

RELIGIOUS BULLETIN

VOL. XLIII, NO. 16
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1963

REV. LLOYD W. TESKE, C.S.C.,
UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN - EDITOR

THE LATEST ON CONTRACEPTIVES

For many Catholics the disturbing element in current discussions about population problems and responsible parenthood is the usually unspoken question: Is the Church about to change its traditional, uncompromising judgment on the use of the most common contraceptive devices?

No Catholic theologian has even suggested publicly that the Church's traditional position on contraceptives might change, but speculation about it is in the air, particularly in the general press. These discussions hint that with all this aggiornamento going on, it is just a matter of time until Catholics fall into step with the rest of the world on the use of contraceptives.

Of course new developments in the knowledge and control of human fertility are already on the horizon. More are bound to come. Each development should be judged as it presents itself. It is quite possible that a study supported by the Planned Parenthood Association or by some similar group might turn up procedures which would be acceptable for Catholics.

But a very significant statement has now appeared which will, as far as we can judge, effectively close the door on the existing contraceptive devices. The November issue of The Catholic World contains a section from a new book, Volume II of Contemporary Moral Problems (Newman Press). The authors, Fathers John C. Ford, S.J. and Gerald Kelly, S.J., are two of the most eminent moral theologians in America. And both have been known for their open-mindedness toward new circumstances and new thinking which might alter the moral judgment of an act.

As professional moral theologians, they summarized their study on this particular point:

"The Church is so completely committed to the doctrine that contraception is intrinsically and gravely immoral that no substantial change in this teaching is possible. It is irrevocable.

"...it is safe to say that it is 'at least definable doctrine,' and is very likely already taught infallibly...

"The basis for recent papal condemnations of contra-
(continued on the back page)

MYTH AS A MEANS TO DIVINE REALITY Myths are undoubtedly contained in the Old Testament, says Father MacKenzie in his recent publication, Faith and History in the Old Testament*. These, however, are not myths in the sense of polytheistic stories, stories about gods and goddesses, but myths in the sense of narratives used to explain the ultimate reason of things and to express the writer's faith in a particular divine activity. Once a person steps outside the familiar world of everyday life and appeals to the works of God done outside Time and Space, he can have no other recourse than to the language of myth to convey the important truths that men need to apprehend.

"Myth," says Fr. MacKenzie, "is always an attempt to express, and thereby to make comprehensible, some truth about the world and man's existence in it, a truth inaccessible and unknown in itself, but capable of being expressed in and by symbols...What is essential is that it should attempt to formulate transcendental reality, to reach something behind the flux of phenomena that envelops human existence."

There is a great difference, therefore, between myths found in pagan religions and those found in Scripture. The mythologies properly so called of pagan religions, in Egypt, Mesopotamia, or ancient Greece, have a totally unreal air and character about them. Those stories belong to another world than ours. When those stories, however, which were the common property of the peoples of the Near East, were borrowed by the Israelites, they were totally transformed. In the hands of the Israelites, they became an im-

pressive portrayal of the activity of an all-powerful, majestic God.

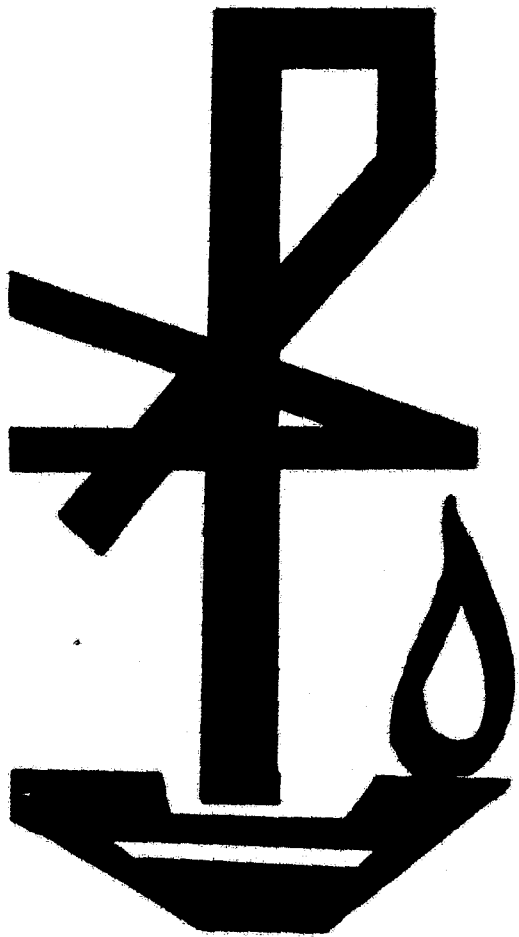
Such books as this by Fr. MacKenzie, are needed by us today if we are going to read the books of the Old and New Testament intelligently. We not only need, in the first place, to read the Bible, but we need to read it with the reliable information which is being made ever more available to us today. A whole new world of Biblical knowledge and interpretation has been opened to us in recent years through vast archaeological discoveries, through the unearthing of entire libraries of ancient literatures, through an ever surer knowledge of Semitic tongues--and Catholic scholarship is abreast of all these studies. This means that the present-day expositor of the Bible can go about his task of determining Scriptural meaning with a guidance and an assurance that former expositors never dreamed of. It would be a shame for us today not to take advantage of this scholarship.

