

Catholics Confused on 'Pill' Debate, Look to Council for Solution

Many Catholics are confused these days. They are puzzled by the so-called debate of the theologians on birth control.

"How can the Church change its basic teachings?" they ask. To answer that question right off — it can't, it won't.

Then why is there a debate? The question which divides the experts concerns the recently developed pills like Enovid.

Catholic theologians are agreed that outright contraceptive drugs and devices violate God's laws.

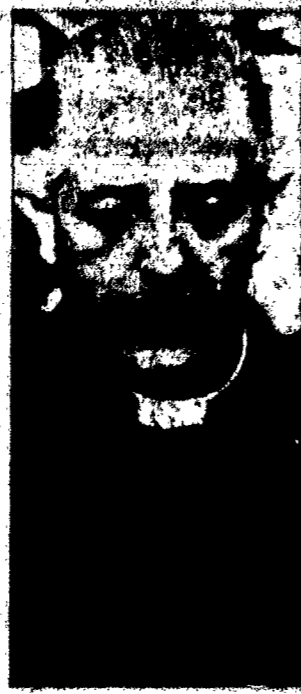
But the theologians aren't sure whether the new pills are contraceptive or not and this is where the present debate then takes off.

"Surely we must make distinctions between these pills and other forms of contraceptives," said Rectorial Father Bernard Haeghe of Rome, reputed to be one of the Church's top moral experts.

He said statements made by Pope Pius XII in 1951 and 1958 in condemning contraceptive pills aren't relevant to the new pills. "They were not yet invented."

A U.S. priest, Monsignor John C. Knott of Washington, flatly contradicted the position of Father Haeghe. He said "all the birth control pills on the market in the United States" are banned by the Church as immoral.

Another priest in Rome, Father Ferdinando Lambroschini of the conservative Lateran University, said in an article in the Vatican's L'Osservatore della Domenica that "categorical solutions" for or against the pills are impossible "at the



CARDINAL SUENENS there will be a pill

present time." He said there is need for "continued scientific research" to produce a pill that will be scientifically effective and morally acceptable.

He said he didn't think Pope Paul or the Vatican Council would settle the current division of opinion. Others do.

The bishops of England, however, decided against waiting for possible Council action. They said "a new contraceptive pill now being advertised" falls under the Church's ban against contraception.

The bishops prefaced their statement by saying they couldn't "remain silent when so many voices are being raised to lead our people astray." The bishops repeated the Church's

long-held position that all forms of birth prevention are "against the law of God" — except nature's own remedy, reliance on the frequently unreliable rhythm method.

They also indicated hope that science will develop a way for this "safe" time to be "predictable."

The bishops of Holland last September refused to take a position one way or another on the morality of the now available pill.

The debate has even escalated into the ranks of the Princes of the Church — the Cardinals.

Belgian Cardinal Leo Suenens, on a visit last month to the United States, also voiced his conviction that medical science will soon produce an "acceptable" pill. But he is credited — or blamed — for triggering the whole present turmoil on the subject because a priest in his diocese wrote the initial article giving qualified approval to the so-called family of pills developed by Dr. John Rock, a Catholic, of Harvard University.

Asked about the article and the furor it has produced, the Cardinal said he gave its author, Father Louis Janssens, "liberty of research to clarify the problem."

This week's *Commonwealth* magazine, edited by U.S. laymen, has ten articles under the general theme of responsible parenthood and introduced them with the remark, "What appeared self-evident even a decade or so ago may now appear highly professional" and asks its readers — and critics — to have "a willingness to listen to different points of view."

But the highest authority by far to speak on the subject is



MICHAEL NOVAK a layman's decision

far is Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, head of the Vatican's Holy Office, the Church's watchdog for faith and morals.

He sharply chided churchmen for speaking on their own authority on the morality of the debated pill.

Urging a stop to public debate on the issue, the 73-year-old Cardinal, frequently described as one of the most conservative members of the Roman Curia, stressed that only the Pope can decide on "such grave and debated questions."

The Cardinal said the issue of contraceptive pills should properly be examined by national conferences of bishops, or even by the Vatican Council,

as one of major importance to the Church. In taking this stand, he said he strongly disapproved of statements on "the problems of individual churchmen, irrespectively of their rank."

"The Holy See," he said "does not normally like a local authority to express opinions of doctrinal guidance, which should come from the head of the Church. We must maintain unity in our thinking. The Holy Office also should express opinions on important matters which should not be left to the evaluation of a single person, cardinal, archbishop or bishop."

