

The Blessings of Birth Control published in the Coloradoan, March 2012

In 1951, Carl Djerassi and his colleagues at Stanford University created a landmark medication whose far-reaching implications are difficult to exaggerate: the first steroidal oral contraceptive, widely known as “The Pill.” Of course, other forms of contraception have been around for centuries, including condoms, which have been manufactured since the 19th century and were recommended by our federal government to soldiers as early as the First World War to prevent sexually transmitted disease.

Genesis 1:28 says, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” With global population nearing 7 billion persons I think we all can declare, “**mission accomplished.**” God does not desire global overpopulation and the suffering it brings.

The current national discourse over contraception seems to be focused on the issues of personal sexual conduct, rather than on global necessity. Population control needs to be among the highest priorities for our planet, and not just in India and China. The resource-usage footprint of each American is far greater than any country in the developing world, so the global impact of each American child has an exaggerated effect on natural resource usage.

Women and men who use birth control aren’t “sluts” — they’re responsible. They are taking control not just of their own reproductive health, but affecting positively the lives of the people and creatures with whom they share the planet. How can we “go green” if we can’t control global population? How do we dare use the word “sustainability” if we can’t rein in our own reproduction?

Enter the religious establishment. While the Roman Catholic church’s prohibition on contraception is well-known, many branches of the Christian household welcome and encourage the use of birth control. For instance, the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council of Churches) in 1931 sanctioned the use of birth control. (*The National Council of Churches includes virtually all mainline and Orthodox churches, many traditionally African-American churches, as well as a grouping of Baptist denominations.*)

Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist Judaism have no problem with birth control. Islam accepts the use of non-permanent birth control methods, such as using oral contraceptives, so long as both partners agree.

So, why are we having a quasi-religious debate about the ethics of birth control 80 years after many Protestant, Orthodox, and Episcopal Christians sanctioned the use of contraception? The oft-quoted *Newsweek* poll that found that 98% of Roman Catholic women of childbearing age use birth control should be an eye-opener for the Roman Curia and the American Council of Bishops.

As the father of two sons, I have ensured that they are educated about sexuality and birth control through *Our Whole Lives*, a comprehensive curriculum produced jointly by the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Some religious perspectives get less media play because they aren’t vitriolic or extreme. I view contraception as a blessing. As a person of faith, I give thanks to God for

scientists like Carl Djerassi and pioneers like Margaret Sanger, who promoted birth control in the early 20th century. As a Christian, I feel duty bound to help ensure the best possible life for people and society, and that includes promoting the blessing of birth control.

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