Fr. MacKenzie, recently professor of Sacred Scripture at the Jesuit seminary in Toronto, is the newly appointed rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.

--Claude L. Boehm

*U of Minn. Press, 1963, \$3.75.

WHY PARTICIPATION?



It is practically impossible for a student to attend Sunday Mass here at Notre Dame without encountering a Dialogue Mass, with commentator, offertory procession, and followed by a hymn sung by the entire congregation. Until now, the comments of most students have been favorable and encouraging. However, there are some who still find the whole experience mystifying and distracting. Why the emphasis on participation? Do those who claim distraction really understand the point of a participated Mass?

The Church herself has said that the faithful attending Mass are not to be "like outsiders or mute spectators." Participation has been initiated and encouraged here at Notre Dame to instruct the student with what the Church considers a more intelligent and prayerful manner of worshipping God in the Mass. And this is precisely the reason for the Dialogue Mass, the commentator, the procession, and the congregational singing.

Actually, the matter of the 'dialogue' should need little explanation. By their very structure, certain parts of the Mass call for an interchange between priest and congregation, just as other parts call for the priest and community to pray together. Thus for example when the priest faces the people and greets them with "Dominus vobiscum," that is, "The Lord be with you," he, as a representative of Christ, is addressing the total Christian community. Why then shouldn't the total community respond? Furthermore, since the Gloria and Credo are primarily our prayer of praise and profession of faith, why shouldn't both priest and community join together as members of one Body of Christ?

Contrary to the opinions of some, the commentator does not simply translate the Mass texts and read them for the benefit of those without missals. His function is simply to call attention to the thoughts or themes expressed in the Mass and urge the Christian community present to share these same intentions and sentiments.

But why the offertory procession? In bringing the wine, water and hosts to the altar as our contributions, we act out perfectly the feelings that should be ours during this portion of the Mass. We are the ones giving, the material means for the sacrifice. But more important, our giving of the gifts reflects our own interior giving of self. The mixing of the water and wine signifies just this, that our lives are immersed and identified with Christ, whom

we profess to follow.

Our worship should incorporate the whole man. It is as active social beings, not as passive isolated individuals, that we worship. We praise and worship God not only with our minds and wills, but also with our bodily faculties. And so we speak out! We sing, we stand, sit and kneel. All of these actions reflect our interior feelings and perhaps help them. Such worship is a noble thing for man. He becomes an active participant and not the mute spectator that the Church discourages.

We hope that you will benefit from the emphasis on liturgical participation here at Notre Dame -- in the first place, that your spiritual life will grow through a more perfect, and meaningful worship of Almighty God; secondly, that when you leave Notre Dame you will be well-informed laymen, acutely aware of your important role in the Church and the responsibilities attached to it. We feel that this awareness should be first of all reflected in a love for and an appreciation of the liturgy.

--Father Saha

* * * * *

CONTRACEPTIVES (continued from the front page)

ception is the natural-law principle that the inherent procreative purpose, or procreative design, of the conjugal act must always be respected. This principle has always been a part of the Christian teaching on conjugal morality; hence in this sense at least, the condemnation of even modern contraceptive techniques may be called traditional doctrine."

Fathers Ford and Kelly would be the first to state that their own judgment does not involve infallibility, but among American Catholic theologians it carries substantial weight.

We would like to make (or repeat) two additional points:

(1) As far as the world population problem is concerned, there is no evidence that the most widely used contraceptives are any kind of an adequate answer, even apart from the morality of their use. We suggest that Catholics and non-Catholics stop pinning their attitude toward the population problem to this controversy.

(2) As far as Catholics are concerned, we would suggest that any notion of a change in the moral teaching on these contraceptives be dismissed. We can't prevent secular publications from making their editorial judgments, but we are presenting our best understanding of the Church's authoritative teaching.

The discussion will go on. Let's conduct it with responsibility and civility.

Ave Maria (November 9, 1963)