Cardinal Ottaviani applied in this fashion after having been questioned regarding the recent statements by Cardinal Suenens and by the British bishops.

Cardinal Ottaviani's remarks that the Council will probably discuss the morality of the contraceptive pills produced a stock market boom in drug companies — Syntex jumping 5 points, Parke Davis up 2 and increases also noted by Searle, Johnson and Johnson, Upjohn and other companies.

Also reflecting the atmosphere of change was a talk last week by Michael Novak at St. John Fisher, College alumni meeting.

The articulate layman, author and Vatican Council correspondent for some Catholic newspapers, said laymen — doctors, business men, teachers, lawyers — should long ago have set up a research center where the basic problem of family limitation could be satisfactorily worked out. Meanwhile, Novak claimed, couples have to decide "according to their own conscience" how they are to solve their own "population explosion."

TO THOSE COUPLES who have endured the burden of



CARDINAL OTTAVIANI don't talk about it

rearing large families and think that talk of possible changes ahead means they were born thirty years too soon —

Every age and every individual has its own cross to bear. This is neither poetry nor an empty phrase. It is the heart of Christian faith.

Any attempt to eliminate the sign of the cross from the interpretation of human conduct only adds to the blurring of problems, it does not aid in their solution.

Countless Christian couples who have, in a spirit of faith and sacrifice, had large families testily — perhaps not as emphatically — that mutual love is so much strengthened

as others say that it is loosened by such discipline.

Whatever decisions are reached by the Council this autumn — and our bishops need our prayers not our criticism to help them in their tasks — the Church and its members will like their Lord, still have a cross of some kind to bear, perhaps — far more "trifling" — one than the self-denial now required of those who love each other so deeply.

For the present we must learn to live with this subject in its condition of tension.

Five centuries ago this conflict of opposing forces within the Church was dramatized by the life and death of St. Joan of Arc, excommunicated and burned as a heretic in 1431 and canonized as a saint in 1920.

In his preface to his play on St. Joan, George Bernard Shaw — not usually considered a spokesman for the Catholic position but both accurate and eloquent on this topic — comments on this continuing conflict of opinions in the Church: "To me it is not the victory of any one of them over the others that will bring peace and the reign of the saints in the Kingdom of God, but this fruitful interaction in a costly but noble state of tension. . . . We must accept the tension and maintain it nobly without letting ourselves be comforted or relieved by burning the shrub."

And for those for whom the present situation is a torment like fire and wonder why God Himself does not step down to settle the issue, the words of Joan of Arc, who also felt the pain of the flames, are significant — "Though He may yet will I trust Him."

There is need again today for such faith and patience.

— Father Henry Austin

Cremation Made Part of Catholic Rite in Japan

A Naked Nation — Spiritually

According to the story about the Emperor's clothes, it took the honesty of a little child to admit, "But the Emperor doesn't have any clothes on!"

Spiritually, that's the way our nation's public schools are now — naked!

Any vestige of hope that religion could survive in them was given its final blow by the Supreme Court this week. The Court ruled out both prayer and Bible reading in Florida's public schools, declaring such practices contrary to the United States Constitution.

The decision will obviously cancel out those few surviving similar practices in public schools elsewhere in the country.

To deplore the decision is quite pointless, it certainly won't reverse the decision.

Backers of the Becker Amendment to authorize such practices will view the decision as giving new urgency to their proposal but we don't believe the Amendment stands a chance of ever being actually enacted.

Public schools for the foreseeable future will have to be as sterile of religion as a vacuum tube is of air.

For those who still believe that children should have a religious education there is now an immediate need to provide such a program at home and in churches in a way that will both appeal to the children and convince them of religion's relevance.

Somewhere in the current ecumenical movement we think there should be room to develop together an environment, a climate of opinion to make such religious education programs a "must" for far more youngsters than are now enrolled in existing programs.

One such program is the released time arrangement for pupils of public schools to have one hour religious instruction each week. Even Catholics, who are about the only religious group taking any sizeable advantage of this opportunity, admit this one hour idea is a negligible minimum.

Protestant youngsters in Sunday School classes represent only a fraction of potential membership. Jewish children in after-school classes at their synagogues have a quite successful program in operation but rabbis admit there is room for more, particularly teenagers, there too.

The Supreme Court has simply cleared away one and for all any notion that public schools can be some kind of halfway parochial schools — providing a common-denominator religion which really never did satisfy anybody anyway.

