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Contraception. John T. Noonan, Jr.

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totaling demands of \$40 million, involving these Corvairs. Without competitive safety, the industry has had no incentive to produce a safer car. The current request for an anti-trust exception for automobile manufacturers' safety programs shows that the car industry has learned little. In fact the Anti-Trust Division of the Justice Department is investigating agreements to cross-license car exhaust developments. Such agreements would seem to insure that no company would put forth a major inventive effort on car exhaust.

Nader seeks to alert the consumer to the hidden dangers in automobiles. Automobile designers have failed to protect the fragile human body from collision with the surrounding interior. He sees a car filled with danger from rigid steering columns and sprung glove compartments capable on impact of penetrating an occupant. The automobile manufacturers have generally omitted protective padding and have allowed door handles and instrument panels to project in a manner which can result in serious injury. According to Nader, numerous Wayne State University crash tests have found the standard windshield to be penetrable on sudden stop at speeds as low as $12\frac{1}{2}$ mph. Nader notes that seat belts, optional in 1955, were not uniformly installed until 1964, when they were required by legislation.

The reformer-author's attempts to force out hidden facts and to move an indifferent society sometimes show frustration and anger. Loss of credibility, resulting from the author's emotional involvement with the subject, is heightened by his failure to cite research sources. The reliability of Nader's findings, however, has been supported by the Commerce Committee hearings. The success of this book can be measured by the increased public awareness of defective automobile design and of the obvious need for safety engineering. The book is well written and is recommended for lawyers and anyone who drives a car.

CONRAD M. CUTCLIFFE

CONTRACEPTION. John T. Noonan, Jr. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965. 533 pp., \$7.95.

In *Contraception*, the entire historical position of the Catholic Church on birth control from the first century of the Roman Empire to the latest Ecumenical Council has been analyzed and presented in language easily understood by laymen. The Catholic doctrine opposed to birth control is in a formal sense based on the Bible, thus Biblical passages are examined.

The Roman Catholic Church used Genesis 38:8-10, to provide a Biblical explanation for its condemnation of contraception:

Then Juda said to Onan, 'Go to your brother's wife, perform your duty as brother-in-law, and raise up seed for your brother.' Onan knew that the descendants would not be his own, so whenever he had relations with his brother's wife, he let (the seed) be lost on the ground, in order not to raise up seed for his brother. What he did displeased Yahweh, who killed him also.¹

Mr. Noonan considers the explanation a mere rationalization. The Catholic Church took the position that Onan was killed because he used a contraceptive method. Noonan contends Genesis 38:8-10 was misinterpreted and takes the position that Onan was slain because he broke a Mosaic Law which required Onan to propagate with his deceased brother's wife in order to furnish heirs. If Onan had first impregnated his brother's wife, birth control thereafter would not have violated Mosaic Law.

Mr. Noonan demonstrates that the Catholic Church adopted non-biblical ideas in order to increase its membership and thereby its influence. For example, the Church borrowed a Stoic doctrine which considered intercourse unlawful except for the purpose of creating children. This Stoic doctrine also condemned intercourse for pleasure because of an erroneous belief that during intercourse, but not otherwise, the female emitted a seed containing a soul.

Mistaken physiological concepts are examined after the predominant influence of secular philosophies is presented. The author discusses dozens of contraceptive methods based on incorrect biological assumptions and analyzes the various methods from the crude magical potions of the first century, the abortion methods of the Dark Ages, the menstrual cycle rhythm method, and the birth control pills available today. From Catholic documents, Mr. Noonan verifies the fact that the Church's opposition to most contraceptive methods stem from the ancient belief that the female emits a seed during intercourse. The Catholics then consider it homicide to disturb this seed. The next step in his investigation leads to a physiological study of the female. It has been proved that the female has no seed to emit during intercourse, but only an egg or ovum that ripens for fertilization between menstrual periods and is emitted as waste during menstruation. This has been substantiated from hundreds of medical books written after

¹The translation is from the La Sainte Bible. The Hebrew omits the words "his seed." Most English translations supply it.

1900. Thus, a combination of a secular philosophy and lack of scientific knowledge served as a rationalization of the Catholic doctrinal opposition to contraception.

It is Mr. Noonan's thesis that even without the Bible the Church would have opposed birth control. The very existence of the Church was threatened when the Gnostics and Manichees greatly increased their numbers with a resulting decrease in Catholic influence. The Gnostic heresy which opposed matrimony because Jesus did not marry was popular in the second century. In the fourth century the Manichean heretics proclaimed that "Procreation is the evil act of evil." (p. 111). These 2 sects opposed marriage and had a hedonistic attitude toward sex. *Contraception* explains how the clergy went outside the orthodox community and copied Stoic ideals in order to attract the multitudes. The Stoic philosophy, which allowed intercourse only for the purpose of creating children, had an immediate appeal for the Catholic Church, for it enabled the priests to differ with their heretical enemies, the Gnostics and Manichees, and at the same time increase their congregations.

Contraception will be controversial and should have a profound effect upon Catholic thinking. The materials are well documented and the author is unbiased in his presentation. The discussion of birth control is presented as a conflict within the Church. All viewpoints are examined and the issues precisely outlined. The socially-concerned person should certainly read this book, for it deals with a pressing social problem and is pertinent to both the Catholic and all other religious communities.

F. WILLIAM BURKE

BID FOR FREEDOM: U.S.S.R. v. TARASOV. C.L. Sareen. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966. 199 pp. \$3.95.

The phrase "international anarchy" is often used to describe the current status of international relations. The problem is that there is no supreme source of law in the international sphere; and in any international incident of consequence, political power rather than law decides the controversy. Recently, there has been substantial agitation by international legal authorities¹ for "depoliticization" of international disputes and increased emphasis on justice. *Bid For Freedom*, by C.L.

¹For example, 1 *The Strategy of World Order* (Falk & Mendlovitz ed. 1966); Clark & Sohn, *World Peace Through World Law* (2d ed. 1960).