can see the problem that arises for Americans within the church and the church within America. Catholics are not taught to think like Americans and Americans are not taught to think like Catholics. In fact, the political dimensions of the two institutions prove to be almost directly opposed. On the one side is the free thinking attitude of the American citizen, while on the other side there is the obedience expected of the laity by the Catholic hierarchy. Combine these two sides and the result is the American Catholic church and all of the problems that come with it. Most of these problems can be categorized under one main category entitled dissent. Dissent, as defined by Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, a prominent Catholic scholar, means "explicit theological expression of views that question or challenge some established Catholic teaching" (O'Brien Steinfels 1994, 9). This definition focuses only on the meaning of the word within the realm of the Catholic tradition. As a heading, dissent covers most of the issues that Catholicism struggles with everyday in the United States. Whether it is the celibate priesthood, the role of
communion, or women within the church, the conservative hierarchy faces a public that does not accept everything the Church teaches. Despite the assertion by the conservative hierarchy that all church teachings have validity "by virtue of divine assistance", Americans continue to publicly question the Church’s authority on numerous matters.

A Case Study:

It is this questioning that is to be the focus of this paper. Yet the extent of dissent in the American church is so vast that it would be virtually impossible to cover it all. Instead I have chosen to take one issue of dissent and focus on it as a case study for the larger examination of dissent. The issue that I have chosen as my case study is the problem with the ban on the use of artificial birth control by church members. This issue is appropriate for several reasons. First of all, it is an issue that has received a good deal of exposure due to the fact that the Catholic church is one of the last institutions to reject the validity of artificial contraception. This factor shows, once again, the dichotomy between the American church and the American state. Another reason that this issue is appropriate, is the fact that it remains official Church doctrine after so many priests, bishops, laity and non-Catholics, have privately and publicly disagreed with it. It is quite possibly the least followed major doctrine within the church today. If this doctrine is the least followed major doctrine, then *Humanae Vitae*, the definitive explanation of the doctrine, is the least followed major encyclical. During his study of the encyclical, Andrew Greeley noted, "It [*Humanae Vitae*] seems to have been the occasion of massive apostasy and for a notable decline in religious devotion and beliefs" (Curran 1992, 28).

Despite all of this dissension, *Humanae Vitae* still remains a steady bastion of a totalitarian structure. Should the church ever become a democracy, this bastion
would be one of the first doctrines to be taken apart by the majority of the Catholic laity. It clearly has gained the attention of a large section of the Catholic population. These reasons and more (see chapter six) make the issue of birth control a good one for examining dissent in the American church. The issue also brings up the question of whether democracy is possible or feasible in the Catholic church. Along the way there will be many points and counterpoints from both sides of the issue. The larger issue of dissent will fade into the background at times so that a true picture of the battle over artificial contraception may be given. A true picture is necessary to see clearly the direction of dissent within, not only the context of contraception, but all of the other issues as well. Chapter by chapter, a balanced and accurate view of the issue will be built. There are effective points on both sides and they will both be given some space within the following chapters. However the author does have certain opinions and biases regarding the issue and occasionally these do sneak out into the text.

The Chapters:

In chapter one, the issue of dissent is given a brief introduction. As I have stated earlier, the issue is really too large to deal with as a whole. This chapter will give the reader a basis of what is being dealt with. Especially important to this chapter will be the entity of the Catholic church within the United States. Because of the commonly held values and ideals of the American people, the Catholic institution has some inherent problems to deal with. Andrew Greeley remarked that "The more American the church becomes, the less Catholic it will be" (Greeley 1967, 20). This statement reflects the problem that the chapter focuses on. Many Americans have tried to experience the Catholic institution in the same way that they experience the secular institutions of the United States. The Catholic church is
not really open to this idea, which oftentimes causes dissent to occur. The problems with, occasions of, and people who dissent with the Church are the main foci of the chapter.

The following chapter begins the section on birth control. This chapter deals primarily with the history of the ban on birth control within Catholicism. Using three papal encyclicals as guides, *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, *Casti Connubii*, and *Humanae Vitae*, the chapter guides the reader through the not so linear history of the issue. Chapter one explains why the ban exists and who formed the birth control doctrine. Along the way different theories about human life, the role of marriage and the role of sex are illustrated. Interestingly enough, a number of these theories, some articulated by figures who greatly influenced Catholic doctrine, are not necessarily reflected in the final decisions reached by the authors of the encyclicals. The theories that were not reflected will be examined, with particular interest paid to why they were not accepted as doctrine. The chapter ends with an explication of *Humanae Vitae*. Especially important within this explication is the seeming betrayal of common opinion by Pope Paul VI. This betrayal would set a major precedence for many subsequent events in the history of the contraception issue along with the larger issue of dissent.

In chapters three and four, two major arguments for the repeal of the ban on birth control are examined. Chapter three focuses on the issue of overpopulation and what role artificial contraception could play as a possible solution. Population control has caused great controversy in Catholicism for several reasons. First of all, there is some argument among a few people concerning whether there is a problem. This paper, following the advice of many experts on the subject, maintains that there is, at least to some extent, a problem with population. Secondly the fact that people are hoping to control population growth by the use of contraceptive devices has caused the conservative hierarchy of the church to take
exception. By opposing artificial contraception as a method for population control, the Catholic church has caused many people to disagree with its doctrine. Of particular interest to the chapter is the United Nation’s International Conference on Population Control and Development which was held in Cairo in 1994. This conference is a good example of one of the latest controversies to surface between traditional Catholic doctrine and secular society.

Another major argument for the repeal of the ban on birth control is explored in chapter four. This chapter is centered on the issue of women within the church. Attention is focused on how the ban on birth control affects the position of the female laity. Many women, led by feminists of differing degrees, feel that this ban serves to subjugate them further and undermines their effort for equality within the church. The Vatican has publicly stated that it seeks to improve the status of women. It also contends that the ban on birth control has actually had a positive affect on women and continues to have a positive affect. Although one unified feminist perspective is impossible to arrive at, the chapter strives to give an overview of ideas that most feminists would agree with to one extent or another. Nonetheless some of the ideas that are reproduced are those held by only a small minority of feminists. This chapter is especially interested in the way that women’s lives, aside from parenting, are influenced by the birth control doctrine. The history of women within the church is not a proud one. Dissenters and conservatives argue whether the ban on birth control improves or perpetuates this history.

Chapter five is an extension of the birth control section. The idea of using contraceptives to stop the spread of disease, especially AIDS, is not directly related to birth control yet it certainly fits into the category. The fact that the same devices are used for both purposes is enough to include this chapter within the section. The Church condemns both protection from disease and the use of birth control for the same reasons. This chapter takes a look at the arguments that have
been put forth by the Church to justify prohibiting condoms to be used to prevent the spread of the HIV infection. These arguments are countered by people who disagree with the Church and think that condoms have to be allowed as preventive measures. The chapter illustrates the dichotomy between the Church’s compassion for the victims of the disease and the insensitivity towards those who are in danger of acquiring the disease. Also, paramount to the issue of AIDS is the idea of education. Much of secular society has decided that it is wise to educate people about the protective properties of condoms. The Church has opposed this education, not only for Catholics, but for non-Catholics as well. It is largely because of these arguments that this problem is included and has become another point of dissent within the church.

Chapter six shows the connection between the issue of the opposition to the ban on birth control and the larger issue of dissent. Here is where parallels between the two are illustrated for the reader’s benefit. Chapter by chapter the arguments for the approval and the rejection of birth control are examined. This examination results in an illustration of how dissent works and how effective it is. It is especially important for the reader to think about why people dissent and whether they should be able to dissent. How does the battle over birth control help to answer this and other questions? Following this chapter is the conclusion where some final comments are made. These final comments culminate in answering some of the major questions brought up throughout the paper. This conclusion is the construction of the author and therefore does contain large portions of his opinions and conclusions from the text.
Explanation of Terms:

Before jumping into the first chapter, it is necessary to explain a few points regarding terms within the text. The term, "the Church", is oftentimes avoided. Yet when it is included in capitals, it should be taken to mean the institutional Church expressed by the conservative members of the hierarchy, especially the Vatican. It implies those who approve of the status quo. This explanation is needed because there is a split in Catholicism extending throughout the hierarchy. Many members of the hierarchy have actually shown themselves to be quite progressive and have become members of the dissenting body. This is one of the aspects that makes the dynamics of the problem so interesting. When the term “church” is used without capitalization it should be taken to mean the people or the whole of the Catholic body.

Another term that should be dealt with is "feminists". Although considerable attention has been paid to its usage, some disclaimer is still necessary. In the context of this paper, feminist implies anyone who actively seeks to further the state of women within the church. This umbrella statement includes feminists of varying degrees. When considered necessary and the information was available, some sort of explanation of the goals of the individual feminist are explained. The goal that holds all of the feminists spoken of in the text together, is that all of the feminists mentioned in the text disagree with the traditional Catholic position on the issue of contraception.

Having said all of that there is little else for the author to do but invite the reader to delve into chapter one, “The Issue of Dissent”.
Chapter One

The Issue of Dissent

“There lies more faith in honest doubt / Believe me than in half the creeds.”

-Alfred Lord Tennyson

“If a man has really strong faith, he can indulge in the luxury of skepticism.”

-Friedrich Nietzsche
For people within the modern religious world the phrase “dissent within the Church” is a relatively common statement. In today’s Catholic church, seemingly everybody has a problem with some aspect of Catholic doctrine. The Catholic church no longer inhabits a world where its followers accept everything it has to say. That is not to say that the Church ever completely did. In years past, the Vatican could count on dissent arising from a small minority of intellectual elites who were easily silenced or rendered largely ineffective. There was a time when Rome wielded substantial amounts of power and controlled Catholic opinion making. Those followers who did not agree with a certain idea did not usually openly defy the Vatican’s position. Yet in the modern Church, dissent is as much a part of the religion as is communion or the Lord’s prayer. The Church retains its position on dissent and still attempts to silence or render ineffective those who disagree with its doctrines and ideas.

Pope John Paul II, who took over the papacy in 1978, has made purging dissent from the framework of Catholicism one of his main goals. He has spoken out many times on the issue and even produced a one hundred and seventy-nine page encyclical focusing on the dissent trend entitled, *The Splendor of Truth*. The more he tries to rid the Church of dissent, the more controversy he and the Vatican encounter. What follows is an examination of dissent and how it is dealt with by the powers that matter within the Catholic church.

In 1984, a group of religious sisters residing in the United States signed a letter regarding abortion and sent it to the local newspaper. This letter stated that there was not just one opinion about abortion held by members of the Catholic church. The letter affirmed that, “In fact a diversity of opinions regarding abortions exists among committed Catholics” (Castro 1985, 83). These
remarks probably do not seem like inflammatory material to those outside of the Catholic conservative hierarchy. The hierarchy took a different view of the whole matter and insisted that all of the nuns who signed the letter would either recant their support for the letter or face expulsion from their religious order. Most of the nuns refused to recant and were expelled from religious life. This occurrence is somewhat atypical but does serve to illustrate an interesting point. These nuns were not openly proposing revolutionary ideas to the public but were merely mentioning that differing opinions on abortion existed. These differing views were held by people, who were largely loyal to their faith. The seventy-seven year old Pope John Paul II, dealing with an overwhelming influx of dissent, took a hard line to enforce conformity within Catholicism. If these nuns could be expelled from religious life for stating that there was a plurality of opinions within the faith, what can happen to the people who publicly recommend theories that conflict with traditional Catholic doctrine.

A year after this occurrence, a poll was taken by the New York Times and CBS news. In this poll the question was asked whether lay people in the United States thought that they could disagree with aspects of the official Catholic position and still be good Catholics. Seventy-nine percent of the laity polled decided that this was possible (Stan 1988, 12). This number is heartening to those who are advocating a change in the Church. Needless to say, Pope John Paul II found these numbers very disturbing. It was exactly this kind of evidence of the American laity’s failure to concur completely with him that caused him to write his encyclical The Splendor of Truth. Within this document he clarifies, in no uncertain terms, the prohibition of dissent for any member of the church, in particular the American church.

Dissent in the form of carefully orchestrated protests and polemics carried on in the media, is opposed to ecclesial communion
and to a correct understanding of the hierarchical constitution of the people of God ("Encyclical Stresses Obedience" 1993, 1007).

This statement reflects the "official" Catholic position on dissent. Within the encyclical the Pope went on to renounce individual forms of morality such as "being at peace with oneself" ("Encyclical Stresses Obedience" 1993, 1007).

These statements have had particular effect on the American laity because of their denial of the things that Americans have come to expect from the decision making process. Americans have been indoctrinated from the beginning with the idea that the democratic process is the correct and proper way to make decisions. Margaret O'Brien Steinfels states that "American Catholics live in a country born in dissent and sustained by it" (O'Brien Steinfels 1994, 9).

Democracy, especially American democracy, is based upon dissent. This makes it particularly hard for Americans to accept the Pope's ban on dissent. Along with the idea of democracy, Americans cherish the idea of the relative autonomy of the individual. It is this individualism that makes it hard for many American lay people to be completely faithful to Catholic doctrine (Greeley 1993, 1090).

Because Americans have become inured to the ideas of individuality, democracy, and free speech, it is hard for us to accept the teachings of the Church verbatim. There is almost no other comparable arena where Americans are expected to give up their own opinions so that an outside influence is allowed to make their decisions for them.

Pope John Paul II has been very attuned to what is going on within the United States, "A church as large and freewheeling as the one in the United States is never far from Rome's thoughts" (Ostling 1986, 75). The problem of democratic societies has become a rather large one for the Pope and his dealings with an ever increasingly democratic world. Many dissenters present their
demands to the Church and expect them to be handled in the democratic manner that they are accustomed to. Yet the Church insists that it is not a democracy and does not need to uphold the theories of democracy in its decision making, especially in the realm of moral teaching. The following statement is from a commentary on the encyclical, *The Splendor of Truth* published in *The Christian Century*.

> While exchanges and conflicts of opinion may constitute normal expression of public life in a representative democracy, moral teaching certainly cannot depend simply upon respect for a process. Indeed it is in no way established by following the rules and the deliberate procedures of a democracy (Quoted in “Encyclical Stresses Obedience” 1993, 1007).

This statement by the Pope seems to answer any ambiguity on how he feels the question of democratic process figures within the Church. The answer leaves the American Catholics in a strange place. If they are to be “good” Catholics they are expected to follow the Church unquestioningly. But should they do this, then they lose many of the freedoms and undermine many of the political theories that Americans have striven so hard to earn and to uphold.

Despite the many exhortations of the Pope, the American church is still on the cutting edge of the dissent movement. Adelle Marie-Stan made the observation that “there is a kind of quiet anarchism in the United States church” (Stan 1988, 12). A year before the Pope made his less than highly successful visit to the United States in 1987, this anarchism became a little louder. A contemporary observer and writer about American Catholicism, Richard N. Ostling, noted that “Bishops are privately vexed [with Pope’s refusal of the ability to dissent] and priests are salting sermons with barbs directed at Rome” (Ostling 1986, 75). The American church was starting to rebel in a more outward fashion.
on a higher level. This rebellion, in part due to the nature of the United State’s political and philosophical system, was also sparked by other factors. John T. McGreevey, the Lilly Fellow in Humanities and the Arts at Valaparaiso University, asked the following question, “To what extent can changes in American society such as suburbanization, affluence, and shifting sexual mores, be separated from Rome?” (McGreevey 1993, 106). These factors have a huge impact on the way American Catholics relate to the Catholic tradition. Rome has no sufficient response to these questions. Until it does, there will be people within the American laity that have questions and problems with Church doctrine.

These problems with Church doctrine are reflected in several polls of American Catholic opinion taken by various organizations. The National Federation of Priest’s Councils poll in 1994 came up with the following statistics:

- 56% of American Catholics polled felt that homosexual sex is always wrong.
- 50% felt that premarital sex was always wrong.
- 47% felt that surrogate mothers were always wrong.
- 35% felt that condom use in order to protect against AIDS was always wrong.
- 28% felt that masturbation was always wrong.
- 25% felt that birth control was always wrong.
- 83% approve of Pope John Paul II’s job. (Greeley 1994, 6).

These statistics show the widespread popularity of dissent within the American church contrasting with the high regard in which the Pope is held. It is interesting to note that the Vatican maintains that all of these issues are wrong all of the time. In part because of these statistics, many American priests and bishops have taken a more laity friendly view of these issues. Andrew Greeley remarked that “American priests tend to value human sexuality, lay freedom, and the dignity of women” (Greeley 1994, 6). These priests, because of these
values, are not drawing the rigid line against dissent that the Pope would like them to.

Allied with the priests and laity are a few higher members of the Catholic hierarchy who have not followed the Pope's wishes. The Archbishop of Milwaukee, Rembert Weakland, argued that "the church must avoid the 'fanaticism and small-mindedness' that through history have 'led to much cruelty, suppression of theological creativity and lack of growth'" (Ostling 1986, 75). Weakland's vision, while not radically revolutionary, is against the commonly understood and doggedly defended traditional Catholic position on dissent. Because of its position on dissent, the Church tends to be somewhat fanatic. Members of the conservative hierarchy feel the Church has to be to get people to do the "right thing". One high ranking member of the hierarchy who has supported Weakland's vision is the recently deceased Cardinal Bernadin of Chicago. Before his death he was developing a program called the Catholic Common Ground Project. This project sought to open a dialogue about issues that were dividing the church. His goal for the project was that, "through open and honest dialogue, differences can be resolved and the integrity of the Gospels proclaimed" (Reese 1996, 6). The Cardinal from Boston, Cardinal Law, a conservative defender of the status quo, argued that the Church had already achieved "common ground". Cardinal Bernadin's document advocating the common ground project drew strong criticism from Cardinal Law, "the fundamental flaw of this document is its appeal for dialogue as a path to common ground" (Reese 1996, 6).

