Be Fruitful and Multiply?
Anglican Efforts to Control Fertility in Interwar England

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SHORT ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the moral justification offered by Anglican leaders for their support for eugenic, pronatalist, and neo-Malthusian schemes between the First and Second World Wars. It argues that Anglican leaders comprehended their widespread efforts to control fertility within the context of a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose in English society, and that these women and men regularly justified their efforts on the grounds that fertility-manipulation schemes served to align procreative behaviours with 'Christian' conceptions of human purpose. Additionally, this thesis argues that key aspects of the shared moral logic of Anglican leaders can help to explain the pervasive interest in birthrate patterns, along with the enduring appeal of fertility-manipulation schemes, amongst middle- and upper-class men and women of varying religious and political persuasions in England, as well as across Europe and North America, during the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, it sheds light on how population concerns led to the liberalization of Church of England teachings on marriage, sexuality, and procreation, and also provides a qualitative contribution to the historiography on secularization by illuminating how Anglican leaders sought to maintain moral influence in the face of perceived large-scale rejection of Christian moral teachings.

Set against a backdrop of rapidly declining birthrates, this thesis has five main chapters, and it is arranged chronologically and thematically. Chapter One explains why Anglican leaders believed procreative behaviours fell under the purview of the Church of England, which functioned as one of the leading moral voices in English society, and Chapter Two elucidates why Anglican leaders believed married couples were having an 'incorrect' number of children. The final three chapters explore, in order, the moral

justification for various efforts aimed at controlling the fertility of specific socio-economic classes, the ‘mentally unfit,’ and the vast majority of the English populace.

LONG ABSTRACT

In the first half of the twentieth century, the burgeoning fields of demography and eugenics attracted socially and politically conscious women and men, many of whom belonged to the professional middle class, with promises of biologically-based solutions to a myriad of problems. Drawing upon these fields, and set against a backdrop of a near continual decline in the birthrate, English men and women from across the political and theological spectrums sought to resolve problems like poverty, vice, and international strife through fertility-manipulation schemes. Some of these schemes were explicitly eugenic in nature, though others were best categorized as pronatalist or neo-Malthusian. Numerous Christian leaders were found amongst the advocates of fertility-manipulation schemes—with many outspoken proponents belonging to one of the leading moral voices in interwar English society, the Church of England (referred to hereafter as the "Church"). This thesis centres on Anglicans during the interwar period, and how during that time laypersons and clergymen sought to redress birthrate patterns inside and outside official Church structures.

A number of flashpoints resulted in birthrate patterns emerging as a leading topic of conversation within Anglican newspapers, theological journals, Church leadership bodies, Church-sanctioned organizations, and informal Anglican groups. These included the mass casualties resulting from the Great War, debates over birth control at the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences, a 1934 government report recommending the legalization of voluntary sterilization, and the dire population projections made by eminent demographers in the lead-up to the Second World War. The pervasiveness of birthrate-related concerns, and related support for fertility-manipulation schemes, amongst Anglican leaders during the interwar period raises several questions. First, why

did Anglican leaders believe birthrate patterns fell under their purview? Second, why did they believe certain segments of the population were not having the 'correct' number of children? Finally, how did they justify their interference with the procreative habits of most, or particular segments of, the population? The answers, this thesis reveals, were shaped by the reflections of Anglican leaders, as well as their anxieties over shifting sentiments amongst the general populace, in regards to perhaps a surprising question: what is the purpose of a human life?

Various aspects of the intertwined histories of eugenics, pronatalism, and neo-Malthusianism in England during the first half of the twentieth century have received considerable attention from scholars, but the full shape of the moral reasoning employed on behalf of these schemes remains underexplored. A related, understudied area is the history of the engagement of twentieth-century Christian leaders in England with eugenic, pronatalist, and neo-Malthusian thought and practices. This thesis addresses both lacunas by examining the justifications offered by Anglican laypersons and clergymen on behalf of their efforts to manipulate both the 'quality' and quantity of the population of England (as well as the rest of Britain and the Dominions).

Common threads were present in the moral reasoning of Anglican promoters of pronatalist, eugenic, and neo-Malthusian schemes, and a central claim of this thesis is that these commonalities can help explain why birthrate-related concerns, and the promotion of fertility-manipulation schemes, pervaded amongst members of the middle and upper classes of nearly all religious and non-religious persuasions during the interwar period in England as well as across Europe and North America. This thesis also sheds light on how birthrate-related fears contributed to the liberalization of Church positions on marriage and sexuality, including the decision by the Church to condone the use of birth control (marking a first for any major Christian denomination in Europe or North America).

Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates the central place assigned to family life in the political and social thought of the Church between the wars, particularly as it related to supporting the 'benevolent' mission of the empire and a stable social order at home. Lastly, this thesis provides a qualitative contribution to the historiography on secularization in England by illuminating how Anglican leaders sought to maintain moral influence in the face of perceived large-scale rejection of Christian moral teachings.

Anglican leaders widely conceived of the supposed discord between reproductive behaviours and the flourishing of individuals, families, the nation, and the empire as fundamentally theological in nature. Within such a framework, they often conceived of their struggles to manipulate birthrates as part of a broader societal struggle over Christian and non-Christian conceptions of human purpose, or to what ends a person *ought* to direct their life. Married couples were therefore thought not to be having the 'correct' number of children, which supposedly imperiled personal and national interests, because they had erred in regards to the question of "what are people for?" Many of these same leaders believed that the struggle between differing conceptions of human purpose had weakened their own authority to provide convincing guidance concerning reproductive behaviours, but they still felt a moral obligation to steward sexual morals, family life, and national interests. And so, in the minds of many Anglican leaders, fertility-manipulation schemes represented a tangible means by which they could maintain influence, advance Christian teachings on human purpose against perceived competitors, and fulfill their pastoral responsibilities. The right to promote these schemes was often thought to be rooted in the authority of God, and specifically His *universal* directives pertaining to human purpose.

Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes regularly spoke about human purpose as it was thought to relate to one's God-ordained obligations to serve,

strengthen, or ‘perfect’ one’s community (broadly defined). Some Anglican leaders also framed the question of human purpose in an individual sense, relating it to God’s desire for each human being to live a ‘full’ or ‘meaningful’ life. Thanks to the connections drawn by Anglican leaders between human purpose and reproduction, discussions relating to terms like “fertility” and “birthrates” could stand in for conversations and concerns relating to the waxing or waning of a certain set of values, and, relatedly, the moral character of certain segments of the population.

This thesis progresses chronologically and thematically, with each chapter examining varying aspects of the moral logic employed by Anglican leaders, and Chapters Two through Five exploring these matters through the lenses of particular fertility-manipulation schemes. Beginning with the Great War and concluding with the early days of the Second World War, the chronological ordering of the chapters helps to chart the rise and fall of various pronatalist, neo-Malthusian, and eugenic proposals within their own social and political contexts. Additionally, the chronological ordering highlights how worries over birthrate patterns fostered an increasing openness within the Church to the separation of sex from procreation, and, correspondingly, to practices like birth control, sterilization, and intentionally childless marriages.

Chapters One and Two look at the interrelated questions of why Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes believed birthrate patterns fell under their purview, and why they believed married couples were having the ‘incorrect’ number of children. Through an examination of reports on the birthrate produced by the National Birth-Rate Commission (NBRC) in 1916 and 1920, Chapter One establishes that Anglican leaders widely believed that sexual morality, family life, and national interests (including the wellbeing of the empire) all fell under the province of the Church. The findings of the NBRC help to make sense of Anglican involvement with the commission,

and more broadly the question of why Anglican leaders believed birthrate patterns fell under their authority, by highlighting the supposed ways in which contemporary birthrate patterns imperiled all three spheres over which Anglican leaders believed they were called to preside. Chapter Two offers a brief overview of the condemnation of birth control at the 1908 and 1920 Lambeth Conferences, and then examines several emerging moral considerations that prompted increased openness to contraception within the Church throughout the 1920s. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to tracing the moral logic offered by Bishop Theodore Woods in defence of birth control. Woods was the preeminent proponent of contraception within the Church, and he believed that birthrate patterns were in misalignment with personal and societal flourishing due to the advancement of a 'hedonistic' philosophy over and against Christian teachings. He also argued that the approval of birth control would furnish the Church with the requisite moral authority to combat unchristian teachings and convince married couples belonging to the eugenically 'desirable' middle and upper classes to serve God and country through childrearing.