Our Lord once said that to clothe the poor would win an everlasting reward. The churches must now step in to clothe the rising generation with the garments of religious truth and guidance which it is their task after all to provide.

If the churches don't do this both separately and in cooperation with each other, we will someday find that not only is the Emperor naked but the whole nation has become spiritually stripped — and that will be not just a shame but the knell of a heritage our forefathers worked and bled to give us.

Matsuzaka, Japan — (NC) — The Japanese practice of cremation of the dead and the preservation of the ashes in a place of worship has been made part of the Christian funeral rite here by a Maryknoll missionary.

Cremation is the only way of disposing of the dead in this city of 100,000 on Honshu, Japan's largest island. Father Leo J. Steinbach, M.F.S., of Clayton, Iowa, pastor of the Catholic church here, has incorporated this practice both in burial and memorial services and the church that the built to hold the ashes of the dead.

After the funeral Mass, the final absolution for the dead is given at the city crematory. The family and friends assist at the service with either the father or the son of the deceased lighting the fire that consumes the coffin.

The ashes and a few bones are then put in an urn and brought back to the church. Before placing the ashes on shelves called "nokotudo," the priest recites prayer in Latin and Japanese.

Right next to this "nokotudo" is another series of shelves for the "ihai," the ancestral tablets, that contain the deceased's name, age and date of death. According to Buddhist tradition, the priests write a new name on these tablets for the person whom they believe will be reborn in the next world.

"In Matsuzaka, we write the baptismal name on the 'ihai,'" Father Steinbach said, "and we explain to our Christians that their rebirth took place at the time of baptism when they became children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven heirs of the kingdom of heaven."

Independence has obliged the Catholic missions to take a hard look at the activities on which they have traditionally concentrated their efforts in Africa.

Frequently the attitude of the new government or the prevailing public opinion in a society in which Africans are the first (and revealing) thoughts is very different from that of the former colonial regime. This is true not only of governments hostile to Christianity, like that of the Sudan, but also of those which recognize the contribution of the missions and value their cooperation.

Formerly, for example, education was in large part controlled and operated by the Christian mission bodies, with the state paying a substantial part of the cost. Now, however, strong pressures have developed to bring the schools under direct state control on the ground that the mission authorities must inevitably give preference to the children of their own communities.

In a society in which only a minority of school-age children can be accommodated in

The ashes are kept in the church for an indefinite period of time, from one to two years. They are then buried in the Catholic cemetery.

The cost of a crematory funeral including cremation, a crematory urn, an enlarged photograph of the deceased and flowers is less than six dollars.

Cremation is almost universal in Japan. In some rural areas, corpses are buried, but this practice is considered unsanitary for rocky soil only permits shallow graves. There are

soon water soaked by heavy rains and exposed to the air and animals. The people themselves prefer the inexpensive cremation and reverse the ashes for years.

Use of the "ihai" is not the only religious custom to which the Maryknoll missionary has adapted the liturgy. The church is built of hard planed wood in Shintoistic style to harmonize with the nearby Ise shrine, the center of Shintoism.

Then, on the Buddhist feast

that corresponds to All Souls Day, Father Steinbach sends a post-card to all the relatives of the deceased, many of whom are not Catholics, to invite them to a special Mass on August 15, to pray for their departed.

Purple vestments are used, since the Japanese prefer that color on such occasions.

All the ancestral tablets are placed on a table outside the altar rail with crucifix, candles, flowers and paper lanterns around them. The priest offers Mass, delivers a sermon and

gives absolution. The people pray and burn incense for the departed. These funeral and memorial rites have impressed both Catholics and Non-Catholics.

"The fact that we have tried to conform to Japanese customs," said Father Steinbach, "has been a great help to our work of evangelization. Although we cannot change our Catholic doctrine, there is no reason why we should try to foist strange customs on God's children in Japan who have their own way of doing things."

The "Shakufuku" technique, although it has been a major reason for Sokagakka's rapid growth, has also produced the resentment and organized opposition of the older religious groups as well as other post-war sects. For fear of hostile public opinion Sokagakka has almost entirely dropped physical violence from "shakufuku," but this has only resulted in stepped-up psychological "holiness" against other religions.

Sokagakka justifies its political efforts on the ground that religious confusion causes chaos in government. It promises to end both the confusion and the chaos.

New Sect Links Religion, Politics

(The following is the first of a series of three articles examining a postwar religious-political sect in Japan, whose phenomenal growth is threatening both Christianity and democracy there.)