This type of argument between church officials (a dialogue of dissent in itself) is something that becomes ever more frequent. This frequency has some people wondering whether another council, along the same lines as the Second Vatican Council, is necessary to discuss the problems of dissent and the Church's
lack of modernity. Tracey K. Jones, the Mission Executive of the United Methodist Church, sees American Catholics, especially older Catholics, as yearning for the days directly preceding the Second Vatican Council when change seemed possible. She maintains that many Catholics in the United States saw in Pope John XXIII and the original outlines of the council, the kind of future that they wanted for the Church (Jones 1994, 132). This desire is especially relevant when considered along with the concept of dissent. To many people the possibility of change before the council and the lack of change since, shows that the Church has not only not progressed since then, but in some ways has regressed. Meanwhile people on the other side of the issue consider the problem inherent in the liberal mindset. These two sides are reflected in John McGreevey's statement below.

Is turmoil within the postconciliar American church a result of liberals hitching the meaning of the conflict to the platform of the Democratic party (as neoconservative theologians and activists contend) or a signal of the desperate need for another council to address issues of sexuality and authority? (McGreevey 1993, 106).

Many dissenters would gladly participate in the work of another council. At the least, allowing a new council would force the conservative hierarchy to actively pursue a dialogue with members of the progressive dissenting members of the hierarchy. At the most, it could open the conservative hierarchy up the point where they would have to make significant changes in Church doctrine. Some people believe that these are the reasons why the Vatican is not overly enthusiastic about the idea.

Be it a new council or change made through other ways, many people see the need for a change within the Church in order to bring it more up to date with secular society. Even in the early days of the church, councils were
promoted as a means of helping the Pope make good decisions regarding controversial issues. Saint Belleneue wrote a letter to Pope Clement VIII in 1601 exhorting the use of a council,

Your holy predecessors did not rely chiefly on study and reasoning in their efforts to penetrate the profundity of dogma. They sought to discover what was the common opinion of the church and above all, of her bishops and doctors, for which reason the popes from the time of Saint Peter have availed themselves of the help of councils, in order to determine the truths of the faith (McCormick 1994, 16).

Councils are historically acceptable means of airing opinions and voicing differing views. In many ways, the council as a form is very similar to a type of democratic decision making. While the council is not completely democratic, it is more collegial, it does contain the aspect of point and counterpoint that is so important to democratic decision making.

The Catholic church is no longer able to exist in a vacuum without popular culture having some effect on it. Citizens today are barraged by all different types of media proposing differing lifestyles and values than the ones that the Catholic church teaches. The hierarchy has to realize that American society is rapidly changing. While these changes occur, any institution which seeks to remain viable will have to change along with society. Margaret O’Brien Steinfels argues:

Today Catholic teaching does not have to be refashioned for MTV, but the reality of MTV and network news and sitcoms and talk radio and elite newspapers has to be part of a Catholic teacher’s calculations just as much as is, say the reality that significant numbers of U.S. Catholics speak Spanish or Vietnamese, or Haitian Creole (O’Brien Steinfels 1994, 9).
This statement is very moderate in its proposals. It is not necessarily asking that the Church make major doctrinal changes but it is asking that the Church take into consideration that it is a different society that they are dealing with now as opposed to fifty or even twenty years ago. If Catholicism is to remain an effective force in people's lives, many people think that it is going to have to re-examine the times and catch up to them.

In arguing for this update in doctrine, dissenters have pointed to the presence of mistakes in the church's past. These mistakes were oftentimes either rectified or an attempt was made to rectify them when more modern ideas prevailed. Some of the mistakes that have been given as examples are religious liberty, ecumenism, slavery, usery, Galileo, and the interpretation of the scriptures (Reese 1996, 6). These are all examples of instances where the Church had to change their stance when contemporary social morality proved that the church was wrong. For example, the Catholic church protected the institution of slavery for many years. Catholics held slaves and slaveholders were provided with a good moral conscience by the church. But, with the elapse of time, people began to see slavery for what it was. The Church, seeing this same evidence, decided that slavery was not moral and opted to change its opinion of slavery. This is a good example of the church catching up with modern society. The argument about the Church's mistakes is particularly effective when applied to the writing of Humanae Vitae. When a change in doctrine was advised before the writing of the encyclical, the conservative hierarchy was worried that any change would expose the presence of mistakes within church tradition (see chapter two). The changes in doctrine that have occurred previously prove that the Church not only makes mistakes, but also has the ability to correct them.

Pope John Paul II does not seem to be preoccupied with the presence of mistakes. He still hopes to eliminate dissent and present the whole of
Catholicism as a unified institution. The pope hopes to produce followers like Saint Ignatius who declared in his *Exercises* that, "What seems to me white, I will believe black if the hierarchical church so defines" (Callahan 1996, 6). John Paul II wants Catholics to allow him and the Vatican to make the decisions regarding doctrine and morality. After these decisions are made, it is the laity's job not to discuss or argue, but rather to follow faithfully. In addressing the topic of dissent, the pope has unequivocally denied its value again and again. "It is prohibited- to everyone and in every case- to violate these precepts" (Ostling 1993, 75). The pontiff does not recognize the possible presence of mistakes within current Catholic doctrine.

Not only does Pope John Paul II not recognize the possibility of mistakes within current Catholic doctrine but he also does not see a necessity to update Church teachings. The call for an update in the American church is dismissed by the Vatican whose representatives tend to consider Catholics in the United States as being chronic dissenters. In the words of Vatican spokesperson Joaquin Nevarro:

...the phenomenon of dissent in the U.S. and elsewhere touches the very nature of the church. The real question is no longer abortion or even moral theology as a whole. It is the essence of Catholic faith around the church, its structure and how it works (Ostling 1986, 75).

It is partially because of the assault on the nature of the Church, that the pope has strong doubts about the American church and ascribes little value to what Americans say regarding changes in doctrine. Especially galling to conservative church officials is the media representation that they receive in the United States. Conservatives within the church hierarchy feel that the media has tended to focus on the negative aspects of Catholicism. They claim that the
media centers its focus on the splinter groups that claim to be Catholic but do not agree with Rome in one way or another.

The bishops have been particularly upset by media attention given to independent Catholic groups that disagree with Vatican teaching on abortion, birth control, the possibility of women's ordination to the priesthood and calls for an end to priestly celibacy and allowance for a married priesthood ("Media Accused of Catholic Bashing" 1993, 1201). There is truth in this statement. The media in the United States does pay particular attention to these fringe groups. This is another cause for the unrest between the Vatican and the American church. It is partially because of the presence of these groups that the Vatican feels that the American church is a bit of rebel and that it is the Vatican's job to bring it back in line with how the church should be run.

Knowing that the American church is a church shrouded in dissent is one thing, finding a solution to this problem is another. According to the pope, the hierarchy has to be able to do something about dissenters. As he stated in his encyclical, bishops need "to have recourse to appropriate measures to ensure that the faithful are guarded from every doctrine and theory contrary to the Catholic church’s moral teaching" (McBrien 1993, 1004). The pope is not only seeking to coerce people to agree with Catholic doctrine, but he is also hoping to be able to present some kind of consequences when this coercion is unsuccessful. During his reign as pope, he has been somewhat successful, especially outside of the United States, at developing consequences for those people who differ with the Church.

...the Vatican [under Pope John Paul II] has attempted to restore a sense of doctrinal discipline; it removed renegade Swiss theologian Hans Kung from his teaching post at the University of
Tubingen, West Germany and silenced for a year Brazilian Franciscan Leonardo Boff; an advocate of the Marxist-tinged liberation theology (Harris 1986, 65).

It is these kind of methods that the Vatican has found mildly effective in its fight against dissent.

In between removing Kung and silencing Boff, the Vatican found an important American to focus on in its attempt to suppress dissent within the United States. Father Charles Curran, a professor who publicly differed with the Church on many issues of sexuality and morality, was eventually removed from his position at the Catholic University of America for teaching these differing views. Because the Catholic University of America was the only American university to award the pontifical degree in theology, the Vatican dealt with Curran in an especially strict manner. The reasons for the removal were justified by the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, “No institution is foolish enough to permit its reason for existence to be undermined from within” (Ostling 1986, 75). Curran was considered to be coercing Catholic students into making decisions that were not supported by existent Catholic doctrine. In fear of having generations of independent thinking Catholic students, the Vatican preempted their education in dissent and exiled Curran from the Catholic educational ranks. Curran filed an academic freedom protest against the Holy See which he eventually lost. Despite his exile, he still remains a loyal Catholic. Michael P. Harris writes,

Curran has promised to remain "a loyal and committed Catholic" asking his supporters to stay with him inside the church to continue pressing for the right of intellectual dissent..."There's got to be room in the church for disagreement on specific issues... My church is a big church and my God is a big God, yes she is" (Harris 1986, 65).
The size or flexibility that Curran attributes to the Church is questioned by the Vatican. To them, the Church is only big enough for one viewpoint and that is the traditional one. Currently, the Church's size is one size fits all.

Despite the Church's official position on dissent, the issue lives on. People still find problems with the Church's teachings and continue to voice their opinions. Thomas J. Reese, a Senior Fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown had an interesting way of identifying Catholics. Starting with an oft-repeated "mark" of Christians he adjusts the statement to fit the Catholic situation. "While people know that we are Christians by our love, they know that we are Catholics by our fights" (Reese 1996, 6). This maxim is one that is more true than Rome would like to think. Especially illustrative of this point is the battle being waged over the issue of birth control.
Chapter Two
Catholicism and Birth Control:
A History

"What's past is prologue."
-William Shakespeare

"Thought once awakened does not again slumber."
-Carlyle
I. Introduction:

In order to understand the arguments for and against birth control in the modern American Catholic church, it is important to understand where the issue has been throughout history. Many lay people would probably guess that the Catholic stance has been the same on the issue for as long as there has been an issue. In some ways these people would be correct. Throughout its long history, the Catholic church has never seriously promoted the use of contraception. With this being said, however, it can also be seen that while the end result has always been the same, the history of the issue is hardly a straightforward timeline. In fact, the teachings that Catholics now know so well are due to relatively recent events, the most important of these being the three papal encyclicals: Pope Leo XIII's *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* (1880), Pope Pius XI's *Casti Connubii* (1930), and *Humanae Vitae*, written by Pope Paul VI in 1968. These three encyclicals firmly state the official Catholic stance on birth control. In the time before these three encyclicals, there was no one set of teachings that could be considered the official Catholic stance on the issue. Ideas differed greatly concerning whether contraception could be allowed in a Catholic context. In the following pages many of these ideas will be explored. The encyclicals will be presented as selective mirrors of the past theories by church fathers. What will also be shown are the theories that were not promoted by the encyclical authors but did represent a Catholic viewpoint on the subject at one time. In this chapter I will present the evolution of Catholic teachings on contraception from the vague beginnings to the writing of the definitive position on the issue, *Humanae Vitae.*
II. Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae:

The first major papal presentation on the subject of marriage was Pope Leo XIII's *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* in 1880. While this encyclical did not deal with contraception directly, it did assert the Church's ability to extend its influence into the realm of marriage and sex (Noonan 1965, 416). It also was to become one of the major bases for Pope Pius XI's *Casti Connubii*. *Arcanum* itself was not an entirely original work. Like most of the encyclicals, it was an amalgamation of thoughts from particular works by selected Catholic thinkers. The document was put forth as an answer to a new set of challenges from the outside world, particularly late nineteenth century Europe. At this time within Europe, the practice of contraception was becoming more and more prevalent. Many of the bishops looked to Pope Leo to answer these challenges in written form.

During the mid-19th century, Malthusian theory was starting to gain significant support in Europe. This theory, stating that population, unless checked by either war or famine, would tend to increase at a faster rate than its means of sustenance, was becoming the basis for new societies and leagues that supported the use of contraception. Because Malthusian theory was so concerned with the problems of over-population, it was the perfect foil for those people who advocated the use of contraception among non-Catholics and Catholics alike. In the 1860's, a Malthusian league was formed by the English author George Drysdale. This particular league did not prosper but it did set a precedent for other leagues later in the century. In 1878, a more successful League was formed in England and the trend quickly spread to Germany, Bohemia, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, and Italy (Noonan 1965, 406). The success of these new leagues was in large part due to the rising influence of the American Charles Knowlton's book in favor of contraception entitled, *The Fruits*
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Of Philosophy. The book was a marginal work until the unsuccessful prosecution of the publishers, Anne Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, by the English government in 1877. Following this decision, the book increased its circulation and served to educate common people about the subject.

This spread of knowledge brought the idea of contraception out into the open. The English Malthusian league won a hearing with the English public and declared that it was legal to use contraception "as a remedy for miseries attributed to over-population and 'over child-bearing'" (Noonan 1965, 406). During these years the Catholic hierarchy responded to challenges to the old order in typical fashion. The Catholic attack focused itself particularly on the people of France who were supposedly practicing contraception at a very high rate.

The hierarchy used the Franco-Prussian War as an opportunity to bring the French people back to the teachings of the Church. In 1872 a Swiss Cardinal told the French people that "You have rejected God and God has struck you. You have, by hideous calculation, made tombs instead of filling cradles with children; therefore you have wanted for soldiers" (Noonan 1965, 414). Other Bishops pointed to the fact that France was experiencing a declining birth rate and was in danger of falling behind other European countries on the population graph. However, the actions of the Bishops were individualistic in nature and did not represent a unified front. Each bishop took a different view on why contraception was wrong and how it should be dealt with. Added to this, was the problem that many priests were unsure about what action to take inside the confessional. How were they to deal with all these people practicing contraception? The existence of these situations prompted the writing of Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae.

Pope Leo stated his purpose for writing very early in the encyclical. In this encyclical he intended to not only deal with marriage, but also to affirm the authority of
the Church to enter into all facets of human life. He justifies this authority by illustrating the intellectual nature of the Church.

In very truth, the Christian religion thought of and provided for all things which are held to be advantageous in a State, so much so, indeed that, according to St. Augustine, one cannot see how it could have offered greater help in the matter of living well and happily, had it been instituted for the single object of procuring or increasing those things which contributed to the conveniences or advantages of this mortal life (Pope Leo XIII 1880, 4).

From this statement of Leo’s, one can discern that he was not only concerned with people’s actions but also was concerned with who was influencing these actions. He wanted to bring people back to following Catholic doctrine because Leo believed that the Catholic church alone has thought of and provided for all things that are advantageous. Leo wanted to clarify just who Catholics should be listening to, in regard to moral decisions.

The issue of who should direct Catholics in their marital lives is central to the content and purpose of Arcanum. Of particular interest to this paper, is who Pope Leo thinks should direct Catholics in regard to contraceptive practices. As has been stated earlier, many of the European countries were considering the increasingly popular use of birth control. This consideration was leading to a more open attitude towards the practice in many of these countries. At this time Leo found more Catholics than ever looking to secular officials for permission to do things which had previously not been allowed by either Church or state. Previously the stance on contraception by most secular governments within Europe had mirrored the Catholic stance. Leo perceived that these days were coming to an end and wanted to insist that the Church’s authority on marital matters was the only one that needed to be consulted.
These many and glorious fruits were ever the product of marriage... had it been under the power and the guardianship of the Church, the trustworthy preserver and protector of these gifts. But now, there is a spreading wish to supplant natural and divine law by human law; and hence has become a gradual extinction of that most excellent ideal of marriage... this power, productive of so great good, has been weakened by the sinfulness of man. Of what advantage is it if a state can institute nuptials estranged from the Christian religion, which is the mother of all good, cherishing all sublime virtues, quickening and urging us to everything that is the glory of a lofty and generous soul. (Pope Leo XII 1880, 27).

Pope Leo states within this passage that the Church should be the sole director of the Catholic faithful in regard to married life. This is a concept that conservatives would base their ideas on for years to come. Regardless of the secular environment, the Church wanted to be the only authority consulted on matters of marriage. The 1960's witnessed a parallel development when popular opinion, government opinion, and the opinion of the Birth Control Commission all seemed to favor the use of contraception. Nonetheless the Church would once again refuse to bow to these pressures and remained adamant about its opposition to the use of artificial contraception.

After the Pope declared the Church's authority on marital matters he focused on what concerned him within the Catholic community as a whole with particular attention paid to European Catholics. Moreover Leo explained why he was concerned with these things. In the realm of contraception he cited three major explanations for not accepting contraception as a moral and ethical choice: the Bible, female rights, and opposition to groups outside of the church who did not hold the same moral ground. It is important to look at all three of these factors in order to understand how his, and eventually the official Catholic position, were constructed.
A. The Biblical Reasoning:

In one of the few statements in the encyclical that deal directly with the idea of contraception, Leo states that, "God thus, in His most far-reaching foresight declared that this husband and wife should be the natural beginning of the human race, from whom it might be propagated and preserved by an unfailing fruitfulness throughout all futurity of time" (Pope Leo XII 1880, 5). This statement about God's foresight shifts Leo's focus onto the Bible. References to the Bible are relatively rare because the Bible never directly states that contraception is wrong. Within it, there are passages that officials have used to support their views, yet all of these passages need to be followed by some type of explanation. Perhaps the two most popularly used citations are the story of Onan and God's commandment to "increase and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). These two citations require specific interpretations in order to be effective anti-contraceptive passages. Other viable interpretations leave the passages lacking force as prohibitions of the use of artificial contraception. This issue of interpretation is the major flaw within the biblical reasoning.