The next three chapters examine the moral justifications for fertility-manipulation schemes directed at specific socio-economic classes, the 'mentally unfit,' and, in the lead-up to the Second World War, the great majority of the English populace. Chapter Three, which completes the story of Woods' successful campaign to secure the approval of contraception at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, highlights near-utopian futures that Woods, along with figures like the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, W. R. Inge, believed could be realized by either expanding the use of birth control amongst the lower classes, or by limiting its use amongst the middle and upper classes. These Anglican leaders drew upon national and international promises of flourishing to categorize class-based fertility-manipulation schemes as disinterested acts of benevolence towards the 'suffering' and

‘disadvantaged’ at home and across the empire. Notably, Woods’ campaign in favour of contraception reveals a common belief amongst Anglican leaders in their own superiority over ‘backwards’ races that was rooted not in heredity, but ‘superior’ morals. And with the Church’s approval of birth control came also the intentional silencing of female critics of contraception by high-level Church leadership after 1930.

Chapter Four is framed around the campaign between 1929 and 1935 to legalize voluntary sterilization, a cause spearheaded by the Eugenics Education Society. This campaign was supported by Professor Leonard Hodgson, Rev. J. P. Hinton, and the social worker, Josephine Calcutt. Hodgson believed that the propagation of persons with ‘diminished’ mental capacities (who were deemed incapable of the ‘foresight’ needed to use contraceptives) defied God’s supposed desire to perfect humanity in body, mind, and morals, while Calcutt and Hinton taught that it contravened God’s desire for all persons to live ‘full’ and ‘meaningful’ lives. All three further agreed that most Christians had not embraced God’s purpose for their lives, which was to partner with Him in pursuing the above ends. In 1935, the majority of bishops, along with both archbishops, followed the lead of Calcutt, Hinton, and Hodgson by voting to affirm that voluntary sterilization was consistent with Christian ethics.

Chapter Five looks at the efforts of anglo-catholic leaders, most of whom were associated with the Christendom Group, to increase the birthrate of nearly all segments of the English population. By 1936, a “depopulation panic” had set in across England, which served to discredit the campaign for voluntary sterilization. The panic was fed by a decline in birthrates amongst most segments of the population and German pronatalist policies. Men like Maurice Reckitt, the founder of the Christendom Group and editor of the journal *Christendom*, along with Rev. J. V. Langmead Casserley, argued that birthrate decline was the result of a disordering of society away from God’s designs. As

the logic went, this disordering brought about a dramatic decline in genuine Christian faith, which subsequently led to the rejection of parenthood and the embrace of self-interests. Naturally, anglo-catholics like Casserley and Reckitt sought to reinvigorate the birthrate through schemes aimed at the rechristianization of England's populace. Casserley believed such an approach would encourage men and women to repent of their abandonment of parenthood, and in turn embrace God-ordained, gender-specific responsibilities pertaining to family life —and he based these responsibilities on what he believed were essential differences, as well as similarities, in the natures of women and men. An increase in the birthrate, it was hoped, would serve as the basis of a Christian social order, making Britain a shining city on a hill that other nations would aspire towards following the close of the war.

My examination of the moral logic offered by Anglican leaders helps to explain the pervasiveness of interest in birthrate patterns, and the enduring appeal of fertility-manipulation schemes, amongst religious and non-religious actors—as key aspects of the moral arguments put forth by Anglican leaders were shared by religious and non-religious proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes. That is, widespread efforts to manipulate birthrates were regularly justified by religious and non-religious figures as a means of aligning procreative behaviours with 'correct' articulations of human purpose, and efforts to regulate fertility were also regularly conceived of as part of broader struggles over competing conceptions of human purpose. Naturally, not all proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes believed that a theological problem was at the bottom of the apparent misalignment between reproductive behaviours and personal and/or societal flourishing. However, persons of varying religious (or non-religious) persuasions regularly framed their moral thinking related to 'qualitative' and quantitative population measures in broadly existential terms—or those relating to the meaning and purpose of

human existence. The framing of birthrate patterns in existential terms helps to explain the pervasive interest in birthrate patterns because of what such matters were perceived to represent. As mentioned, rather than functioning only as abstract vital statistics, birthrate patterns could signify tangible ‘proof’ of the waxing or waning of a particular set of existential values. Relatedly, the relationship drawn between birthrate patterns and human purpose can also help to explain the widespread support for fertility-manipulation schemes in that these schemes could serve to identify a definite ‘subversive’ element, associated with ends other than the ‘flourishing’ of the entire community or nation, that could be blamed for any number of societal problems.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	Archbishop's Advisory Committee on Spiritual Healing
AID	Artificial Insemination by Donor
AIH	Artificial Insemination by Husband
BMA	British Medical Association
CAMW	Central Association for Mental Welfare
CLES	Committee for Legalizing Eugenic Sterilization
COPEC	Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship
CSA	Church Union Association for Church Social Action
EES	Eugenics Education Society (later renamed the Eugenics Society)
LNL	League of National Life
MCU	Modern Churchmen's Union
MU	Mothers' Union
NBRC	National Birth-Rate Commission
NCPM	National Council of Public Morals
PIC	Population Investigation Committee
SCBC	Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

