

Volume 19

Number 029

**History's Turning Points (15) – The
Death of Chastity - I**

Lead: Historical study often helps reveal twists in the human journey. Consider one of history's great social turning points – the death of chastity.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The expectation that a woman had to remain chaste, a virgin, until marriage or at least until engagement, had been around for millennia. The purpose of sex had been to make babies, propagate the species, extend the family, and in that process women were seen to play the essential

role, the depository of the seed of life. It was thought that female chastity was essential. That the other half of the population, the male half, was not expected to maintain quite the same level of virtuous existence became increasingly seen as a double-standard in the modern era. Suddenly women had an ally, a tiny chemical wafer – the Pill - that helped redress an ancient gender imbalance. Now the act of sex could be severed from procreation. The rules governing chastity were being repealed. The invention and wide availability of the Pill sat upon one of history’s great turning points.

The researchers who invented it certainly were not out to provoke a sexual revolution. Their goals were

much more prosaic. They hoped the Pill would give married couples around the world the means to engage in effective family planning, in short, they desired to come up with a truly dependable contraceptive. Their invention became commercially available in 1960. Over the next two decades, while also benefitting those who were married, the Pill became in the hands of those who were not married a pathway to sexual engagement not experienced in human history. There were other malefactors in the murder scheme, but the Pill once and for all hammered home the final and permanent nail in the coffin of chastity. Next time: other culprits in the demise of the chaste.

At the University of Richmond's School of Professional and Continuing Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.

Resources

**Boorstin, Daniel J. and Gerald Parshall, "History's
Hidden Turning Points," *U.S. News and World Report*.
110 (15, April 22, 1991): 52-66.**

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.