The story of Onan is probably the most familiar section of the Bible referring to contraception (Noonan 1965, 33). In this story, Onan is struck down by the Lord for spilling his seed on the ground while having sex with his dead brother's wife. Many people who support the Catholic teaching on contraception claim that he was struck down for his failure to procreate. This interpretation of the passage is a useful one for people who believe that contraception is wrong. Most of the people who consider the story of Onan a refutation of contraception already believe contraception is morally wrong. That is to say, the passage does not form opinions so much as it supports them. It is important to note that many modern scholars claim that Onan was struck down for either disobeying his father's orders, or for disobeying a Jewish law which maintained that one must not let a brother's name be erased from the books (Noonan 1965, 34-35).
The passage’s authority on contraception is questioned by scholars because the story never addresses contraception directly. What is clearly stated is that Onan’s father tells Onan to go to his brother’s wife and fulfill the Jewish law. This statement seems to be more at the heart of what is really happening within the story. Because of the speculation involved, this passage carries little weight with anyone who familiar with modern biblical scholarship or against the official Catholic stance on contraception.

The other Biblical teaching applied to contraception is the commandment to increase and multiply. This commandment needs to be stretched somewhat to be seen as prohibiting contraception. Without making the traditional Thomistic assumptions about God’s overall intentions, the passage presents obvious pitfalls. That is to say that people have to extrapolate extra information from the commandment in order to form an anti-contraceptive argument from the passage. The biblical command to increase and multiply does not mean that there is an obligation to continue to procreate throughout the entirety of one’s sexual life. Instead of literal interpretation, most early church fathers who wrote on the idea of contraception based their teachings more on the “structural emphasis on procreation” within the Old Testament (Noonan 1965 33). This structural emphasis within the Old Testament is exemplified by the caution with which sex is approached within the book. The church fathers did not focus so much on the individual events but rather on the general themes within the book. It is a somewhat modern phenomenon that brings the story of Onan into the main spotlight to support teachings that were already, to some extent, in place. Onan becomes a supporting feature rather than the foundation of the traditional Catholic teaching on contraception.
B. Women’s Rights:

The second major argument that Leo cites is the idea of maintaining women’s rights within the church. It is clear that Leo takes a substantially different view of the female in this encyclical than do many of the women and men in the modern Catholic church. Leo felt it necessary to protect women from the innate sexual nature of men. By maintaining the Church's role within the marriage, Leo believed that the Church was acting as the great protector of Catholic women.

Hence, too, sprang up the greatest confusion as to the mutual rites and the duties of husbands and wives, insomuch as a man assumed a right of dominion over his wife, ordering her to go about her business, often without any just cause; while he was himself at liberty; "to run headlong with impunity into lust, unbridled and unrestrained, in houses of ill-fame and amongst his female slaves, as if the dignity of the persons sinned with, and not the will of the sinner, made the guilt". When the licentiousness of a husband thus showed itself, nothing could be more piteous than the wife, sunk so low as to be all but reckoned as a means for the gratification of passion, or for the production of offspring (Pope Leo XIII 1880, 7).

Although this passage deals primarily with marriage, it also forms the foundation for further teachings on sex and contraception. The idea of the Church acting on the woman's behalf has historically been a popular one amongst church officials. In the modern era many women object to this paternalistic nature of the Catholic church. In this section Leo provides a worst case scenario of what could happen if his teachings about marriage were ignored. This idea comes into play later on in the birth control debate when officials say that lifting the ban on birth control would produce a similar result. Ironically, in the twentieth century, many women argue against the ban on contraception saying that when combined with the paternalism of the Church, it actually interferes with the rights of the female.
C. Reaction To Heresy:

The final explanation that Leo gave for the Church's teachings involves the need to refute outside groups who were seen as a challenge to the Church's moral standing. He stated that,

Again in the very beginning of the Christian Church were repulsed and defeated, with the like unremitting determination, the efforts of many who aimed at the destruction of the Christian marriage, such as the Gnostics, Manicheans and Montanists; and in our own time Mormons, St. Simonians, phalansterians, and communists (Pope Leo XIII 1880, 13).

All of the above groups fell out of line with the Church's teachings in their approaches to both sex and marriage. The two groups that are most important to the scholar studying the construction of the birth control ban are the Gnostics and the Manichaeans. It is in an effort to differentiate itself from these two groups that the Church formed much of its early teachings on contraception.

1. The Gnostics:

The Gnostics came about a little before the time of Paul's mission. Nevertheless recent scholarship has discounted the commonly held claim that the Gnostics were an entirely Christian sect. In actuality the Gnostic theory represents a more Eastern tradition than a Western one. Like Hinduism the Gnostics preached that "the self and the divine were identical" (Pagels 1979 XX). Along the same lines as this statement, the living Jesus that Gnostics focus on, speaks of illusion and enlightenment. Around 150 C.E. Theodotus explained that a fellow Gnostic would
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know, "who we were and what we have become; where we are...whither we are hastening; from what we are being released; what birth is and what is rebirth" (Pagels 1979 XIX). The idea of hidden knowledge is central to the Gnostic faith. The claim to hidden knowledge about Jesus' life causes Gnostics to oftentimes be referred to as Christians. Near the end of the second century Orthodox Christians separated themselves from the Gnostics by accusing them of deriving their beliefs from Greek philosophy, astrology, mystery religions, magic and Indian sources. Some of these accusations were true while others were paranoid fabrications.

Regardless of their roots, the Gnostics opposed many of the Church doctrines and many scholars have hypothesized that they were the false prophets whom Paul warned against. In later years, the refutation of the Gnostics became something of an obsession for Christian theologians. The liberal Gnostic teachings on sex became an especially good target. There were two major camps within Gnosticism. The more conservative Gnostics held that asceticism and virginity were the correct path to follow while the more liberal Gnostics preached the separation of sex and procreation. These views were extolled in the Gospels of the Gnostics. These Gospels included works that did and did not fit into the official Christian Church canon. An example of the teaching in these Gospels comes from one entitled the "Gospel According to the Egyptians". Within the storyline of this scripture, Jesus says to Salome that "as long as women bear children, men shall die" (Noonan 1965, 61). Another example can be found in the Gospel of Thomas, "For there shall be days when you will say, 'Blessed is the womb that has not conceived and those breasts which have not given suck'" (Noonan 1965 62).

There are two notes to add to this quotation however. The first note to add is that this passage can also be found in the Christian canon in Luke 23:29. Secondly, while the Gospel of Thomas has been historically considered a Gnostic gospel, many modern biblical scholars are refuting this position and saying that it is not Gnostic. The Catholic Church still managed to use this passage to react against Gnostic sexual teaching.
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The presence of the Gnostics proved to be a call to action and many church teachers came forth to refute the Gnostic's sexual teachings. In the fourth century Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Clement both formulated many of their ideas about sex in response to the Gnostics. Chrysostom announced that the sexual act itself was sacral and therefore could not be tampered with. Meanwhile Clement declared in his literary work *The Educator* that "...the seed is not to be vainly ejaculated, nor is it to be damaged, nor is it to be wasted" (Noonan 1965, 93). These are the beginnings of an official Catholic doctrine against the use of birth control. With the coming of the Manichaean into Christian thought, this doctrine was to be further solidified.

2. The Manichaean:

It is impossible to say for sure, but it is quite probable that if Augustine had never converted back to the Christian faith, the Manichaean would have little or no role in the making of Catholic doctrine. Augustine, a vastly influential figure in the making of Catholic doctrine and one who will be discussed again later, disliked the Manichaean’s doctrine so much that he tempered his own ideas so they would conflict more clearly with those of the Manichaean. Here, once again, we can see a reactionary formation of doctrine rather than a positive formation. The Manichaean, unlike the Gnostics, were definitely not part of Christianity but were a separate religion unto themselves. They believed that the world was made up of Light and Dark and at the beginning of time the King of Light was trapped. He eventually escaped but left much of the Light imprisoned. *The Manichaean’s stance on sex grew out of these beliefs* because procreation was said to perpetuate the imprisonment of the Light. It was because of this that the practice of abstinence was taught. *The Christian church, which*
was not opposed to abstinence, disapproved of the reasons that the Manicheaens cited for their practices.

Augustine, a Manichean for many years, fostered a disdain for Manichean theory that could only come through familiarity. In his later years he found sex rather appalling, but because of his dislike for the group's theories, he had to revise these thoughts. He adjusted his ideas about sex to say that it was moral only if conception was possible. During his association with the sect, Augustine had lived with a woman without benefit of marriage. In his teachings about sex, one can discern some regret over the sexual relationship that he maintained with this woman. Augustine was clearly motivated not wholly by divine inspiration but by his own regrets and biases. These regrets and biases echo through the ages right up to 1880 when Leo made his statements in Arcanum. The Manicheaens and Gnostics did not totally agree with official Catholic doctrine so therefore the church decided that they would not agree with the Manicheaens and Gnostics on sexual teachings. It is partially on this reactionary formulated foundation that the Church built its platform against contraception. Approximately fifty years after Arcanum, this platform received substantial reinforcement by Pope Pius XI.

III. Casti Connubii:

Evidence that Pope Pius XI relied heavily on Arcanum in his writing of Casti Connubii comes early in the work. Pope Pius writes,

We have decided therefore to speak to you, Venerable Brethren, ... on the nature and dignity of human marriage, ... on the errors contrary to this most important point of the Gospel teaching, on the vices opposed to conjugal union, and lastly on the principle remedies to be applied. In so doing, We follow the footsteps of Our predecessor, Leo XIII, of happy memory, whose Encyclical Arcanum, published fifty years ago, We hereby confirm and make Our own and
while We wish to expound more fully certain points called for by the circumstances of our time, nevertheless We declare that, far from being obsolete, it retains its full force at the present day. (Pope Pius XI 1930, 4).

Although it was Pope Pius XI who decided the encyclical had to be written at the given time, it is clear that it is not a work of entirely independent thought. The above remarks show *Casti Connubii* to be a kind of supplement to the points previously made by Leo. One can see from this example that the Encyclicals do not only affect their contemporaries but those who are to follow as well.

Another point brought out by the statement is that Pius is replying to current events both within, and outside of the church. Here it is important to realize that up to this point, the Church had very little official doctrine concerning how to deal with contraception. In response to this lack of specific guidelines and current events Pope Pius set about writing his encyclical. The important current events of the time can be broken into three main categories, the Lambeth conference vote, the revision of the teachings of *Hochland*, and the fact that priests were not enforcing the understood ban on contraception the way that the Pope expected them to (Noonan 1965, 424).

The Lambeth conference vote was perhaps the single biggest factor that prompted Pope Pius to write *Casti Connubii*. The conference was a gathering of Anglican bishops to discuss matters within the Anglican church. On August 15, 1930 the bishops voted on whether birth control should be allowed within the Anglican church. The results of this vote determined that if it was considered absolutely necessary, then birth control could be undertaken with a clear conscience. Almost immediately the Catholic archbishop of Westminster publicly complained along with Arthur Vermeesch, the most important Vatican theologian at the time (Noonan 1965, 424). It soon was clear that the Catholic hierarchy would have to give some sort of
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response to this decision by the Anglican bishops. This decision resulted in *Casti Connubii*.

Another major factor that led to the writing of the encyclical was a particular article that appeared in the June 1930 issue of the German periodical, *Hochland*. This article, entitled "Revolutionizing the Marriage" provided a glance at German dissent on Catholic doctrines about marriage. The fact that Hochland had always been a conservative Catholic paper made the article all the more disturbing to Pius and other church officials. The article was not revolutionary but rather was a reflection of the uncertainty within the Catholic world about the proper stand to be taken in response to contraception. This leads to the third major factor which was the priests not upholding the ban on contraception the way that the Church expected them to. Vermeesch had observed that in the confessional, priests were avoiding the issue as much as possible, not encouraging lay people to confess the use of contraception (Noonan 1965, 426). These actions greatly disturbed him and the pope. Because of these developments Pius felt it necessary to issue a definitive statement prohibiting contraceptive use.

*Casti Connubii*, which also condemned mixed marriages, became the most complete presentation on Catholic doctrine about contraception ever published. This remained true until the publication of *Humanae Vitae* some thirty-five years later. *Casti Connubii*'s release date was scheduled to coincide with the mixed marriage of King Boris III of Bulgaria. As was the case in *Arcanum*, Pius made it clear that the Church had the right to interfere in almost any aspect of marriage. As well as being the most authoritative Catholic response to contraception, *Casti Connubii* also let people know that marriage was a Catholic institution and therefore Catholic doctrine should be followed at all times. The Catholic doctrine in question came from the great teachers of the church and especially Leo XIII.
A. The Role of Church Fathers

Pius affirmed that people should follow the divine and natural laws that should govern all marriages. This natural law theory was not something that Pius had invented. Foundations were laid for the theory within the writings of Paul, the Stoics and Philo. However natural law is usually attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas, who built upon the ideas of these earlier writers. Aquinas theorized that natural coitus, the man being on top of the woman with procreation occurring, was instituted by God. Any alteration of this event was an offense to God. "Just as the ordering of right reason proceeds from man, so the order of nature is from God himself; wherefore in sins contrary to nature, whereby the very order of nature is violated, an injury is done to God, the ordainer of nature" (Noonan 1965, 240). Aquinas's presentation of ideas offered a dichotomy that is hard to pull together. On one hand he states that the performance of natural law is only possible for rational thinking beings, or more specifically humans. On the other hand he states that natural law is the law that is taught to all animals. He tends to vacillate between the two ideas with little distinction. John Noonan explains the dichotomy,

In the case of the sin against nature, the two formulas are reconcilable only by supposing, as Aquinas does suppose, that to depart from the inseminating use of the sexual act is to offend God directly; then both animal nature and love of God are violated (Noonan 1965, 240).

Animal nature is the natural law that is taught to all animals, while the knowledge of the love of God is appreciated only by higher life forms. This dichotomy allows
Aquinas and those who follow him the flexibility that they need to apply the natural law theory to contraception in differing circumstances.

Referring back to Aquinas, Pius stated what he thought about the sacrament of marriage. In the following quote he was referring to the freedom of Catholics to choose their spouse as opposed to having spouses chosen for them.

This freedom, however, regards only the question whether the contracting parties really wish to enter upon matrimony or to marry this particular person; but the nature of matrimony is entirely dependent on the free will of man, so if one has once contracted matrimony he is thereby subject to its divinely made laws and its essential properties. For the Angelic Doctor, writing on conjugal honor and on the offspring which is the fruit of marriage, says: "These things are so contained in matrimony by the marriage pact itself that, if anything to the contrary were expressed in the consent which makes the marriage, it would not be a true marriage." (Pope Pius XI 1930, 6).

This quotation illustrates two points, the influence of Aquinas on modern Church thinking and the role of marriage in the Catholic context. The influence of Aquinas becomes more interesting to note later because of his teachings that the official Catholic doctrine does not reflect. These teachings are good examples of differences within the Catholic sphere yet are largely ignored.

The role of marriage within the Catholic context became extremely important in the discussions that focused on contraception in years to come. Throughout the centuries, the official Church tradition built marriage up as an institution specifically for the procreation and education of children. This idea was greatly involved with the idea of contraception. If contraception were allowed, the marriage would cease to perform its major function. In large part, the theory that marriage was only for procreation, was rooted in the Roman world where Christianity first evolved. In fact, it was a Roman law that the purpose of marriage was to have children and increase the population of
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the Roman empire. Augustine incorporated these theories into his own teachings developed them further. Eventually these teachings on marriage were put into the “Code of Canon Law”. In Casti Connubii Pius used the role of marriage as one of the major bases for his opposition to contraception. Clearly he believed that marriage was a Catholic matter, and therefore within a marriage, Catholic duty should be performed.

Pius used a great Christian teacher from the past again, this time to answer the contemporary skepticism about the teachings of the Church. Pius realized that people were questioning the modernity of the Church's teachings and he sought to answer these questions by use of Paul's words.

...there are those who, striving as it were to ride a middle course, believe nevertheless that something should be conceded in our times as regards certain precepts of the divine and natural law. But these likewise, more or less wittingly, are emissaries of the great enemy who is ever seeking to sow cockle among the wheat. We, therefore, whom the Father has appointed over His field, We who are bound by Our most holy office to take care lest the good seed be choked by the weeds, believe it fitting to apply to Ourselves the most grace words of the Holy Ghost with which the Apostle Paul exhorted his beloved Timothy: "Be thou vigilant... Fulfill thy ministry... Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine" (Pope Pius XI 1930, 47).

This quotation is significant in that it uses biblical references to make its point. This is especially important when considering the choice of the biblical narrative. The use of the story of the seed (insemination) is a not so subtle reminder of the larger issue at hand within the Encyclical. Perhaps more important was the point that the biblical narrative was used to support. In his remarks Pius refused to see any need for modernity. The Church should stick to its teachings and ignore those who try to bring about change, for those were the "emissaries of the great enemy". This feeling about popular and contemporary dissent stayed with the Church not only through
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*Humane Vitae,* but right up to the current day. With this theory in place, any attempt to change the doctrine becomes almost inherently futile.

Perhaps more than anybody else, Augustine is responsible for the formulation of the doctrine and ideas within *Casti Connubii.* Pius cited many statements from Augustine throughout his treatise. The following selection encompasses many of the problems with sexual relations that the Pope encountered.

...the stern words of the Bishop of Hippo... denouncing those wicked parents who seek to remain childless, and failing in this, are not ashamed to put their offspring to death: "Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure a baneful sterility... in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born. If both man and woman are party to such practices they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification; if both are not party to these deeds, I make bold to say that either the one makes herself a mistress of the husband, or the other simply the paramour of his wife. (Pope Pius XI 1930, 65).