By FATHER A.W. BRYSON, M.S.C.

Tokyo — (NC) — Japan's religious and political leaders are increasingly concerned over Sokagakka, the extreme nationalist and anti-Christian sect whose phenomenal growth is threatening both Christianity and democracy there.

Sokagakka (Creative Value Society) is one of the country's numerous postwar religious-political sects. When it first registered as a religious organization in 1952, its membership was only 11,070 families. Today it claims the allegiance of 10 million Japanese, 10% of the nation's population. It has become the third largest party in the upper chamber of the national legislature, the House of Coun-

cellors, and has scored major successes in local elections.

Sokagakka, which calls Christianity and Communism Japan's greatest enemies, claims it is based on a 13th-century Buddhist sect founded by Nichiren Daishonin (1222-1282), who denounced all other forms of Buddhism as false and dangerous to Japan and called for a Buddhist government.

Similarly, "Shakufuku Scripture," the official handbook of Sokagakka, which calls itself "True Buddhism," condemns all other religions as false and superstitious and demands that organization members oppose them.

The sect has used threats and blackmail to oppose rival religions and to increase its own power, although its leader calls any criticism of Sokagakka "persecution." It has condoned violence.

At times, sect members have invaded other Buddhist temples and Christian churches and occasionally destroyed sacred objects. Nichiren, the alleged

founder, has been cited 41 times in "To-kill heretics is not murder."

Sokagakka is organized on military lines, and its strict discipline and cell system, comparable to communism, have enabled it to control the votes of members, whose fanatical zeal has helped them to win large numbers of new converts. Many Catholic pastors are reporting Sokagakka proselytizing efforts among parishioners.

A powerful, nazified, million-member youth organization is charged by Sokagakka with staging mass demonstrations and rallies and making propaganda against other religions.

The propaganda technique is called "shakufuku" (break and subdue). The sect offers people immediate health, happiness and prosperity if they join, but threatens them with personal disaster if they do not.

William Woodard of Tokyo's International Institute for the Study of Religion had this to say about the sect: "Sokagakka does not respect

the rights of others. It threatens reprisals to all who oppose it. Followers are obligated to engage in forced conversions and in doing so they force themselves into private homes and refuse to leave when asked. They disrupt public meetings and threaten nonbelievers. Leaders encourage violence."

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Missions in Africa Re-assess their Methods

all schools, this tends to concentrate education in certain religious groups and keep the others in permanent inferiority. Uganda and Nyasaland have already taken over control of administration and syllabus in mission schools, and other states are being urged to follow them.

Apart from such intrinsic merits as the argument for greater state control of education may have, the position of the mission schools has been weakened by their practices in some territories under the colonial administrations. In return for the financial aid received from governments, they provided a higher level of service for the European and Asian than for the African members of the community.

Today the Africans by virtue of their numbers make policy, and they have not forgotten. A friendly critic, Tom Mboya, minister of justice of Kenya, recently said what many are thinking. Having described what he himself owes to the mission schools, he says that Africans have doubts about the work of missionaries when they see how the missionaries in the past complied in

easily with the type of colonial regime in which they found themselves.

"Their social life has often reflected the behavior of the European settlers and colonial administrators," he said, "and disenchantment has come when nationalists see in the missionary world itself the same systems and attitudes which prevail among the settlers."

In such a climate of opinion, it can be anticipated that the role of the missions in education will steadily decline. There are indications, however, that their help will be welcomed in allied areas which the new governments are anxious to develop, subject to provisions to prevent the creation of monopolies.

Uganda, for example, has for some ten years been promoting women's clubs through its department of community development. Such work is particularly useful in Africa, in much of which women have existed in a condition of inferiority little removed from that of the domestic animals.

Many of the clubs were formed at the Catholic missions, and the movement gained momentum when the Grail in 1955 sent a staff member from Europe to do social work among Uganda women. Gradually, the Grail and the White Sisters provided additional full-time workers, that formal training of leaders became possible. The training covers principles of leadership and group management, agriculture, home improvement, child welfare, education, and Christian family living. Training is now conducted not only at the parish but at the diocesan and inter-diocesan level, with as many as eighty courses a year.

The Catholic clubs have lateral autonomy and are organized in a national union. They are simultaneously affiliated to the association of women's clubs sponsored by Community Development, and they participate in general community programs.

Such are the lines along which many similar agencies project the future of their work. To continue to function, they will have to concentrate on activities recognized by the state as of major national benefit.