Introduction

> While there should be censure of the recklessness of the poor who assume parental responsibility without the capacity or the effort to discharge it worthily, there should be no less a condemnation of the selfishness, or the social ambition, which leads some of the well-to-do to restrict their families.[1]

To these words, the Bishop of Barking, Thomas Stevens, the Bishop of Birmingham, Henry Russell Wakefield, and the medical doctor and devout Anglican layperson, Mary Scharlieb, signed their names in 1916. The resolution represented one of twelve proposals for raising the British birthrate found in an addendum to a report by the National Birth-Rate Commission (NBRC). Stevens, Wakefield, Scharlieb, and several other Anglican leaders sat as commission members on the non-governmental body, and in the chair sat the former Bishop of Ripon, William Boyd Carpenter.

The main NBRC report warned that, between 1876 and 1912, the birthrate in England and Wales had plummeted by roughly one-third.[2] The NBRC assessed that the decline was the result of conscious limitation amongst married couples, and that limitation was especially prevalent amongst the middle and upper classes—the very persons thought to possess the requisite financial means to rear large families. Other suggestions offered in the addendum for increasing the birthrate included providing government funding for the education of children from large families, ensuring the availability of affordable housing, and imploring the "religious and moral teachers of the nation" to provide "more certain and competent guidance" regarding the duty of parenthood. These schemes, the addendum suggested, would facilitate increased

[1] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate, Its Causes and Effects: Being the Report of and the Chief Evidence Taken by the National Birth-Rate Commission, Instituted, with Official Recognition, by the National Council of Public Morals—For the Promotion of Race Regeneration—Spiritual, Moral, and Physical* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1916), 78.
[2] English birthrate data refers to both England and Wales in this thesis unless otherwise noted.

emigration, and so serve to keep the Dominions "white" against the "pressure of Asiatic immigration."[3]

Anglican interest in birthrate patterns

In the first half of the twentieth century, the burgeoning fields of demography and eugenics attracted socially and politically conscious men and women, many of whom belonged to the professional middle class, with promises of biologically-based solutions to a myriad of problems. Drawing upon these fields, women and men from across the political spectrum sought to resolve matters like poverty, vice, and international strife through fertility-manipulation schemes.[4] Some of these schemes were explicitly eugenic in nature, though others were best categorized as pronatalist or neo-Malthusian. In line with the call of the NBRC, numerous Christian leaders were found amongst the advocates of fertility-manipulation schemes—with many vocal proponents belonging to the Church of England (referred to hereafter as the "Church"). This thesis centres on Anglicans in the interwar period, and during that time laypersons and clergymen served outside Church structures in various organizations concerned with altering birthrate patterns. These included the Eugenics Education Society (EES; later renamed the Eugenics Society), the League of National Life (LNL), and the National Council of Public Morals (NCPM; the parent organization of the NBRC). Anglican leaders similarly sought to encourage and discourage parenthood by way of their respective roles within various Church leadership bodies, such as the Lambeth Conference, as well as through Church-sanctioned organizations, including the Mothers' Union (MU), and via informal Anglican organizations, like the Christendom Group.

[3] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 3, 37, 77-80, 74.
[4] For further discussion on how support for eugenics was not limited to a single political party or political ideology, see Alex Aylward, "R.A. Fisher, Eugenics, and the Campaign for Family Allowances in Interwar Britain," *British Journal for the History of Science* 54, no. 4 (2021): 485-486

The pervasiveness of birthrate-related concerns outside Anglican circles will be discussed later in this introduction, but the historian Richard Soloway's words pertaining to fears over perceived demographic changes brought about by birthrate patterns, or what he terms as the "population question," provide a helpful overview:

> that question … eventually engaged prominent as well as peripheral figures of widely varying persuasions in government, politics, law, religion, education, journalism, literature, theater, science, medicine, and the armed forces. It intruded one way or another into most contemporary issues … as men and women in ever-increasing numbers came to recognize they were living through a revolution in reproductive behavior.[5]