In this passage can be found many of the thoughts grounded in Augustine's disdain of the Manicheaen practices and the regret about his own actions while a part of this group. Augustine attached to sex the stain of concupiscence. Concupiscence is the ardent desire for something that will give the soul fulfillment. According to Augustine, the sin of concupiscence was expecting that something other than the love of God could give this fulfillment. The idea of concupiscence is ever present in his writings, and therefore it is logical that it should work its way into his teachings about sex. In this case, largely in response to the Manicheaens, he states that this stain can be removed from the sexual act by allowing procreation to occur. Pius agreed with Augustine's teachings and made them a major part of his own document.

This encyclical of Pius' provided just the assertive statement of doctrine that many of the conservative church officials had hoped for. It was to be the ultimate word
on contraception until the issue was re-opened for discussion in the 1960's. Yet even when the issue resurfaced, *Casti Connubii* still provided the Catholic conservatives the ammunition that they would need to keep the ban in place. Even now, some sixty-seven years later, most of the encyclical's ideas and theories represent current Catholic doctrine.

IV. Differences of Opinion:

Before looking at the third and final major encyclical on contraception it is important to emphasize one point. The history of contraception was not a straight path leading to the aforementioned encyclicals. Along the way there were many differences of opinion, not only concerning the actual ban on contraception, but also concerning reasons why contraception should be banned. These differences of opinion were not only, as one would expect, from outside of the Church but in actuality many of them came from the same people that made up the early Christian canon. It is important to see some of the ideas that did not contribute to the traditional Catholic stance that comes to full fruition in *Arcanum, Casti Connubii*, and *Humane Vitae*.

The first figure who deserves attention is John Chrysostom. Chrysostom, who lived from 347 to 407, was one of the people who opposed in writing, the Gnostic ideas of sex. Chrysostom's words were very influential in the making of official Catholic doctrine. However the Church turned a deaf ear to Chrysostom when he started to expound on some of his other views on sex and marriage. Through his teachings about sex, Chrysostom had hoped to suggest a new vision of the civic community. In Antioch, where he was bishop, he saw people reproducing for the "good" of the city. Chrysostom felt that the city was beyond the point of needing to
bolster its population. He believed that procreation should not be the sole aim of marriage, but rather marriage should be used as a device to help people control their bodies. Marriage, especially for men, was ideally to be undertaken, "so as to bring down the high temperature" of their sexual drive (Brown 1988, 308). Chrysostom went on to refer to an ancient rhetorical argument and expressed favor towards the practice of homosexuality. These ideas are not ones that are endorsed in a modern Catholic catechism. In actuality, some of them are specifically prohibited by the catechism.

John Chrysostom, although influential in the Church was a relatively minor figure in comparison to Thomas Aquinas. After Augustine, Thomas Aquinas is probably the most important person in Catholic thought. The modern Catholic church relies heavily on his theories and thoughts for its doctrine. Yet even he is used selectively when it comes to the idea of contraception. Thomas' first departure from traditional Catholic teaching came when he pronounced that it was not necessarily wrong if a person had intercourse with someone who was unable to procreate. He used the example of someone being too old to procreate. Conservatives maintained that if under any circumstances, an individual could not procreate, then sex with that individual was not supposed to take place. Aquinas differs from the conservatives further in his teachings about sex. Augustine's teachings, which became the official church teachings, said that sex was not to be enjoyed even when procreation took place. Aquinas argued that it was good and right to enjoy sex. God deemed it good to procreate so therefore humans should enjoy the event. Aquinas not only pursued God's purpose in this teaching but consulted Aristotle as well. This consultation led Aquinas to observe that, "delight is the perfection of operation" (Noonan 1965 293).

The figures of Aquinas and Chrysostom are just two of many whose teachings did not fall into line with what the Catholic doctrine eventually became. In the modern Church many people would have others believe that the ban on contraception is the result of a straight line of development through the ages. This clearly is not true
and becomes a major issue when discussing whether the teachings on contraception can be refuted. History proves that within this issue, among others, change is the only constant. In the 1960's many people realized this and started to push the Church to change not only the ban on contraception, but many other teachings as well. The world was rapidly becoming modern, and the Catholic hierarchy decided to make an effort to join it. However, some doctrines remained timeless in the eyes of the Vatican as evidenced by *Humanae Vitae*.

V. *Humanae Vitae*:

... the conclusions arrived at by the commission could not be considered by Us as definitive... dispensing Us from the duty of examining personally this serious question. This was all the more necessary because, within the commission itself there was not complete agreement concerning the moral norms to be proposed, and especially because certain approaches and criteria for a solution to this question had emerged which were at variance with the moral doctrine on marriage constantly taught by the magisterium of the Church. (Pope Paul VI 1968, 6).

With these words Pope Paul VI crushed any hopes Catholic reformers of the 1960's might have had regarding a new teaching from the Catholic hierarchy. The commission that is referred to is the Commission on Birth Control formed by Pope John XXIII five years before *Humanae Vitae* was published. This commission was the first of its kind and led many people to believe that there would finally be a significant change in the Catholic stance on contraception. When *Humanae Vitae* was released in 1968, people realized that there would be little new in the Catholic doctrine regarding contraception for some time to come.
The Papal Commission on Birth Control was established in 1963, just months prior to the death of Pope John XXIII. It grew out of the effort at Catholic reform that came to be known as Vatican II. Vatican II was instituted by Pope John to bring the Church up to date. The Pope felt that many people did not realize the relevance of Catholicism in the modern age. Oddly enough, the idea of contraception was not found on the docket of Vatican II. With encouragement from bishops, postulates had been sent by the Catholic laity to the Pope regarding changes that the faithful would like to see from Vatican II. Not one of the postulates submitted expressed concern over the issue of birth control. It was going to take something out of the ordinary to reopen the discussion of birth control that had been closed by Pope Pius XI and *Casti Connubii* some thirty-five years earlier.

Three major events were responsible for thrusting contraception back into the spotlight. The first of these events focused on William Bekkers from Holland. Bekkers was a Bishop from S-Hertogen Bosch who argued that the Pope was not infallible and therefore the teachings of *Casti Connubii* should be open to discussion. Bekkers wanted discussion on the encyclical because he believed that it was an act of love for a married couple to decide how many children that they would have. On March 21, 1963, Bekkers gave a radio presentation on a Catholic broadcasting station. During this presentation Bekkers publicly questioned the traditional Catholic teachings about sex. As these revolutionary ideas reached the Vatican, the Dutch Church came under heavy fire from conservative Catholics.

The second event was an international meeting to discuss the rising problem of overpopulation. Leaders from around the world took part in this meeting to form some sort of solution. As a result of this meeting, the Catholic ideal of having as many children as possible came under heavy fire. Perhaps the most important event leading
up to the Council was John Rock's book entitled *The Time Has Come*. Rock, a theologian at Harvard, wrote this book in 1963 in favor of the use of artificial contraception. The book found little support in the lay population, but it did manage to capture one influential reader's attention. Bernard Haring, who was Pope Paul VI's private theologian at the time, agreed with Rock. The presence of this opinion gave the work the high level support that it needed to move it from being a mere book to one of the causes of the Papal Commission on Birth Control.

The start of the council found members looking at mixed blessings. In 1951, Pope Pius XII had stated that the rhythm method was an acceptable method for preventing procreation. This was a positive note for those who favored change. If this method, which was the first method that Augustine had condemned, could be granted, then perhaps other methods could be approved as well. Balancing this decision however was a Church that only nineteen years earlier had restated that the primary purpose of marriage was the procreation of children. This teaching posed a major boundary between where the Church was and where the reformers wanted to take it. It would take the council over a year to decide that sex was a positive experience for couples not only for the procreation of children, but also for the relationship between husband and wife (Kaiser 1985, 112). This major step forward was largely facilitated by the inclusion of lay people on the Council.

In 1964, Canon de Locht, a respected member of the Commission called for a married couple to draft a letter to Pope Paul VI regarding a letter the Pope had written condemning contraception. The couple's letter was signed by over one hundred and twenty Catholic intellectuals. It was received by the Pope and prompted him to invite selected lay people to take part in the Council. It is interesting to note that at approximately the same time there was a TV show about the Papal Commission that was canceled because the American Bishops did not feel that the lay people could properly grasp what was happening. Father Louis Arand was quoted as saying,
I do not believe that it is possible to discuss these issues before millions of people who are unable to make the distinctions and qualifications demanded by these talks. If there is no authoritative guidance and teaching, then everyone will and must feel free to come to his own conclusions. And mere private judgments in matters of morals will be at least as pernicious as private judgments in matters of dogma. (Kaiser 1985, 74).

From this statement, one can see that the Church was hardly unified in its feelings about involvement in the issue or the issue itself. This quotation also illustrates the regard with which certain members of the Catholic hierarchy held the laity. Even though the Catholic system is largely made up of lay people, some officials felt and still feel that lay people did not and do not have the ability to make decisions regarding its status.

Nevertheless the Commission continued with the addition of the lay people and started to make some inroads towards reform. The main question focused on whether church law could be changed. The proponents of the status quo argued that to say the teachings could be changed would be to admit that the Church had previously been wrong. Indeed, perhaps the biggest argument in favor of keeping the ban on contraception was that people were not comfortable in asserting that the Church had once been wrong. Yet Vatican II, among other situations, had set precedence when it had overturned Pope Pius IX’s Quantum Cura with its "Declaration of Religious Liberty". One member of the Papal Commission, Cardinal Newman, argued that "religious ideas develop by a combination of opposites. To grow is to change and to change often is to be perfect" (Kaiser 1985, 134). These arguments held little weight with many of the conservatives. Many of these people still had Pope Pius' reference to Paul's exhortations to Timothy to stay strong in the face of change ringing resonantly in their ears.
The majority of the Council would eventually agree that Church doctrine could be changed. The minority, who would have the greatest influence on the Pope's final decision, asserted that it was not productive to admit that the Church had been wrong. The majority opinion was accepted by the commission. It now had to decide whether contraception was one of the teachings that could or should be changed. They addressed the section within *Casti Connubii* that said contraception was an intrinsically evil act. An intrinsically evil act is one that can not be undertaken in any circumstances. For example, murder is not an intrinsically evil act because it could be allowed if used as self-defense. Using the maxim, *Ogetto, circumstanzene fine* (object, circumstance and outcome), the Commission decided that contraception was not intrinsically evil and therefore could be employed under specific circumstances. They forwarded their advice to Pope Paul and awaited his statement. This statement came as quite a surprise not only to the members of the commission, but to the Catholic world as a whole.

B. The Pope's Reaction:

The Pope took into consideration the Commission's opinions and thoughts. However, reading the encyclical, one is reminded that the previous encyclicals and church fathers held more sway than did the Commission's findings. In this way, *Humanae Vitae* was little different than the other two encyclicals that have already been looked at. *Casti Connubii* and *Arcanum* echo loudly throughout the following section from *Humanae Vitae*.

...they [the married couple] are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow...they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator.
Chapter Two

The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out. (Pope Paul VI 1968, II 10).

This statement is very similar to passages found in both Pius' and Leo's encyclicals. From the very beginning of Humanae Vitae one can see that it is not a reworking of Catholic doctrine but rather the rewriting of Casti Connubii and Arcanum with a few additions and apologies.

One of the major additions that Pope Paul put forth was the acceptance of the rhythm method. The acceptance of the rhythm method had officially occurred in 1951 when Pope Pius XII stated that it could be used by "good" Catholics. This concession was a fairly major departure from what Casti Connubii had said about this method. Pope Paul VI made sure that this relatively new found freedom did not lead to other means of birth control.

Neither the Church nor her doctrine is inconsistent when she considers it lawful for married people to take advantage of the infertile period but condemns as always unlawful the use of means which directly conception, even when the reasons given for the later practice may appear to be upright and serious. In reality these two cases are completely different. In the former the married couple rightly uses a faculty provide them by nature. In the latter they obstruct the natural development of the generative process. (Pope Paul VI 1968, II 16).

This statement relies heavily on the natural law theory which has remained consistent throughout Catholic tradition. This quotation reinterpreted the theory to allow for the use of the rhythm method. Augustine had used an early model of this theory to condemn the rhythm method. Despite this allowance by Pope Paul, artificial contraception was still considered to be evil because it was an obstruction of the natural process.

Pope Paul VI went on to address some of the specific people who precipitated the writing of the encyclical. In regard to the world leaders who were discussing the
problem of overpopulation he exhorted them not to succumb to the modern pressures of secular society. "The family is the primary unit in the state; do not tolerate any legislation that would introduce into the family those practices which are opposed to the natural law of God" (Pope Paul VI 1968, III 23). Here is a statement that was not necessarily addressed to Catholics or even Christians, but to world leaders in general. Instead of bowing to the pressures of science in the modern world, they were advised to refer to the words of Paul and "be thou vigilant" and "fulfill thy ministry" (Pope Pius XI 1930, 47). Here one can see that the church conservatives had entrenched themselves against change and were lobbying others to take position with them.

Indeed the church conservatives did entrench themselves. From the writing of *Humanae Vitae* to the current day, the doctrine has not been significantly changed. Nonetheless what has happened since 1968, is the arrival of new problems and the resurfacing of old problems stemming from this ban on artificial contraception.
Chapter Three
A Question of Population Control

"Once men begin to feel cramped in their geographical, social, and mental habitat, they are in danger of being tempted by the simple solution of denying one section of the species the right to exist."

-Levi Strauss

"Mysteries such as the grace of God are beyond the power of human penetration, yet not in opposition to it."

-Madame de Stael
The question of overpopulation has been around for a significant number of years. People have wondered for a long time just how many bodies this planet will be able to support comfortably. This question has become more frequently asked in the past few decades. In this time, the population of the world has spiraled upward at an unprecedented rate. Along with this spiraling population growth, science informs us that there is a finite amount of natural resources that can be used to support human life. These two factors, along with others that will be discussed later on in this chapter, are the very reasons why many people believe that the world has to begin some sort of concerted effort to minimize population growth.

Of course, one of the largest obstacles in the path of population control is the Church and its policy against the use of birth control. With the problem of population control becoming more urgent and more public, the Catholic policy is coming under greater amounts of scrutiny. The population control issue is one more front where the conservative Catholic hierarchy faces disagreement with their doctrine. It is clear that how the hierarchy deals with this challenge will effect not only the members of the Catholic church, but also the members of the global community. This is one issue that cannot be confined to denominational lines.

In chapter two I discussed the presence of Malthusian leagues cropping up around Europe. The figure of Malthus continues to dominate the study of overpopulation and its effects. Malthus was the first person to publish a mathematical approach to the problem. Max Lerner calls the Malthusian period the first period in the history of population control (Hart 1973, 9). Reverend Robert Thomas Malthus began his work in the late part of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th. His theory, on which most concurrent theories are at least partially based, stated that while population increased geometrically (1,2,4,8,16...) the food source increased
arithmetically (1,2,3,4,5,...). With this theory he argued that humankind would exhaust its food supply if it continued to increase at the same rate. Put simply, "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce subsistence for men" (Toolan 1993, 16).

This doomsday approach to the problem by Malthus is considered to be relatively accurate by most modern population experts despite some questions regarding the arithmetic increase of the food supply. With the theory came little effective advice on how to curb the growth of population. It was after Malthusian's theory became popular that the Neo-Malthusians increased their sphere of influence. These Neo-Malthusians believed in the theory of spiraling population. What set them apart from Malthus was their potential methods for effective population control. The main problem standing between Malthusianism and an effective solution was the fact the Malthus was a strict religious moralist. He opposed the use of contraception for any purposes. His solution for lowering the birth rate involved women marrying later on in life and for both men and women to control and monitor their sexual instincts. As many people have argued before and since, this theory is largely ineffective. The Neo-Malthusians were limited by no such morals in their theories. Unlike Malthus', their solution for population control strongly promoted the use of contraception to lower the birth rate.

Following the advent of Neo-Malthusianism, the population control method of choice became the ability to control the number of children that people would have. Now, as many secular institutions have realized the positive aspects of artificial birth control, the Catholic church is quickly becoming one of the few remaining major institutions that still prohibit its use. As the Church's allies in this situation dwindle, more attention from reformers is focused upon Catholicism. The hierarchy has been presented with many reasons to support birth control so that the world does not
become overpopulated. These reasons, along with the counter arguments, are the subjects of the following paragraphs.

Although there has been much argument on the subject, most experts feel that overpopulation threatens to bring about a doomsday situation that includes: the loss of both individual health and personal security, the proliferation of political conflicts (trying to cope with too many people), the hindrance of economic development, the increasing pollution of the environment, the depletion of non-renewable resources, the presence of harmful crowding, and lastly, the proliferation of forced migration (Callahan 1970, 3). All of these problems are detrimental and harmful to the sanctity of human life. For example, increased pollution would eventually mean reduced natural resources. A reduction of natural resources would certainly affect the quality of life and eventually could danger the presence of life. This example shows that the problems inherent with overpopulation are not only dangerous, but could be deadly. Perhaps the scariest aspect of the problem is that the human race could, theoretically, breed itself out of existence.

I have already mentioned that many people do not think the scenario outlined above is possible. "Every definition of the 'population problem' or of 'excessive population growth' will be value laden expressions of the ethical orientations of those who do the defining" (Callahan 1970, 2). And in fact, not all of the problems mentioned may ever come to surface. But it does not take a population analyst to see that, should population continue to proceed unchecked, some of these problems will occur and the quality of human life will be negatively affected in some way.

Despite all this, the Church's official statements on population control have been rare to say the least. It is hard for an institution that promotes the value of life not to promote population control. Should some of these potential problems occur, i.e. the depletion of non-renewable resources, the loss of personal security, etc., life will be
destroyed rather than created. While the Church is concerned, for the most part, with the welfare of its members and the members of the world community, it is clear to many that the only way the institutional Church will be able to continue to endorse the sanctity of human life will be for them to change their opinions about birth control.

The earlier quotation stated that everyone who defines the population problem will define it according to his or her own ethical and moral position. By this token, the traditional Catholic position states that population control should not be achieved by the use of artificial contraception. This method of defining the problem is not necessarily correct and moral according to many people. As stated in the introduction the problem of birth control is not one that adheres to the strict lines between church and state. In the early 1970's Max Lerner, a former professor of American Civilization and World Politics at Brandeis University and a writer for the New York Post, argued that it was time conservatives within Catholicism took a new look at this problem.

The new insight can run in the terms of the difference between birth control- which rests on the rights and the freedoms of the individuals- and population control which rests on the necessities of the nation and therefore on the obligations of the individuals" (Hart 1970, 14).

This statement by Lerner reflects the feelings of many people trying to reform the traditional Catholic policies on contraception both from inside and from outside of the church. It is in some ways acceptable for the Catholic hierarchy to ban birth control within the church, because it is, for the most part, affecting only those who choose to be members of the church. Yet when it comes to the spread of disease (see chapter five) and the dangerous increase in population, it is no longer as acceptable. In these two issues we find that the Church's policies are not only affecting those who are Catholic but are effecting the world community as a whole. The threat of overpopulation is one that is a threat to everyone in the world. Should Catholics decide to continue having as
many children as possible, they would be negatively affecting the lives of others. The presence of too many Catholics is no less detrimental, in the sphere of overpopulation, than the presence of too many Jews, Sikhs, or Hindus.

This idea of a global effect has become an important weapon deployed against the Catholic ban on birth control. The spiritual and religious institutions of the world may be able to separate themselves from secular institutions in many areas, but this is not one of them. Many people think that the conservative hierarchy is being extremely selfish in its refusal to change its policy. As a result the hierarchy has alienated itself and its members from the rest of the world. Many non-Catholics see Catholics as thrusting their morals and the consequences of these morals upon the community as a whole (Hart 1973, 19). People see the Catholic church as a large obstacle impeding not only the path of global population control, but of international goodwill as well. In referring to a recent Catholic argument against the use of birth control for population control, Daniel Maguire, a major Catholic theologian, stated that "the Vatican's idiosyncratic fixation on... contraception and abortion' caused religions once again to be perceived as obstructional" ("Catholic Theologians Criticize Vatican" 1994, 890). This is a very real problem that many people find with Catholicism and especially with the contraception issue. Instead of working to help, the Church is often perceived as a barrier to the pathway of progress.

This pathway to progress, according to many population control experts, leads straight to the use of artificial contraceptives. It is a fact that contraceptives are very effective in decreasing the fertility rate which, in turn, leads to fewer people. The United Nations World Population Conference in 1974 asserted that, "Countries which aim at achieving moderate or low population growth should try to achieve it by a low level of birth and death rates" (Appleman 1976, 226). This low level of birth rate is achieved one of four ways, abstinence, abortion, artificial contraception, or natural family planning. Most proponents of population control look to artificial contraception.
as the most realistic and effective means of reducing the number of births. The Vatican remains firm in its theory that abstinence and natural family planning (the rhythm method) are the only two acceptable ways for controlling the number of births within a family. The population control experts counter that both of these methods are unrealistic and ineffective in the modern world.

Because Catholic doctrine opposes the use of artificial contraception by everyone, another controversial idea surfaces. The conservative hierarchy expects everyone, Catholic or non-Catholic to remain abstinent. This expectation, as I have mentioned before, is considered quite unrealistic by most people. An unrealistic goal is a non-solution in the eyes of the people that take the overpopulation problem seriously. In regard to the rhythm method, the same people have argued the same thing; it is not realistic in today's society. Many people involved in loving relationships are not going to want to have their sex lives dictated to them by the woman's biological calendar. The rhythm method is considered to have another problem in that it is largely ineffective. It has consistently high rates of failure partially because not all women who use it, completely understand it. "Women without minimal education are unlikely to understand reproduction well enough to achieve even moderate levels of effectiveness with this method" (Jacobsen 1987, 27). Unlike artificial contraception which can be used with some rates of success (educated users are clearly more successful) by people of any educational level, the rhythm method is a relatively complex method reliant on the knowledge of those who use it. When one takes into account the fact that much of the growth in population is occurring in third world countries where sex education is by no means adequate, the need for another method becomes obvious to many people.

Especially in need of artificial contraception is the third world. As stated earlier, the growth of population in these countries is what has many experts worried. As most industrialized countries' (Two prominent examples being the U.S. and Great
Britain), population growths begin to even off, the third world's populations continue
to grow for the most part unchecked. The challenge within these underdeveloped
countries is two fold. The first challenge is to convince them that population control is
not just a ploy devised by the industrialized countries to keep their place at the top of
society. This is a problem which is hard to counter, partially because there are some
aspects of truth within it. The second challenge, which is more applicable to the focus
of this paper, is to try to teach and provide these people with artificial contraception
methods. Nowhere is this problem more obvious than in the country of Bangladesh
where the population will soon be equal to that of the United States trapped in an area
the size of Wisconsin ("Nothing is Unthinkable 1990, 659).

The example of Bangladesh is only one of the many examples of population
spiraling out of control in underdeveloped countries. This spiraling population could
definitely be positively affected by the use of artificial contraception. A United Nations
poll conducted between the years 1974 and 1984 found that in eighteen underdeveloped
countries forty to fifty percent of the women who had reached reproductive age did not
want to have any more children (Jacobsen 1987, 13). The indication here is that they are
not aware of how to avoid having these unwanted children (unwanted children being
a problem with the ban on birth control in its own right). The same poll found that if
unwanted births were prevented within these eighteen countries, the birth rate could
be reduced by thirty percent. This is a significant decrease in births and consequently in
population growth. A shining example to population and birth control advocates
would have to be Indonesia. Between the years of 1970 and 1985 there was a forty-two
percent decrease in the number of births within the country (Jacobsen 1987, 13). This
decrease is usually attributed to the fact that there is an extremely high rate of
contraceptive usage and government and educational programs make contraceptives
easily obtainable by everyone.
These are just two examples among many that show the effectiveness of the use of artificial birth control in the fight against the population spiral. Another example of what can happen when effective contraception is not readily available to counter overpopulation is Bulgaria. Because of heavy reliance on ineffective birth control methods, Bulgaria reported that in 1984 there were ninety-two abortions performed for every one hundred live births (Jacobsen 1987, 28). This number is shocking not only to those who advocate the use of birth control, but also to the Church which strictly denies the right of women to abortion. This leaves the Church in a moral quagmire. Realistically how do you decrease this appalling number and still manage to arrest population growth? For many people removed from the Catholic teaching, the solution is clear. Not only should contraceptives be allowed but they have to become more readily available to people who have been educated on their correct usage. In 1987 Judy Jacobsen, the author of the Worldwatch Paper entitled "Planning the Global Family", an endeavor supported by the United Nations remarked, "To achieve global population stabilization by the end of the next century sixty-five to seventy percent of all married couples would have to be using contraception to space and limit their families" (Jacobsen 1987, 36).

Because so much of the population growth is occurring within the third world countries, many people wonder what this problem has to do with the United States in general and the American Catholic church in particular. As has already been stated, the U.S. has managed to stabilize its own growth in population. Yet the problems inherent with overpopulation obviously stretch beyond national boundaries. If there are too many people in one place they will eventually become displaced and begin to overcrowd another area. Also the United States, along with a few other developed countries, contributes ten percent of the world’s population yet consumes ninety percent of the world’s natural resources. A decline in these resources would have a huge impact on the way that Americans live. But the situation facing American
Catholics goes beyond all this. The United States represents much of the wealth and industrial possibility within the world. This leaves us as the prime candidates for supplying less fortunate countries with birth control and an education on its proper usage.

The presence of wealth and industrial possibility makes the United States somewhat responsible for what happens within other less fortunate countries. This strikes American Catholics with the moral question of which is worse, allowing overpopulation to continue, even though it might not effect the current generation of Americans, or allowing the use of birth control. The majority of the population would probably prefer that birth control be used. The American Catholic hierarchy continues to stand by the official Vatican position. This Vatican position has been stubbornly retained even under withering fire from the United Nations, an institution in which the United States has played a large role.

The United Nations has been at the forefront of the movement to deal with the issue of overpopulation. This position has also put them at the front of the Catholic dissent line. These two institutions have definitely spent much time at the opposite ends of the spectrum. In 1968, the same year that *Humanae Vitae* unequivocally banned birth control, the United Nations held its International Conference on Human Rights and released this statement: "couples have a basic human right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and a right to adequate information and education in this respect" (Hart 1973:90). This statement put the United Nations and the Vatican on different planets in 1968. It is the willingness to endorse family planning that has helped the United Nations become a large influence on decisions about population control. This willingness has also caused the Catholic hierarchy to disagree with the actions of the United Nations and interfere with the policies that the United Nations has tried to institute.
Particularly interesting was the interaction between the conservative hierarchy of the Church and the United Nations during the months leading up to the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population Control and Development. This meeting, which was supposed to bring all of the nations together to discuss the problem of overpopulation took place only two years after the 1992 United Nation's Earth Summit. Many blamed the Church for keeping population control off from the agenda at that summit. At the international conference on population control, the Church was once again representing the vanguard of the dissenters. Pope John Paul II claimed that the United Nation's draft of the plan to be discussed at Cairo devalued the traditional family and encouraged abortion (Seib 1993, 22). According to the Vatican the ability to utilize artificial means of birth control is one of the transgressions that results in the devaluation of the family. Pope John Paul II went on to say that the United Nations was also promoting homosexuality and licentiousness (Pollitt 1994, 264).

Because the Vatican is recognized as a sovereign nation, the Pope could file his position not only as a religious leader, but also as the leader of a secular state. This fact assured that the United Nations had to give some consideration to his objections. John Paul II attacked Bill Clinton for his support of the U.N. plan, adding that the Vatican had “grave ethical problems” with the population control efforts supported by the President (Carroll 1994, 19). All of the furor raised by the Church before the conference even started caused the Church to find a rather unlikely ally in Islamic fundamentalists, who were protesting the United Nation's proposals as well. These two groups became increasingly alienated from the rest of the countries represented as the conference approached and proceeded.

The conservative hierarchy argued that for reasons of faith and morality the United Nations should promote natural family planning. Yet in the secular atmosphere of this conference this plan lacked credibility with many people who had
little tolerance for faith as a basis for a solution to a very real problem (Zipperer 1994, 60). Historian and Futurist Paul Kennedy remarked that "the only practical way to insure a decrease in fertility rates and thus population growth is to introduce cheap and reliable birth control" (Passell 1994, 2). The conference continued to work on a draft that would try to make everyone happy and still be effective. One of the decisions that they came to was that the empowerment of women would be crucial to the termination of the spiraling growth.

The decision to empower women, a topic discussed further in a later chapter, has been an important step forward for population control advocates. Many people feel that the main obstacle to the empowerment of women is the ban on artificial birth control. Halfden Mahler, winner of the United Nation's Population Award, referred to the subjugation of women after the conference. He makes the claim that religion and morality oftentimes serve to hurt women more than they help women. "Opposition to family planning [is] 'the politicized creature of men' supported by 'anti-woman ideology' parading in the robes of 'religion' and 'morality'" (Halfden Mahler on Women's Control of their Reproductive Lives 1995, 696). This rather strong statement lays the blame right at the Catholic doorstep. Proponents argue that it is crucial for the United Nations to promote the rights of women not only for women's sake, but also for the sake of population control. If women are availed of a better education and more opportunities to work then several other benefits to women will follow. First, women will be able to support themselves and not have to be drawn into marriages where they are expected to constantly reproduce. Second, they will marry later. As they pursue their careers or education, they will have less time to give birth probably resulting in fewer births. And finally, educated women will be able to make more informed choices about birth control and be able to use the methods more successfully. Surveys suggest that one hundred and twenty million more women would use a modern method of birth control if the information regarding its use and affordability were increased.
Chapter Three

("Reproductive Rights, Family Planning: A Cornerstone of Control" 1994, 46). Along with this increased use, women would also be seeking support from their husbands, families and communities ("Reproductive Rights, Family Planning: A Cornerstone of Control" 1994, 46). This support is seen as another short coming personified by Catholic doctrine.

Of course a lot of the dissent against the institutionalized use of birth control has come from certain feminists who say that they do not want their reproductive lives controlled by governments. This is important to note because a dissenting vote would seem to side with the Catholic conservatives. Yet upon examination, it is clear that feminists seeking the right to reproductive freedom are not going to ally themselves with the Catholic viewpoint. This, once again, leaves the Vatican largely isolated in its attempt to enforce its morality upon everyone involved with the issue of population control.

This morality was not accepted by the United Nation’s International Conference. In deciding about how to deal with the population problem, the nations decided to expend seventeen billion dollars annually by the year 2000 in an effort to curb population growth. Much of this money will go towards family planning. Somewhat surprisingly, the Vatican City representatives agreed with this decision for the most part. They did manage to get most of the abortion language taken out of the final document and protested the acceptance of artificial contraception in the United Nation’s final decision. The United States will be called on to once again carry the largest financial and industrial (manufacture of contraceptive devices) load in achieving this goal. Malcolm Potts and Allan Rosenfield state, “nearly all the work to be done in the 1990’s will depend on contraceptive methods and channels of distribution that are already in use and well understood” (Potts 1990, 1293). These efforts are going to be helped or hampered by the amount of support received by the
public. It remains to be seen how much support will be garnered from Catholics as a whole and the Vatican in particular.

In 1970, Daniel Callahan published an occasional paper of the Population Council entitled "Ethics and Population Limitation". Although now, some twenty six years later, many of the predictions can be seen to be incorrect, there is a portion of the book on ethics that is very helpful to those attempting to control the amount of people on this planet. Callahan states some general moral rules that he devised for the use of population control:

Individuals have the right to freedom of procreative choice; they have the obligation to respect the freedom of others and the requirements of the common good.

Governments have the right to take those steps necessary to secure a maximization of freedom, justice and security/survival; they have the obligation to act in such a way that freedom and justice are protected and security/survival enhanced (Callahan 1970, 22).

The kind of moral rules outlined by Callahan reflect the assumptions that the majority of the secular world is working under, when trying to deal with the problem of overpopulation. The fact is that, whether it intends to or not, the Church plants itself firmly against these rules, thus making progress towards sustainable development increasingly difficult.

In an effort to explain the Church's position more clearly, Archbishop Reneto Martino made the following statement at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro;

The Catholic Church does not propose procreation at any cost. It keeps insisting...that the aim of public policy is to enhance the welfare of families; that it is the right of spouses to decide on the size of the family and spacing of births without pressure from governments or organizations...What the Church opposes is the... promotion of methods for limiting births which are contrary to the objective moral order and to the liberty, dignity and conscience of the human being (Toolan 1993, 16).
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While many proponents of the population control would applaud the enhancement of welfare that the Archbishop proposes, they argue that the Church is not being realistic. To invoke unrealistic religious moral tenets when searching for a solution to a serious secular problem is to invite failure time and time again. No matter what the Church states, many people will not believe their sincerity until they revoke the ban on birth control and propose realistic methods to solving a very real problem.
"Persecution is a bad and indirect way to plant religion."

-Sir Thomas Browne

"The strength of criticism lies only in the weakness of the thing criticized."

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
When Pope Leo XIII released his encyclical on marriage in 1880, he claimed that many of the ideas and doctrines within it were for the protection of women. These ideas were supposedly intended to protect women from the inherent licentiousness of men outside the bounds of Catholic marriage. The thoughts on marriage would, as stated earlier, extend themselves into the birth control conflict. Thus birth control became for the conservative hierarchy, a means by which they could continue to protect women from man's raving sexual desire. Now more than one hundred years after the release of this encyclical, many women and men are arguing that the birth control ban is not a positive aspect of Catholicism but rather has an extremely detrimental effect on all of the women who participate in the Catholic church. Far from being seen as the protection of women, the birth control ban is looked on by many people as imprisoning women. It does not protect women but instead makes them dependent and subservient to the patriarchal system and to their husband. This problem with the Church's stand on birth control is what I will call the feminist consideration. It is this topic that I intend to focus on in the following chapter.

It is interesting to note that most of the scholarship about women's roles within Catholicism focuses on the question of whether women should be able to be priests. This is understandable when one considers that this issue is probably the most high-profile "feminist" issue within the church. The absence of female priests is a glaring one to Catholics and non-Catholics alike. At first sight, this issue seems to be one that has little to do with arguments about the use of contraception. And in fact it is a very different issue with different players and consequences. However, there is a thread of connection between the two that I would like to briefly address before moving on to a more concrete explication of the feminist consideration of contraception.
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The fact that there are no women priests within Roman Catholicism is important when one realizes that the church body is approximately fifty percent women. Currently the Catholic system has an all-male hierarchy making decisions for fifty percent of its constituents that it cannot relate to. Mary Daly, a noted feminist and Catholic dissenter, perhaps explained the problem best when she said, "...one hundred percent of the bishops who oppose the repeal of anti-abortion laws are men and one hundred percent of the people who have abortions are women" (Daly 1973 105). Even though this statement is specifically pertaining to abortion, it is still pertinent to the birth control question. The "statistic" that Daly cited is even more telling when one considers that not only are one hundred percent of the bishops men, but they are all celibate men as well. "Men do the sacraments and make the decisions even to the point of birth control. That a celibate man makes these decisions is absolutely un-Christian" (Hayes 1993, 1). That is to say, that not only can the bishops not relate to the women's situation, but they cannot relate to the experience of sexual intercourse from a knowledgeable standpoint either. So the idea of women becoming priests would perhaps be a sort of first step for the birth control reformers to achieve their goal within Catholicism. Women priests could relate to the issue of women's bodies much better than a group of celibate men and therefore could make the church a more benevolent institution towards women in general.