Amongst Anglican leaders, the pervasiveness of apprehensions pertaining to birthrate patterns, and specifically their potential effect on the quantity and 'quality' of the population, is of course itself difficult to quantify. But to provide a sense of scale, it is helpful to distinguish between Anglican leaders, numbering in the dozens, who persistently sought to draw attention to birthrate patterns, including prominent clergymen like the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, W. R. Inge, as well as the Bishop of Birmingham, Ernest Barnes, and those with episodic interest in the matter. Certain flashpoints, such as the mass casualties resulting from the Great War, debates over birth control at the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences, the publishing of a 1934 government report that recommended the legalization of voluntary sterilization, and the dire population projections made by eminent demographers in the lead-up to the Second World War, resulted in birthrate patterns emerging as a leading topic of conversation within Anglican

[5] Richard Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), xii. Soloway was speaking of the period between 1890 and 1930, but his words hold true for the entirety of the interwar period. I am deeply indebted to the work of Soloway, especially as it relates to my efforts to contextualize birthrate trends in the introductory and concluding portions of each of my main chapters.

newspapers, theological journals, Church leadership bodies, Church-sanctioned organizations, and informal Anglican groups.[6]

Parallels can be drawn to the prevalence of concerns amongst Anglican leaders over gambling and birthrate patterns in the 1920s and 1930s. As was the case with gambling, few Anglican leaders publicly objected to the notion that the Church ought to be concerned with birthrate patterns. And present amongst the Anglican leaders who sought to redress both procreative and gambling habits were some of the most influential voices within the Church, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang. Anglican leaders likewise addressed both matters through their participation in external, ecumenical organizations and by way of related lobbying for various forms of government intervention.[7] Also, at the height of interest, birthrate patterns, like gambling, could best be described as *a* question of the hour, rather than *the* question of the hour. The correspondence drawn between birthrate patterns and gambling falters, however, when the matter of perceived national importance is considered. In contrast to conversations surrounding gambling, the entire British social order, along with the existence of the empire, was regularly said to be at stake in the course of birthrate-related discussions. Thanks to the extensive influence enjoyed by Church leadership bodies like the decennial Lambeth Conference (a gathering of the bishops of the worldwide Anglican Communion that provided guidance to all members of the Communion, and whose resolutions were reported widely in the Christian and mainstream press), as well as Church-sanctioned organizations like the MU (whose members numbered in the hundreds of thousands by 1910), and the popularity of ecclesiastical figures like Inge (who wrote a weekly column

[6] The term "birth control" is most often used in this thesis to refer to the practice of preventing pregnancies through the use of 'artificial' methods or devices, and on occasion the term is also employed to refer collectively to the devices or methods themselves.
[7] For further discussion on the Church and gambling, see G. I. T. Machin, *Churches and Social Issues in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 66-75.

for the *Evening Standard*), worries expressed by Anglican leaders over birthrate patterns reached a large audience inside and outside Anglican circles.

The pervasiveness of birthrate-related concerns, and correlated support for fertility-manipulation schemes, amongst Anglican leaders raises several questions. First, why did Anglican leaders believe birthrate patterns fell under their purview? Second, why did they believe certain segments of the population were not having the 'correct' number of children? Finally, how did they justify their interference with the procreative habits of most or particular segments of the population? The answers, this thesis reveals, were shaped by the reflections of Anglican leaders, as well as their anxieties over shifting sentiments amongst the general populace, in regards to perhaps a surprising question: what is the purpose of a human life?

Contributions to historical scholarship

The historical actors examined in this thesis were prominent Anglican leaders who demonstrated a mixture of persistent and episodic concern over birthrate patterns, and most actively promoted fertility-manipulation schemes, or methods of coercion, exclusion, instruction, or incentivization aimed at changing procreative behaviours. As the term is employed in this thesis, an Anglican leader refers to a woman or man who: (1) identified with the Anglican faith tradition; and (2) drew upon their Christian faith as a leader within various religious and non-religious organizations and governing bodies or in the context of their own written work. As an additional note, the term "fertility-manipulation scheme" perhaps reads as a judgment on the historical actors examined in this thesis. While I would denounce many of the actions and opinions of these women and men, I did not choose the term as an expression of my own displeasure—nor to imply deceit on the part of any historical actors. I have chosen it because I needed a way to refer

collectively to the numerous pronatalist, eugenic, and neo-Malthusian policies supported by Anglican leaders.[8]

As will be discussed more fully later in this introduction, various aspects of the intertwined histories of eugenics, pronatalism, and neo-Malthusianism in England during the first half of the twentieth century have received considerable attention from scholars, but the full shape of the moral reasoning employed on behalf of these schemes remains underexplored. A related, understudied area is the history of the engagement of twentieth-century Christian leaders in England with eugenic, pronatalist, and neo-Malthusian thought and practices. This thesis addresses both lacunae by examining the justifications offered by Anglican laypersons and clergymen for their efforts to manipulate both the 'quality' and quantity of the population of England (as well as Britain and the Dominions) between the First and Second World Wars. Of note, not all the Anglican leaders who expressed quantitative population concerns also worried about 'qualitative" matters, but those who fretted over the 'quality' (or hereditarian endowment) of the population necessarily concerned themselves with the growth or decline of all, or a particular part, of the population.