Many people may question the need for the hierarchy to be able to relate to women better. After all, most people would think of birth control as not only a women's issue but a couple's issue. The assumption is that men are equally affected by the ban on birth control. This is a very simplified view of the situation. Women have much more of a stake in the birth control battle because they are the ones who are impregnated. The maturation of the fetus takes place within the woman's body. Regardless of whether insemination occurs or not, men do not have to take nine months out of their lives to foster a developing fetus. Carrying a child is a constant
burden that women cannot escape for one moment during these nine months. That is to say, being with child influences everything a mother does for three-quarters of a year. The issue of birth control is clearly one that affects everyone, but it has particular concerns for those of the female sex. Having stated this, it is interesting to look at the arguments that feminists put forth to promote a change in the Roman Catholic doctrine.

To many feminists, the ban on birth control represents just one more way in which the patriarchal system of the Church marginalizes women. It is, in effect, a tool to keep women on the bottom and men on the top of the social and religious hierarchy. Many feminists are trying to rid the Church of this tool. Dr. Anne Biezanek, a convert to Catholicism and self-described rebel, made the following statement. "They've [the Catholic hierarchy] never cared how much women have suffered. This is what makes me rebellious. If a priest says [the ban on birth control] is the law of God, he's prescribing martyrdom"(Daly 1968 132). This quotation shows the way that many people feel about the birth control ban's effect on women. To be subject to one's body instead of vice versa, assures that a person will always have to be ready to deal with the consequences. By expecting women to always be prepared for childbirth is to expect them to be ready to give up everything else in their lives that is important to them. This expectation throws women into the roles of unwilling martyrs for the Catholic cause.

The inability to regulate birth is, within feminist's eyes, a degradation of women themselves. It is partially because of this inability that women can only be placed into two patriarchal categories within the Catholic framework; whore or saint. "Catholic teaching has prolonged a traditional view of women which at the same time idealizes and humiliates her" (Daly 1968 53). The women who chooses to follow Catholic doctrine and either remain celibate or continually produce offspring is considered a saint within the framework of the church. This is the idealization of
women. Yet at the same time, the woman is humiliated because she is either trapped within her own sexuality or is a slave to the birth process. The woman who decides to step out of this role of saint and be sexually active while preventing insemination is portrayed as a whore. The characterization of whore is clearly a humiliating one for any woman, be they Catholic or not. The presence of only two categories for women is one of the by-products of the ban on birth control. The conservative argument that sex is solely for reproductive purposes (the reasoning for the ban on birth control) asserts that: a) "good women" do not enjoy sex and participate in sex only to procreate and b) "bad women" or "whores" are all those women who have sex without the possibility of procreation and possibly even for the enjoyment of it. Therein lies the dichotomy.

Feminists argue that the traditional views of women within Catholicism do more than to just categorize them within the faith. They also prevent women from achieving their full potential outside of the church context and inside secular society. Mary Daly explains the problem in the following manner,

The reduction of the woman to the condition of biological beast, the spread of delinquency and prostitution coincident with multiplication of offspring who cannot be adequately provided for- critics impute these in large measure to the policy of the Church which even today, it is charged, continues to combat the legitimate aspirations of women, justifying this by archaic ideology, making a fetish of 'nature' while ignoring the vocation of the individual to dominate 'nature' (Daly 1968 55).

From this quotation one can discern that feminists feel that without birth control their lives are considered useful by the Church only because of their ability to reproduce. Because women are unable to control nature within the context of Catholicism, they are consistently enslaved by their value as "people producers". This value does not allow them to pursue other goals that they may have, i.e. careers, creative ventures, etc. Feminists argue that with birth control, women could decide on when they became pregnant or if they became pregnant. The value of this ability is obvious when seen in
the light of having a career. Having to devote nine months of one's time to having a baby is not always conducive to being successful in other ventures. With the approval of birth control, the Church could go one step towards reversing the sexism that it has been perceived as perpetrating throughout its modern history.

Denying women the ability to undertake other ventures is a problem that many people have spoken up about within the context of birth control. However, along with this idea is one that is oftentimes ignored. People who are sensitive to the female plight within the church put forth the argument that women should have power over their own bodies. With the invention of technology, humankind has becoming increasingly able to control nature and to use it to humankind's benefit. The ability to control nature, supposedly challenging the natural law theory, has been used by Catholics in good conscience in many other areas of life. Whether it is in the field of medicine, entertainment or other, non-Catholics and Catholics alike use the ability to control nature to make their lives easier and more enjoyable everyday. Many women within the Catholic church see birth control as one of these means by which they could not only make their lives easier but it could give them power over their own bodies. Mary Daly hearkens us back to Nietzche, "Man's happiness, as Nietzche said is 'my will'. Woman's happiness is 'his will'" (Daly 1968, 153). This quotation applies to the empowerment of the body within the Catholic context. Catholicism asserts that men have control over there own bodies and women's bodies. It is the men who make the decisions regarding how women should deal with their own biology.

Many feminists insist that therein lies the problem. Because men have power over the body, not only their own, but ostensibly the female's as well, they do not wish to see a change. Joan Dunlap, the president of the International Women's Health Coalition in 1994, saw this problem, "The Vatican's inflammatory language [regarding female rights] is a smoke screen; they are threatened by women having a say in their own lives" (Cowell 1994, 1). From this statement it is clear that some feminists
see that the issue of birth control is little more than a power struggle. Only by the repeal of the ban will women take some power for themselves and thus begin on the road to equality within the Catholic spectrum. Therefore the right to decide about one's body is not only inspired by convenience, but is actually necessary for women to achieve a higher standing within the church. It is clear to feminists that as long as the ban is in effect, they will continue to dwell within the Catholic community as second rate citizens.

This role as second-rate citizen, subject to nature, forces women to depend on the men within the Church and society. "Pregnancy, childbirth, and menstruation reduced their capacity for work and made them at times wholly dependent on the men for protection and food" (De Beauvoir 1953, 62). Feminists argue that this historical dependence on men is not only a by-product of no access to contraception, but is one of the main reasons that the church hierarchy retains this teaching. The Church, it is assumed, wants to keep women dependent on men. Some feminists have gone so far as to say that the very structure of the Catholic church is dependent on women being subservient to men. Meanwhile the hierarchy has stated that the birth control ban and therefore, by extension, the subservience of women to men is part of nature.

This idea of birth control being unnatural is one that many feminists attack as well. Mary Daly wonders that if openness to reproduction is so natural, why is it that the church hierarchy has to keep reminding the Catholic laity? (Daly 1968 117). The natural law theory that Catholic doctrine is so dependent on, loses its relevance to feminists when faced with this question. Daly goes on to say that the opposition to birth control is not natural but rather is "rooted in a rigid and inadequate conception of nature" (Daly 1968 117). This rigid conception of nature is one of the theories that have kept the Catholic doctrine alive. Yet as many feminists and church reformers of all kinds have discovered, the roots of doctrine are not easily pulled up. Despite this fact,
people have not given up trying. In the recent past some of the roots holding on to the subservience of women have seemed to loosen.

The Second Vatican Council in the 1960's started a reformation within the Church structure. Indeed in many ways Catholicism moved into the twentieth century with the help of this council. Vatican II prompted much hope in feminists that women's place within the church would be improved. Obviously the right to use birth control was one of these hoped-for improvements. This hope was buoyed by the release of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

For in truth, it must be still regretted that fundamental personal rights are not yet being universally honored. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right and freedom to choose a husband, to embrace a state of life, or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men (Quoted in Daly 1968 120).

It was this kind of rhetoric that made women hopeful for change and improvement. Many people felt that this statement was a precursor of things to come. With the arrival of *Humane Vitae* in 1968 and the stagnation of the Church on feminist issues for the last thirty years, attitudes have changed. The failure of the Church to effect significant change in its doctrine, especially in regards to the priesthood and birth control, has left women frustrated. One feminist stated the difference about attitudes then compared to now. "I see in older women activists a faith and idealism fueled by Vatican II and the Civil Rights Movement, an idealism that believes that institutions can be changed, that people can work together towards a common goal" (Walsh 1995, 5). The implication is that feminists today lack this faith and idealism. This lack of faith and idealism is directly attributable to the lack of progress that has been made within the church over the last thirty years. It is hard to retain idealism after such instances as *Humane Vitae* have shown the Church to be committed to an unchanging doctrine. Younger reformers have shown a much greater propensity for
doubting the church’s ability to ever change significantly thus forcing more elaborate schemes of dissent.

In the 1990’s the Church has been presented with two very good opportunities to reconsider its ban on birth control. The first of these opportunities was the writing of a pastoral letter by the American bishops on the role of women within the church. This letter was actually started in 1988 but underwent several revisions delaying its official arrival. The second opportunity that presented itself was the United Nation’s Third International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo held in 1994. This conference, as stated earlier was called by the United Nations to study the effects and the possible solutions to the problem of overpopulation. During this conference, the reproductive rights of women were very much at the forefront of discussion. Along with the reproductive rights of women came mention of the Catholic Church. These two opportunities represented pressure from the “real” world for the Church to rethink its damaging teachings. Not surprisingly, the conservative hierarchy passed on both opportunities.

In the mid 1980’s the American bishops came together and decided that they should draft a pastoral letter relating to women within Catholicism. In 1988, they wrote a first draft of the letter which was later rejected by conservatives because of its content. This first draft had not promoted the use of birth control or made any value statements concerning the use of such methods. What it had done was to talk about women’s widespread unhappiness with the ban. This draft also called for a dialogue to be taken up about the issue. The bishops drafting the letter had seen the widespread disapproval of the teaching and were admonishing a rethinking of the issue, not necessarily a reform. These same bishops who drafted the letter called for all bishops to “pay a little more attention to the patriarchal structure that perpetuates the oppression of women” (Hendrix B 1991, 1). Clearly this was radical thinking for men within the Catholic hierarchy. To many people it seemed that the Church was on its way to change.
However, the rejection of the first draft was, as can be seen so many times before, a reversal of progress.

The rejection of the first draft by the conservative sector called for the production of new drafts which would be accepted. The Vatican is said to have disapproved of the first draft forcing the conservative faction to speak out. These new drafts, among other changes, were not supposed to mention the "sin of sexism" because conservative bishops thought that this was too strong a term to describe the Catholic stance on women (Steinfels 1992, 11). The consequent drafts also did not focus on the negative feelings about birth control. The bishops were instructed to tone these parts of the letter down significantly. By the time of the fourth draft, there was hardly a mention of the dissent over the issue. Instead, the later drafts described the position of the Church and discussed the reasons for its implementation. These drafts called for women to participate in programs that were aimed at making the ban on birth control more convincing (Steinfels 1992, 11). In effect, what the new drafts did, was to ignore the fact that women did not agree with the ban and called for them not to question it but rather to support it. These new drafts were not the proponents of dialogue that the first drafts had been, but were rather a rallying cry to support the Church's teachings. It was these later drafts that would help to polarize American Catholicism even more between liberals and conservatives. This polarization was sure to produce not less dissent within the church, but rather much more.

Two years after the fourth draft of the pastoral letter on women within the Church came out in 1992, the United Nation's Third International Conference on Population and Development convened in Cairo. This conference was attempting to make some decisions regarding population control and how it would effect not only society but how it would effect the reproductive rights of women. Women were expected to play a large part in the conference and push for the right to reproductive freedom. Before the conference had even begun the Vatican opposed the strong
feminist influence. A year earlier, in response to the call to change Catholic teaching, Pope John Paul II stated that the Church could not compromise with a feminism “that polarizes along bitter ideological lines” (Associated Press 1993, 4). Cardinal O'Connor called into question specifically the potential presence of the American feminists at the conference. These feminists were the people that he found particularly offensive (Cowell 1994, 1).

The Catholic concern with the presence of the female voices was largely ignored by the conference. However, as the conference went on, it became clear that they would not be able to ignore the Catholic doctrine that would not effectively allow for population control. William Drozdiak of The Washington Post reported,

...the 74 year old Pope is being criticized by some Catholics as well as many outside the Church for dogmatic conservatism, which at the recent U.N. population conference in Cairo made the Vatican appear stubbornly insensitive to the problems of women and global overpopulation. Vatican officials acknowledge that the diplomatic image of the Holy See suffered as a result (Drozdiak 1994, 11).

The damage to the Holy See, although occurring primarily to the image of the church, was important in that it caused more people to disagree and to fault the church and its policies. Especially damaging was the fact that this would have been a good occasion for the church to change its viewed insensitivity to women. Yet clearly by its actions, it can be determined that the church had no interest in changing this insensitive stance. At a conference where seemingly everyone was supporting the same thing, the Catholic Church stood alone in its stubborn “dogmatic conservatism”. Instead of taking advantage of a chance to make a positive diplomatic impression, the Church rejected the ideas of the conference. “Vatican officials say the Church prefers to promote its own concept of women as deserving equality and special respect, but within the context of church tradition” (Cowell 1994, 1).
This assertion by the Vatican made sure that the Catholic Church would not use this conference as an opportunity for reform but rather would use it to further alienate its feminist members and the secular world. To Pope John Paul II this came across as a non-issue. "But he [Pope John Paul II] said the rights enjoyed in society are not necessarily the same as the rights and duties of individuals within the Church" (Associated Press 1993, 4). Statements like this from the Pope have resulted in his power with Catholics, especially feminist Catholics, diminishing. The same year as the United Nations conference, a CNN/Gallup poll came out stating that the majority of Americans thought that the Pope was doing a good job but would follow their own conscience when making decisions about moral matters, such as abortion or birth control (Drozdiak 1994, 11). This caused one author to proclaim that in the third millennium, the single greatest challenge facing the Catholic church will be how to deal with the demands made by both women and third world countries to have more of a voice in the Catholic structure. (Drozdiak 1994, 11). This challenge will almost definitely involve discussion about the issue of birth control.

The fact that these two opportunities came and went without any major changes in Catholic ideology has served to frustrate further those trying to reform Catholic doctrine. Just as Humanae Vitae crushed the hopes of those people who yearned for change, these opportunities seemed to present a good situation for reform but instead resulted in a reaffirmation of traditional Catholic views. The response to this disappointment by reformers has been varied. The one constant aspect of these responses has been frustration. Some feminists have taken Mary Daly's route and left behind the institution of the Catholic church forever. They argue that change cannot occur within the Church because it is based on the subjugation of women. Other women, like Susan Muto, director of the Epiphany Association, a Catholic based organization instituted to bring about a deeper spiritual life, see change coming eventually. "Women are very good at waiting. They have patience and endurance.
Curiously enough something happens. There is action in waiting” (Hendrix A 1991, 1). This waiting mentality is another way in which women deal with their hope for change. Finally there is the group who actively pursues change within the Church. These are the women who do not leave the institution but doggedly pursue the change that has been promised and then taken away. These women believe that they can produce a true change in Catholic doctrine. One thing that all of these groups have in common is their insistence that the ban on birth control is not a doctrine that supports or protects women in the modern world.
Chapter Five

Extensions:
The Threat of AIDS

"God befriend us as our cause is just."

-William Shakespeare

"Labor to keep alive that little spark of celestial fire called conscience."

-George Washington
The HIV virus has been with human civilization approximately twenty years. In those twenty years there have been major improvements in our understanding of the mechanisms of the disease, our treatments of the disease, and our understanding of those people who have been infected. One aspect that has not changed in these twenty years is that the Catholic Church will still not allow artificial contraceptive devices to be used to inhibit the transmission of the disease. This has been one of the major battlegrounds for both AIDS activists and liberal minded church members who are trying to change the church's perception of prophylactics. The idea of using prophylactics to stop the spread of AIDS is one of the newest and possibly most important reason, dissenters of the Church have cited in their struggle to change Catholic sexual doctrine. There is clearly a lot of emotion on both sides of the issue. In the following chapter, I hope to present both sides of the issue while allowing for some personal additions. In some ways the conservative hierarchy has met the challenge of HIV and AIDS in a positive and progressive manner, while in other ways, they still lag far behind. Of particular importance will be the battle for the classroom and how to educate the children of the United States regarding AIDS and HIV.

When AIDS first appeared on the scene in the early 1980's religious groups in general were a bit slow in reacting. This can be understood when one considers how the disease was thought of at the time. In the beginning, the disease was thought to be only transmitted through homosexual intercourse or through intravenous drug use. These two groups, both of whom are included in the margins of institutional religions, if included at all, were easy to ignore. In fact, many people within Christian institutions, some Catholics included, thought the disease to be an act of vengeance by God. They thought that God was so infuriated by the actions of these homosexuals and drug users, that they were to be wiped out by this disease. John Krol, the Cardinal of
Philadelphia in the mid-1980's, officially stated that "The spread of AIDS is an act of vengeance against the sin of homosexuality" (Smith 1994, 19). It is because of this type of thinking that religious institutions were hesitant to give aid. If God thought it prudent to wipe these people out than the "good" people of God's church should not stand in God's way. This view was quite prevalent until it was factually proved that HIV and AIDS could be transmitted through heterosexual intercourse. Only then did the Catholic Church and other religious institutions recognize that they could no longer pass the disease off as being the consequences for "sinners". Suddenly AIDS was being acquired by the "good" people of the church as well as those on the fringes.

When the Church finally realized that the AIDS virus was not only the scourge of the homosexual and drug addict population but the general population as well, it set into place an elaborate system of care centers for those with the disease. Many people infected with the disease have received care from Catholic lay people and clergy alike. The Catholic effort to help those people with AIDS has been exemplary and has reflected commonly held Christian values. The statement by Jesus to love your neighbor has been quoted many times in the Catholic call to arms. It is clear that the Church should be given good marks for its treatment of those who have contracted the disease. Yet it is this type of care that makes dissenters question why the Church can't promote preventive medicine in the form of the condom.

"In life and death crises persons reach into those deep reservoirs of belief and value that we call faith traditions. People respond to decisions of health care, at least in part, in terms of the ethics of their belief communities" (Flynn 1985, 50). This quotation from Kenneth L. Vaux shows the power that is present within religious traditions regarding their applications to medical situations. In attempting to remain healthy, many people try to follow the outlines of their religious traditions. That is to say, that religious ethics play a large part in how we decide to take care of ourselves and others. Religious traditions can have a huge impact on whether a person chooses a system of
health care that is effective or one that is not effective. The Catholic Church assumes a pro-life stance and therefore is usually on the side of effective medicine and a healthy lifestyle. In part, it is because of this teaching that most Catholics are morally capable of enjoying the finest health care and leading relatively healthy and safe lives. It is the power to influence its followers along with the life-affirming doctrine of the Church that leads dissents to question how the Catholic Church can continue to prohibit the use of condoms in regards to preventing the spread of disease.

Proponents of the use of condoms to stop the spread of AIDS try to appeal to the Church’s life affirming doctrine when questioning Catholic teaching. They wonder how the Church can say that they are pro-life yet still facilitate the spread of this as yet incurable disease by its opposition to the use of condoms. It is important to think of which doctrine is more important to Catholic life. Throughout the history of the Catholic church there has been a tradition of determining the more important of two diametrically opposed ideas. Is a pro-life stance more or less important than the ban on artificial contraception? David Hollenbach, a noted opponent of Catholic sexual doctrine and the Margaret O’Brien Flatley Professor of Theology at Boston College, states that a pro-life stance should be given prominence, "...the use of condoms by those who would be engaged in risky sex anyway constitutes a lesser evil than the immense suffering and loss of life from AIDS that will predictably result from 'unprotected' sex" (Spohn 1988, 142). This has been the path taken by most dissenters, and it clearly has merit. The Catholic church cannot help but look at the fact that a doctrine advanced to preserve life is now serving in some cases to destroy human life. The conservative hierarchy however, remains adamant in its refusal to change.

The Catholic conservative hierarchy's stance against the dissenters has remained solid, if not always logical. The opinion on the issue by most of the conservative hierarchy is that because artificial contraception was forbidden by Arcanum, Casti Connubii and most importantly Humanae Vitae, it is never right
regardless of the circumstances. In this argument, they seem to ignore the Catholic motto spoken of earlier; ogetto, circonstanze, e fine. In 1987, the bishops of metropolitan Washington gave an unequivocal pronouncement on the use of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS, "It is never morally permissible to employ an intrinsically evil means to achieve a good purpose" (Smith 1994, 68). This statement is important for two reasons. First of all it shows the Vatican has given little thought to the circumstance section of the Italian motto. The Vatican believes that contraception is wrong not for what it is used for, but for what it is. The second important aspect is that the bishops refer to artificial contraception as being intrinsically evil. Somewhere in history the Church picked up the idea of artificial contraception being intrinsically evil, and they have doggedly hung on to it.

It is this adamant conservatism that makes many people doubt the ability to change the conservative hierarchy’s view on the subject. And if it were not for the far reaching effects of Catholic doctrine, many people would probably not bother trying to change this traditional position. The fact is that, like the issue of population control, this doctrine goes far beyond the confines of Catholicism and spreads to the rest of the world. The influence of the Catholic Church reaches into secular institutions as well. It is this influence that will not allow people to give up trying to change the Church. In particular, it is the Catholic influence over the educational sphere that has many people stating their opinions. The spotlight has shifted from the Church and to the schoolhouses of America, where the question of whether to teach children about, and whether to supply children with condoms rages on with the Catholic conservative opinion near the center of the problem.

The presence of condoms in the world does not make them useful in the fight against the spread of AIDS. In order for condoms to be effective, they have to be available, and people have to know how to use them properly. A misused condom is oftentimes more dangerous than one not used at all. It is for this reason that many
schools have tried to implement programs that will educate children about and provide them with condoms. This education would also tell children that the only one hundred percent effective way of not sexually acquiring HIV is not to have sex. The conservative hierarchy has said that this should be the only teaching. In 1991, Pope John Paul II publicly challenged anyone teaching the use of condoms in classes because he thought that people who differed with the Catholic stance on contraception might as well question "the very idea of God's holiness" (Hume 1991, 1). Most of the people who teach within the school systems argue that to expect children to remain sexually inactive throughout their school years is to expect the impossible.

Most people who teach sexual education want the Church to recognize the fact that we live in a pluralistic society. That is to say, that the Church should recognize that they can lay down ideals, but not everyone is going to follow these ideals. In these cases, the teachers argue, it is necessary to make sure that these people know how to keep themselves safe. The question has been posed "How can parents purposefully put their child's very life in danger by withholding the most basic life-saving information?" (Dority 1996, 42). This argument is one that is tough to refute. It is clear, that in the light of the AIDS epidemic, to send someone out in the world without knowledge of condoms is risky at best. The Catholic Church's objections to condom education does more than put Catholics at risk; it puts everyone at risk. Promoters of sexual education assert that the more information that is circulating regarding condoms, the more likely it is that they will be used correctly and safely.

The interesting thing to note about the Church's position on AIDS education is that there has been some disagreement within the American hierarchy. As it stands currently, the issue of educating people about the use of condoms for the prevention of disease is expressly forbidden by both the American hierarchy and the Roman hierarchy. However, at one time, the American bishops supported a proposal that would have accepted the teaching of the truths about condoms. In 1987 the U.S
Catholic Conference met and decided that some document concerning condom education was necessary. The document that they issued, "The Many Faces of AIDS: A Gospel Response", was not a real departure from standard Catholic teachings. It stressed that the AIDS crisis should be dealt with in a way that kept with the Gospel tradition. Keeping with the gospel tradition, apparently meant that the issue should be dealt with in a sensitive and compassionate manner. The statement that was to make this document important was the bishops remark that sexual education should include the facts concerning the effectiveness of a prophylactic in preventing the spread of HIV. They did not promote the use of condoms or say that they were morally right. All they actually did was to give Catholic educators the right to say that condoms were sometimes effective in stopping the transmission of a deadly virus. The statement within the document reads that condoms "as a potential means of preventing AIDS" could be taught but, "...we [the bishops] are not promoting the use of prophylactics but merely providing information" (Ostling 1987, 64).

This thirty page document caused mixed reaction within Catholicism and the educational world as well. Cardinal Bernadin, who was one of the bishops that helped to create the document was very pleased with the outcome. He insisted that the paper was "faithful to the Catholic Doctrinal and moral tradition, and it is sensitive to the human dimension of the issue" (Ostling 1987, 64). Bernadin was a realist. He saw that the issue of preventing disease is not refuted by *Humanae Vitae* and that there is a very real human dimension to the problem. By his statement it is also clear that he understood that people are human and are going to act accordingly. William Buckley summed these feelings up:

Look let's just be grown up enough to recognize that Catholics are of the same biological composition as Protestants and Jews and therefore no matter how much emphasis we place in this training, or sanctioned sexual behavior, they are going to prove their fallibility seventy times seven times, and since this is the case we may as well not have seventy times seven
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bastards, seventy times seven abortions, and however many more AIDS cases germinate from 490 homosexual unions (Buckley 1988, 64).

This quotation shows a common sense approach to the issue of condom education. It is clear that many people support this kind of approach. However, within the conservative workings of the Church, the American bishop's document did not receive unanimous approval.

Cardinal O'Connor, from New York City was one of the first dissenters to speak out against the document. He was appalled by the document and called it "an invitation to promiscuity" (Buckley 1988, 64). He called for schools to continue teaching chastity as the only acceptable way to prevent pregnancy, even though figures at the time showed half of the nation's high school aged girls were sexually active (Tifft 1991, 66). Several other parties joined Cardinal O'Connor in his stance against the teachings of the document. One group, called Human Life International, threatened to sue the New York school system if a child was either infected or impregnated while using a school issued condom. Once again, just as the Catholic Church seemed to be taking a step into the future, somebody was there to try to push it back into the past. In 1989, the United States Catholic Conference led by Cardinal O'Connor, took a giant step back towards conservatism with the publication of "Call to Compassion and Responsibility: A Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis". This document superseded the 1987 document and insisted that teaching the use of prophylactics was "morally unacceptable" (Barnet 1993, 6). Just as Humanae Vitae disappointed those pushing for change in 1968, so did this text disappoint dissenters in 1987. Not surprisingly, a "Call to Compassion and Responsibility" claimed its authority from Humanae Vitae. This incident showed once again that history seemingly does repeat itself.

In discussing the two documents, Robert L. Smith, the author of AIDS, Gays and the Church, reacted to "The Many Faces of AIDS" in a positive manner saying that
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it showed a knowledgeable stance and a willingness to discuss ideas with a more pluralistic society. He said that "Called to Compassion and Responsibility" ignored all discussion and merely laid down the traditional Catholic view as final. It is the second document that has left a permanent mark on Catholic sexual teaching. In actuality, it is not only the document itself that has left its mark but also the theory behind the document; the willingness to ignore discussion and continue to promote traditional Catholic sexual teaching. This theory resurfaced in Pope John Paul II's writing of "Human Sexuality: Truth and Significance" issued on December 22, 1995. He wrote this document in response to the fact that many people within education, many of them Catholic, continued to push for prophylactic education regarding effectiveness in stopping the spread of HIV. This document was little more than an elaboration on Humanae Vitae and therefore had little new to say. It did serve to further diminish any hopes that people may have had regarding the changing of the Vatican's position on education.

In the paper, the Pope warns parents to keep their children away from sexually explicit media. He cited the "rich westernized" societies in particular as "exalting pagan hedonism" (Dority 1996, 42). Instead of a sexual education stemming from the classroom, he called for a return to the family as the sole center for sexual and ethical teachings. Within this family unit, the parents are to steer their youths away from "secular or antibirth ideas" (Dority 1996, 42). Near the end of the document, he turns specifically to the idea of teaching proper condom use to children to prevent the spread of AIDS. He admonished Catholic parents that they had "a duty to pull their children from sexual education programs" in school systems that "promote condoms to prevent pregnancy or AIDS" (Dority 1996, 42). Needless to say, this document has not met with universal approval.

It is these ideas put forth by Pope John Paul II that exemplify the problem of dissent in the Catholic church. The Pope encourages Catholic parents to isolate their
children, not only from sexual education classes, but from society in general. While these teachings may be a nice ideal to think about, they are not effective in today's society where the secular and the religious are not entirely mutually exclusive. In fact, both the religious and the secular have significant influence on each other. Many people believe that the conservative hierarchy's ostrichesque method of dealing with problems by trying to ignore them is going to ruin the very people it is attempting to protect. As Juan Flavier, the health secretary of the Philippines stated, "Education is the best preventive measure [against the spread of AIDS] that we have" ("Church vs. State vs. AIDS" 1993, 44). Many people would argue that by the Pope's statements he is taking away the best preventive medicine.

Education has been recognized by many organizations as the best way to prevent the spread of AIDS. Many of these organizations have pressed for this education to happen within schools. During the last few years there have been many instances where these organizations and the Catholic Church have come up against each other. Recently the Catholic position has began to be less and less influential within the educational system. In 1991 the conservative Catholic position failed to influence the New York Board of Education's decision to not let students opt out of sexual and condom education classes. This loss, in a pro-Catholic area with a strong bishop presiding, showed Catholic influence to be at least somewhat on the wane. Many conservatives point to this loss as coming from outside of the Catholic context. Yet it is becoming increasingly prevalent to see dissent about the use of condoms coming from within the Catholic framework and in some instances coming from the hierarchy itself.

In one interview, an unidentified priest asked the following question, "Would you really rather have a teenager die of AIDS than to use a condom?" (Kissling 1993, B7). It is this type of pragmatic realism that is starting to increase within the ranks of the Catholicism. While the ban still remains, it is obvious that certain individuals
within the system do not insist on it and sometimes encourage disobedience. In a poll taken in 1970, two years after *Humanae Vitae*, eighty percent of priests said that they did not insist on the ban of contraception (Kissling 1993, B7). It is safe to say that with the emergence of the AIDS epidemic, this number has only increased. Noting that the individual priests do not insist on the ban, many lay people have started to rethink the position on birth control with respect to their own individual situations. "Many Catholics, far ahead of the institution have crafted a workable and honorable sexual ethic on their own using the perspective the church uses in every other issue that came before it: the standard of justice" (Kissling 1993, B7).

As well as priests and lay people the bishops within the church have called for a more open attitude as well. Many bishops, like Cardinal Bemadin, say that the condom should be talked about as a barrier to infection while other bishops such as Albert Rouet of France insisted that the circumstances be taken into consideration.

It is appropriate to make distinction among users, those whose sexually activity is sufficiently enlightened and requires taking precaution against risk; authorities who simply do not know what else to propose and propagandists of libertarianism that reduces sexuality to insignificance (Whitney 1996, A5).

This quotation shows Rouet has carefully considered the issue and has made a decision not on the letter of the law but on the meaning of the law. That is to say his promotion of the use of condoms is clearly not absolute, but rather dependent on specific circumstances. He promotes condoms when they are used in a way that enriches "proper" sexual union so that the people involved are not punished. This quotation is a searing indictment of a system that has chosen to ignore some of its most highly valued teachings in order to assert the letter of the law concerning the ban on birth control. Lost somewhere within this shuffle is that the letter of the law, generally accepted as *Humanae Vitae*, does not prohibit prophylactics but rather bans the use of
prophylactics in an attempt at birth control. Bishop Rouet is a fine example of a person working within the system, using the system to his advantage to bring about a change in Catholic doctrine. Rouet sees the paradox of the church's teachings as well, "The church thought to be opposed to it, sees itself accused of promoting death" (Whitney 1996, A5).

There are some indications that all of this dissent and discussion has led the Pope to think about the condom as a disease barrier. Despite his pronouncement that expressly forbade the action, people near the Pope are still grappling with the problem (Drane 1991, 119). Author James F. Drane states three arguments that he thinks the Pope will have to deal with effectively. The first argument that he presents is contingent on the idea of preventive medicine. Citing the role of the natural law theory within Catholicism, Drane makes the point that preventive medicine is more respectful to the body's natural workings than are cures (Drane 1991, 190). This is a point that challenges the use of one of the main bases for the anti-contraception argument within the Church. His second argument is that the condom can be used as a disease barrier. As previously stated, *Humanae Vitae* does not prohibit the use of prophylactics, but prohibits the act of birth control. It is the modern Church that has extended this ban using traditional Church arguments. Drane takes exception, "The notion that a condom is a condom and no context would ever justify its use reflects the same mindset which insists that God is a rock and that a rock is a rock: a mindset far removed from the Catholic tradition" (Drane 1991, 191). The final argument that Drane puts forward is perhaps the most telling. "It is not a Catholic notion that past blameworthy actions narrow the range of permissible future moral choices" (Drane 1991, 190). This quotation expresses the idea that if a Catholic makes a mistake, he or she should not have to die for that one mistake. Catholicism is about forgiveness and repentance. As noted Catholic dissenter Martin Luther stated, "Have faith and sin boldly". AIDS allows for no amount of repentance or forgiveness.
"Leninism teaches us that the ruling classes will not surrender their power voluntarily."

-Nikita Krushchev

"[Creeds] have been the bane of the church...made of Christendom a slaughterhouse."

-Thomas Jefferson
Throughout the history of the issue of birth control in the Catholic church, there have been many different reasons for and against the use of contraceptives. In the preceding chapters I have touched upon a few of the major ones. These reasons are useful for looking at, not only the semantics of the use of contraceptives within a Catholic framework, but also for looking at the larger issue of dissent within the church, particularly the American Catholic church. Birth control is just one of the many issues that constitute a subset of this larger issue. Dissent comes from all sides and about all issues. The birth control doctrine presents a good example because its use is so popular, not only outside the Catholic world, but inside as well. Most of the other issues of dissent do not have the large scale support that the birth control issue has. Many of the other issues of dissent can appear to stem from the activities or beliefs of radicals who, in the eyes of people tending towards conservatism, go too far. Birth control is so elemental to many people’s daily lives and so socially acceptable in secular society that even many conservatives allow for its use. With all that being said, it is necessary to discuss how dissent and the argument over birth control are related in a wider sense.

In chapter two, the history of the issue was discussed. This history followed the development of the three major encyclicals on the subject of marriage and birth control, *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae, Casti Connubii, and Humanae Vitae*. It is interesting to note the inverse movement of these encyclicals and everyday society. As the world became more modern, and the use birth control became more prevalent, the secular world’s attitudes towards birth control use became more accepting. The acceptance of the use of contraceptives by the secular world came to fruition as the Catholic Church’s doctrine forbidding its use became more firmly embedded. While
Arcanum hardly mentioned birth control at all (at the time birth control was less socially acceptable within secular society), the other two encyclicals made it increasingly clear that no circumstances could excuse the use of artificial contraception. This inverse movement proved very disappointing to the many dissenters who hoped to make a significant change in Catholic doctrine. Especially disappointing to them was the presentation of *Humanae Vitae* after the dissenters had apparently won a major victory with the Birth Control Commission.