Common threads were present in the moral reasoning of Anglican leaders who promoted pronatalist, eugenic, and neo-Malthusian schemes. This thesis argues that these commonalities can help explain why birthrate-related fears, and the promotion of fertility-manipulation schemes, pervaded amongst members of the middle and upper classes of nearly all religious and non-religious persuasions during the interwar period in England as well as across Europe and North America. Furthermore, this thesis sheds light on how worries about the birthrate contributed to the liberalization of Church positions on

[8] The term "population control" was not chosen because it is often associated in the present-day with efforts specifically aimed at restricting the size of a population or particular group of people.

marriage and sexuality, including the decision by the Church to formally condone the use of birth control (making it the first major Christian denomination in Europe or North America to officially sanction the use of contraceptives). The archbishops of York and Canterbury, along with the majority of bishops, soon after voted to affirm the morality of voluntary sterilization (and thereby permitted bishops to sanction intentionally childless marriages within their respective dioceses), a fact hitherto overlooked by historians. This thesis also demonstrates the central place assigned to family life in the political and social thought of the Church between the wars, particularly as it related to supporting the 'benevolent' mission of the empire and a stable social order at home. Lastly, it provides a qualitative contribution to the historiography on secularization in England by illuminating how Anglican leaders sought to maintain moral influence in the face of perceived large-scale rejection of Christian teachings pertaining to marriage, procreation, and sexuality.

Birthrates and a broader struggle over human purpose

Anglican leaders widely conceived of the supposed discord between reproductive behaviours and the flourishing of individuals, families, the nation, and the empire as fundamentally theological in nature. Within such a framework, they often conceived of their struggles to manipulate birthrates as part of a broader societal struggle over Christian and non-Christian conceptions of human purpose, or the matter of to what ends a person *ought* to direct their life. Married couples were therefore thought not to be having the 'correct' number of children, which supposedly imperiled nearly every aspect of personal, social, and political life, because they had erred in regards to the question "what are people for?" Many of these same leaders believed that the struggle between differing conceptions of human purpose had weakened their own authority to provide convincing guidance about reproductive behaviours, but they still felt a moral obligation

to steward sexual morals, family life, and national interests. Fertility manipulation schemes, then, seemingly provided a means to do exactly that (by way of aligning reproductive behaviours with Christian conceptions of human purpose). And so, in the minds of many Anglican leaders, fertility-manipulation schemes represented a tangible means by which they could maintain influence, advance Christian teachings on human purpose against perceived competitors, and fulfill their perceived pastoral responsibilities. The right to promote these schemes was thought to be rooted in the authority of God, and specifically His *universal* directives pertaining to human purpose.

Christian conceptions of the highest aims a person could direct their life towards have historically drawn upon the teachings of scripture. The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, written in 1648, asked "What is the chief end of man?" The answer, according to the Westminster Assembly's reading of the Bible, ran as follows: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."[9] Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes in the interwar period also regularly spoke about human purpose as it related to one's God-ordained obligations to serve, strengthen, or 'perfect' her or his community (broadly defined).[10] For example, Inge, fearing the costs associated with caring for the hereditarily 'unfit,' regularly asked if these individuals had an unmitigated right to procreate. Others, like the Bishop of Winchester, Theodore Woods, raised the matter of whether middle-class parents had an obligation to the state to produce a certain number of children. Some Anglican leaders also framed the question of human purpose in relation to God's desire for each human being to live a 'full' or 'meaningful' life. In this individual sense, it might be said that the purpose of a human

[9] "The Westminster Shorter Catechism," A Puritan's Mind, accessed December 1, 2021, https://www.apuritansmind.com/westminster-standards/shorter-catechism.
[10] Such conceptions of human purpose were often perceived to be under threat by individual (and supposedly individualistic) understandings of human purpose, which emphasized self-gratification and/or social advancement.

life was to develop morally, mentally, and spiritually, and, relatedly, to participate in family life and secure and/or enjoy a certain standard of living. However, Christian conceptions of individual human purpose were not placed in opposition to perceived communal obligations, but rather it was believed that they needed to be pursued in tandem. And claims pertaining to individual and communal purpose sometimes overlapped with one another in the moral logic offered by Anglican leaders; Chapter Four reveals that proponents of sterilization justified their support with the assertion that God bestowed upon all people the communal obligation of working to ensure that each member of the community was born with the requisite hereditary capacities to live a 'meaningful' life.

Thanks to the connections drawn by Anglican leaders between human purpose and reproduction, terms like "fertility" and "birthrates" could refer to more than general population trends. Discussions relating to these matters could stand in for conversations and concerns relating to the waxing or waning of specific values, and, relatedly, the moral character of certain segments of the population. Furthermore, notions of how specific segments of the population ought to individually contribute to their shared communal purpose of advancing both the interests of God and England were informed by demography and eugenics, and were often class-, race-, and gender-specific (e.g., the 'unfit' might best serve their community by having fewer children, while the 'fit' ought to have more). For some, the study of the history of evolution, as well as findings from the 'science' of eugenics, was also thought to have revealed new teachings from God relating to shared communal obligations (such as God's supposed desire for human beings to work with Him to bring about the 'perfection' of the human species).

Anglican leaders typically pinned declining commitments to Christian conceptions of human purpose on some combination of Church missteps (with the result

of religious disillusionment), high taxation (meaning some middle- and upper-class parents desired larger families, but were stymied by tax burdens), the propagation of 'hedonistic' philosophies, misguided social welfare and/or charitable programs (which not only contributed to 'excessive' taxation, but also supposedly enabled 'undesirable' segments of the population to eschew their 'obligations' of limiting the size of their respective families), the Industrial Revolution, and acquisitiveness. For his part, Bishop Woods tilted strongly towards the disillusionment side of the spectrum. He argued that the Church was out of step with most English people, and especially with the younger generation. It was not that young people were any less inherently moral than before, Woods contended, but rather that many of the Church's moral teachings had not taken into account contemporary changes in society. He held that the Church mainly talked about sex in negative terms, and, contrary to the alleged practice and moral sentiments of most married couples, emphatically denounced birth control. As a result, young people had begun to look elsewhere for what they believed to be more credible moral guidance, often adopting 'hedonistic' teachings preached by secular prophets. These teachings, warned Anglican leaders, taught that meaning was to be found in immediate self-fulfillment rather than through service to God and country.

This thesis draws inspiration from Richard Soloway's work *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, which analyzes how, in the first half of the twentieth century, "the declining birthrate in general and its class differential characteristics in particular" engendered "the rise of eugenic analyses."[11] However, my work is not exclusively a history of eugenic thought and practice. My interest lies in how Anglican leaders interpreted the meaning and causes of

[11] Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), xiii.

birthrate trends, and, relatedly, how they justified their support for eugenic, pronatalist, and neo-Malthusian schemes. In his exceptional work, *Fatal Misconception*: *The Struggle to Control World Population*, Matthew Connelly focuses on American efforts to restrict fertility amongst 'poor' people living in 'poor' countries following the Second World War. Significantly for this thesis, Connelly asserts that, when contemplating the rise in global population during the twentieth century,

> the most thoughtful observers have eventually asked themselves: "What are people for?" One cannot read the debates that ensued without starting to take them personally, because they ultimately concern the meaning and purpose of life itself. This book will not try to settle existential questions. But a work of history can at least show what happens when some people believe they can answer on behalf of others because they think they know best.[12]

Connelly's reflections on human purpose, which focus on individual conceptions of the matter, especially as it related to weighing a higher standard of living against having more children, are not elaborated on at length in his book. And where my project differs from Connelly's is not only in examining efforts to both restrict and increase birthrates, but also in providing a lengthy analysis, rather than a brief gloss, as to the central role the question "what are people for?" played in justifying fertility-manipulation schemes.