This disappointment is a good example of how many dissenters feel about the Church. The Church seemingly becomes more difficult to change as more people seek to change it. It is evident that Catholic doctrine on birth control has been assaulted from all sides. Yet the conservatives within the church hierarchy doggedly cling to the doctrine. This is one of the many facets that makes dissent within the church different than issues of dissent within the secular institutions of the United States. Popular opinion usually goes a long way in effecting change (at least surface changes) in a secular institution. Democracy is defined as rule by the people. That is to say the people and their opinion are supposed to be the defining aspects of our political system. The Catholic Church does not only not subscribe to this idea of democracy, but seems, at times, to act upon the opposite principle. It is possible to say that popular opinion informs ideas about what doctrine should not be rather than what it should. This idea is illustrated by the inverse movements of the encyclicals in relation to the development of secular society.

Another interesting idea that comes from chapter two is the idea of the formation of doctrine. As is stated in the chapter, the justifications that the Popes use in their encyclicals consistently come from the same sources. Certain ideas and names, e.g., Augustine, the natural law theory, Thomas Aquinas, the protection of women, and reaction to heresy are all recycled again and again to support the Catholic view of birth control. This is frustrating to reformers because these people and ideas are hundreds of
years old. While the rest of the world has moved into the modern age, scientifically, philosophically and physically, the Church continues to base its doctrine on the same people and ideas from the past. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas were both very wise men, but they had no way of realizing the progress that the world would make. Church conservatives are very unwilling to update their sources for the faithful so that these sources are more approachable and applicable to modern life.

This dependence on archaic sources has become a major roadblock to dissenters of all types. By relying consistently on these classical sources, the Church assures that dissenters will have very little traditional Catholic context on which to base their dissent. It is virtually impossible to argue from the point of view of a fourth or thirteenth century Catholic scholar that birth control, abortion, or women priests are a good thing. The context of the sixth or thirteenth century world does not allow for these progressions. In order for one to argue effectively for change within Catholicism in the late twentieth century, it is necessary to argue from the context of the late twentieth century. However, as soon as a dissenter resorts to modern sources and modern arguments, he or she is faced with the fact that the Catholic stance on these issues is not influenced by modern considerations. This make it impossible to justify these changes in a way that is traditionally proper within a Catholic context. Therefore, the dissenter is faced with a Catch-22 situation which explains why many dissenters, i.e. Mary Daly and Martin Luther among others, have gone completely outside the Catholic institutional tradition. Within the institution there is little room for mobility.

Chapter three focused on the idea of artificial contraception being used to control population. Within this chapter many instances were discussed where the common good was supposedly being undermined by the Catholic doctrinal tradition. This chapter shows a different aspect of dissent within the American church. While there are many Catholics who believe in the need to control population, this problem is most often raised for Catholics by speakers from outside the confines of the
institutional church. The traditional Catholic view of birth control does not affect Catholics exclusively. Throughout most of the disagreements with the church, dissent has come from the people who were involved with Catholicism in some way or another. As I discussed in chapter one, Pope John Paul II has methods, be they effective or not, of dealing with dissent within the church. Yet, when non-Catholics start to press the church, the Vatican has no access to any type of recourse. The Vatican can ignore these outside voices, but because these voices are not part of the institution, they cannot suffer the punishments of the institution. The Vatican cannot remove them from positions or officially silence them. In many ways dissent from the outside is untouchable.

The United Nations, an important dissenter on the question of population control, is not restricted to Catholics. Although Vatican City is a part of the United Nations, it is not an overly important player within the organization. The church does not have the command within the secular world that it would like. And while the Church probably will not be forced by the United Nations to change its policy, it is also clear that the U.N.'s policies will not necessarily reflect Catholic morals or traditions. Within the context of the United Nations, the conservative hierarchy has found an opponent whom they cannot coerce to agree with them and cannot punish for disobeying them. Instead, the issue of population control has brought much exterior pressure on the church to change its teachings, if not for Catholicism's good, than for the good of the general populace. The idea of overpopulation gives those who disagree with the Catholic position scientific ammunition for their fight.

Of course, outside dissenters informed by scientific research have yet to influence Catholic doctrine. The Vatican maintains that population can be controlled without recourse to artificial contraception, using other means, means which many people argue are ineffective and not feasible. The Pope has remained vigilant in his defense of traditional doctrine. It will be interesting to see what happens, when and if,
the scientist's predictions come true regarding overpopulation and the consequences that it will bring. Will the Vatican be morally capable of continuing to defend a policy that is obviously not working? If we are faced with the impending problems of overpopulation, will the Vatican be able to defend its traditional doctrine while retaining the devotion of the laity? Should these problems arise, be sure that the dissenters will be widely heard and the church will be modified in one way or another. If the hierarchy decides that doctrine is more important than the problems of overpopulation, look for more dissent and fewer members of Catholicism.

The question of the persecution of women within the realm of Catholicism is discussed in Chapter Four. This persecution was examined with particular emphasis on how the birth control policy of the Catholic church supports this persecution. The unequal position of women within the church is certainly nothing new. What is relatively new is the Vatican's determination that all people should be treated as equals within the church. The Pastoral Commission on the Church and the Modern World, which met during the Second Vatican Council, sought to give women the "fundamental personal rights" enjoyed by men within the church (Daly 1968, 120). This shows two other sides of the dissent question that can be examined through the microscope of birth control. The first side is the fact that the Church seems to be disagreeing with itself on this issue. How does this contradiction effect the presence and effectiveness of dissent? The other question that becomes apparent is how a doctrine that oppresses one group can be defended and encouraged within the church.

The contradiction in terms is apparent when one considers the attempt of the Second Vatican Council to bring equality to women and men within the church while retaining the presence of the ban on birth control. This presence of the ban prevents equality from happening. Many people believe that women will never be able to be equal to men until they are allowed to control the birth process. As is stated in chapter four, the state of pregnancy is not conducive to being an effective contributor to society,
aside from bringing new life into the world. This is an extremely important ability but should not be the sole function that women are able to perform. If you are the Vatican, how do you defend this contradiction in terms? Historically, the Vatican has played down the burden of pregnancy along with offering alternative "natural" means of birth control. This is not a sufficient, proper or feasible answer to many who are concerned with this issue. People, not only women, want the Vatican to clear up this contradiction and take an active role in improving the roles of women within church and society.

The second side to the issue is the fact that members of the church are being marginalized. Contradiction notwithstanding, the fact is that women who adhere to the Catholic doctrine are seen by many as being persecuted. Their inability to control their bodies makes them slaves to their biological functions in an age where humankind has learned to master these functions so that they may work for the social good. The fact that women remain slaves to their bodies causes many people to be appalled with the hierarchy's treatment of females. In a case such as this, many people feel that dissent is not an option, but a duty. No one should stand by and watch people be persecuted for no substantial reason. This brings about a whole other element of dissent. Can a person morally and ethically allow a certain group of people to be manipulated? The Church would argue that women are not wrongfully persecuted and in fact are not persecuted at all. There is currently no problem with women within the Catholic church. This kind of mindset makes it difficult for any movement to be made. As long as the Church believes that its women are not repressed than no substantial headway can be made. It is going to be up to the dissenters to convince the church that there is a legitimate problem.

In the chapter preceding this one, the subject of birth control was put aside while a subject that is closely related to it was discussed. The fact that some of the methods used to prevent birth, especially the condom, are also effective in preventing
the spread of the AIDS virus, was my reason for including this chapter. While the AIDS issue is not about birth control (unless it is passed to the fetus from the mother) it is affected by the Catholic stance on birth control. This issue, once again, brings up two good points about the church and dissent. The first point is about doctrine versus health. Is the defense of doctrine worth human lives? The second major point is the adaptation of doctrine. The Catholic Church has never had a policy forbidding protection against disease. What they have done is to adapt their anti-artificial contraception stance to prohibit the use of condoms to prevent disease. How does this adaptation affect the process and presence of dissent?

In addressing the first point it can be seen that we have traveled in a circular fashion. Once again, the Church argues that abstinence is the way to prevent AIDS from being spread. The two problems with this point have been taken up time and again by AIDS activists. Abstinence is not proscribed in the case of marriage. This leaves "good" Catholic couples in danger of transmission. Second, is that the idea of abstinence is one which has been proved to not be feasible. People are not going to refrain from having sex. Whether this is wrong or right is immaterial to activists. The Catholic Church, lagging behind popular culture in many ways, ignores the validity of this conclusion. The prohibition of premarital sex is one which is ingrained within the Catholic tradition probably more than the prohibition of birth control. This circumstance would leave even the most optimistic reformer feeling helpless. How do you change a church that does not recognize the presence of the true problem? Especially disheartening is that until reformers find an answer to this question, "proper" Catholics are leaving themselves open to the transmission of death.

The second point is one that is even more demoralizing to reformers than the first. The Church, not having a policy on prevention of disease, decided to adapt an already controversial policy to cover something that it doesn't really cover. Nowhere in Catholic doctrine does it say that condoms cannot be worn. What it does say is that
condoms cannot be used to prevent the insemination process. If you are a reformer, how do you cope with this adaptation? Just when you thought that the church would have to come up with a new policy, it takes an already outdated policy and applies it to a new problem. This adaptation is oftentimes decried as being ethically wrong. For example, a person who kills another person in self defense is not considered a sinner. Yet that person has performed an act that has been condemned by the Church, thou shalt not kill. In the case of murder, the idea of circumstance enters into the argument. In birth control there is no consideration of the circumstance of the deed. The Church considers birth control wrong regardless of the circumstances. This point illustrates the nonsensical reasoning that dissenters often find behind the official Catholic position on controversial issues such as the prevention of AIDS. How does one dissent in a systematic way against an idea that has little real substance behind? Basically, the Church adapted this policy so that people would not undermine its birth control policy. So once again, one doctrine has to be changed before another doctrine can be discussed, bringing everyone back to square one.
Conclusions

"Can a free government possibly exist with the Roman Catholic Religion?"
- John Adams

"Reason in Man is rather like God in the world."
- Thomas Aquinas

"Extreme remedies are very appropriate for extreme diseases."
- Hippocrates
In conclusion, it is difficult to say just exactly where Catholic dissent is heading. Some light has been shed on the issue by the previous chapters. This light is helpful in discovering where the issue has been and where it is now. To speculate about where it is going requires some assumptions and educated guesses. It is clear that we are in an age when dissent is not going to fade away. Because of the dynamics of modern American society, disagreement will always be present. This is not in question. The answers that I hoped to supply within this paper are to other questions, such as: How encouraging is the future of dissent? Is democracy possible within a Catholic context? How does dissent work? Does it do any good or make any significant difference? We cannot find absolute answers to these questions but we can, through a reading of the text discover probabilities and possibilities. This examination of the Catholic position on birth control provides a stark model of dissent within the modern American Catholic church. One can move from the conclusions reached here about birth control, to related conclusions about dissent.

One must first raise the question: how encouraging is the future of dissent? This is somewhat dependent on what the dissent is about, despite Pope John Paul II’s apparent absolute stand against dissent. Clearly some issues are more likely to change than others. Oftentimes it seems that the most controversial issues are those that are most firmly embedded within Catholic teaching. One could discern from looking at a history of the Catholic Church, that change is possible. The mistakes discussed in the first chapter all point to instances where the Church decided that they had been wrong about something and had taken steps to fix the situation. The Second Vatican Council took significant steps towards formulating a more modern conscience for the Church. It also provided a forum for discussion on major doctrinal ideas and theories. These
are examples that give encouragement to people who hope the Church will change for the better.

The more pessimistic side is the fact that the Second Vatican Council took place more than thirty years ago. The optimism that feminists and other reformers talked about before the council is no longer present in many people. The fact that little has changed in these thirty years leads many people to believe that change will never occur. Especially relevant to this argument is *Humanae Vitae*. At a time when everything seemed to be progressing towards a more inclusive and modern Church, this encyclical was a sober reminder that the Church is not easily changed despite popular opinion. At first, this turnabout may have seemed an anomaly in the Church’s politics. As time has passed, an increasing number of people have come to see the circumstances of *Humanae Vitae* as a precedent, rather than an anomaly. In the years since *Humanae Vitae*, the Church has oftentimes seemingly moved a small step forward only to plunge itself backwards when it comes time to make lasting official statements.

Meanwhile, Pope John Paul II is still firmly in power. Anyone seeking to change the Church in the near future should realize that they are dealing with a conservative pontiff from a conservative Catholic region (Poland). John Paul II has made it abundantly clear that popular opinion will hold no sway in his decision making. The same aspect that makes people respect him also makes them frustrated with him. He is a man who will stand by his convictions regardless of what other people may think. To take an optimistic view of the near future of dissent with him in power is to be ignorant of the situation. His hard line against dissent is unlikely to break down. He has made it his mission to rid the church of dissent. It would be a stunning turnaround on his part to willingly accept any amount of dissent.

In my opinion, those wishing for dissent will find better luck under a new pontiff. To be realistic about the situation, few changes can take place in the area of
doctrine with the current pope in power. John Paul II has been repeatedly challenged to defend Catholic doctrine and by rising to these occasions he has established a position which he probably could not escape even if he wanted to. Doctrine under Pope John Paul II is unlikely to undergo any major renovations. But all is not lost for those who wish for change. The history of the church, despite what conservatives would like us to believe, is filled with moments of change and growth. History does have a way of repeating itself. When a different pope happens upon the scene, many things might be possible. While it is unlikely that a *bona fide* liberal will become pope any time soon, it is obvious that the current pope is a bit of an exception. That is to say, that a new pope will inevitably be conservative, but to what degree? To retain conservative doctrine in the midst of a modern world the way that John Paul II has, will take an extraordinary person. These are few and far between. The possibility is present for a more relaxed view of conservatism within the Church. This would be beneficial to reformers of all kinds.

The second question to address is whether democracy is a feasible option within the Catholic context. As has been stated earlier, much of the conflict between the Catholic Church and its American followers stems from the presence of democracy in American secular society. Americans who expecting the church to work for and by the people disturb the *status quo* of the Church. Once again, it is clear that while Pope John Paul II is in power, democracy is little more than an abstract idea. Most reformers consciously or subconsciously recognize this. Along with this, I would not expect the church to ever be a full-fledged democracy. Partial democracy is probably the most that people can hope for, a partial democracy where the people's views are listened to and considered to some extent. Where the current system allows for no discussion, partial democracy could grant people the right express their opinions freely. Whether these opinions were heeded or not would still be at the discretion of the hierarchy.
I think this kind of democracy is possible within the church. As I stated in chapter one, the presence of church councils shows that this is already in effect to some degree. Councils allow some people, bishops and cardinals, to differ with the traditional stance and to air these differences in front of an audience that matters. Of course if these councils are token gestures, as the Birth Control Commission turned out to be, little is gained. But I think as more people dissent and as solid reasons surface, i.e. prevention of AIDS, women's rights, population control etc., the conservative hierarchy will be forced to give more respect to differing views. The Church is increasingly finding itself ostracizing the faithful and will eventually have to deal with this problem. One way to bring people back to the fold will be to offer them a voice in the church. Whether these voices will serve to produce the changes that so many people desire within the Church will only be seen with time.

The final question is: what happens in the meantime? Is it effective to dissent while conservatives hold power and clearly are not about to make any major changes? What good does it do to repeatedly bang one's head against the wall when progress is not being made? There is no one simple answer to this question, but rather several applicable ones. The first possible answer is that dissent currently does little good. The conservative hierarchy is still the dominant force within Catholicism. This hierarchy has made a habit, evidenced by the birth control debate, of pressing its conservative agenda despite popular opposition. Many people think, that if this hierarchy has not given in to the mass of opinion against it yet, dissent is futile and useless. Why argue with someone who does not listen to your argument?

It is true that currently, dissent is not achieving the larger goal of reform within the church. However, this does not necessarily mean that dissent is wholly ineffective. By voicing a differing opinion than the Church, reformers assure that people are exposed to alternative views. From the numbers of people that disagree with the Church on birth control, it is clear that dissenters have in some ways made
their point. While the Church does not officially endorse the practice, partially by the influence of dissenters, increasing numbers of Catholics are taking control of their sexual lives. In some ways this is more effective than a change in church doctrine. People are living new dissenting ethics more than they usually live Catholic doctrine. And that is one of the goals that Catholic reformers are pressing for.

That does not mean that the pressure on the institution will end. It will not. But the dissenters are forging a new vision of morality even if the church does not keep up with them. Almost inevitably the Church will eventually catch up. As this new vision of morality gains favor among greater numbers of Catholics, a continued denial of this morality would leave the church lacking influence. If the Church becomes completely out of touch with contemporary thought, it will lose the laity. In order to avoid these potential losses I think that the church will have to make some concessions of doctrine. However this will not happen by itself. Any changes in doctrine will be at least partially attributable to all of the dissenters, whether they be from the past, in the present, or in the future. Clearly the discussions taking place currently are the foundation for change in the future. The United States has taken a prominent role in this debate because of its nature and the nature of the church within this country. Americans will continue to be prominent in this debate and will continue to press for the freedoms that our secular institutions promote. For these are the same freedoms that American Catholics would like the Church to uphold. Clearly American Catholics are becoming tired of being defined by Rousseau’s statement on Christians and are seeking to escape the slavery.
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