In addition to Soloway's work, a robust historiography exists on eugenics in Britain, as well as across the United States and Europe, in the interwar period. A seminal work in the field of the history of British and American eugenics is Daniel Kevles' *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, which helpfully traces the rise and fall of the eugenics movement in both countries in accordance with developments in the science of human genetics. Soloway and Kevles, along with other scholars like Pauline Mazumdar, focus primarily on historical actors associated with universities and

[12] Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), xi.

the EES.[13] Helpfully, another body of work has addressed the pervasiveness of eugenic thought outside these structures, with one notable example being Angus McClaren's analysis of the place and role of eugenic thought in interwar literature.[14]

Several scholars have examined the support of Christian leaders for eugenics in the United States, and increasingly historians have focused their attention on religious engagement with eugenics in other parts of the world.[15] Christine Rosen provided the first in-depth analysis of Christian support for eugenics in America in *Preaching Eugenics*, which frames the support for eugenics by theologically liberal Christians as an abandonment of core Christian principles, motivated partially out of a desire to solve social problems and "increase human happiness."[16] This narrative of abandonment has since been challenged by Dennis Durst and others, who have demonstrated the theological compatibility of eugenics with pre-existing streams of Christian thought within an American context.[17]

A smaller body of literature exists on eugenics and Christianity in England. In his DPhil thesis "Eugenics and Christian Mission," Graham Baker helps to reveal the popularity of eugenic thought amongst English Christians by examining two voluntary societies that worked amongst the poor. Baker also demonstrates that a desire to garner support amongst Christian leaders shaped, and tempered, the work of the EES.[18] In

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[13] Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); and Pauline M. H. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings: The Eugenics Society, its Sources, and its Critics in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1992).
[14] Angus McClaren, *Reproduction by Design: Sex, Robots, Trees, and Test-Tube Babies in Interwar Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 3-5. For a discussion of the prevalence of eugenic thought amongst women, see Greta Jones, "Women and Eugenics in Britain: The Case of Mary Scharlieb, Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, and Stella Browne," *Annals of Science* 52, no. 5 (1995): 482-483.
[15] For example, see Sarah Walsh, *The Religion of Life: Eugenics, Race, and Catholicism in Chile* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022).
[16] Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 184.
[17] For example, see Dennis Durst, *Eugenics and Protestant Social Reform: Hereditary, Science, and Religion in America, 1860–1940* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2017), ix-xii.
[18] Graham Baker, "Eugenics and Christian Mission. Charitable Welfare in Transition: London and New York, c. 1865–1940" (DPhil diss., University of Oxford, 2011).

Religion and Racial Progress in Twentieth-Century Britain: Bishop Barnes of Birmingham, P. T. Merricks draws heavily from the work of Marius Turda in framing Barnes' support for eugenics through the lens of "programmatic modernism." Merricks provides an illuminating intellectual biography of Barnes, appointed bishop of Birmingham in 1924, and notes that Barnes sought to leverage eugenics for the purpose of bringing about a "bio-spiritual" revival in England. However, he often presents the bishop as a figure who was representative of only a narrow band of theological modernists.[19]

Regarding the history of neo-Malthusian thought and practice in England during the first half of the twentieth century, there exists a sizeable body of work by economic historians.[20] And Robert Mayhew helpfully traces how Malthus' teachings shaped not only economic thought, but also eugenic discourse and the "modern construction of the idea of a global binary between rich and poor countries."[21] Along similar lines, Alison Bashford provides an adept analysis of how the global "population problem" was "comprehended and created" amongst disciples of Malthus from a number of countries, including prominent members of the (English) Malthusian League, such as H. G. Wells and John Maynard Keynes.[22] Multiple scholars have also traced the relationship between birth control advocacy and neo-Malthusian thought, including Soloway, who offers a history of the Malthusian League through the lens of debates over contraception in *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930*. And of particular importance for this thesis, Timothy Jones points out in *Sexual Politics in the Church of*

[19] P. T. Merricks, *Religion and Racial Progress in Twentieth-Century Britain: Bishop Barnes of Birmingham* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 41, 21, 8.
[20] For example, see John Toye, "Keynes on Population and Economic Growth," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 21, no. 1 (January, 1997).
[21] Robert Mayhew, *Malthus: The Life and Legacies of an Untimely Prophet* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2014), 173.
[22] Alison Bashford, *Global Population: History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 3.

England that fears regarding *overpopulation* encouraged an openness to birth control at the 1930 Lambeth Conference.[23] Turning towards pronatalism, numerous authors have highlighted how maternal and child welfare initiatives, as well as the social hygiene movement, were closely linked with quantitative population concerns (particularly in regards to peopling the empire).[24]

Existing literature has certainly highlighted the pervasiveness of concerns over birthrate patterns in interwar England, along with the widespread support for pronatalist, eugenic, and neo-Malthusian schemes (which spanned across political and ideological divides). Support for such schemes has often been explained by way of the desires to solve seemingly intractable social and geo-political problems, the appeal of the "authority of science," and fears amongst the middle and upper classes over various kinds of social change.[25] Philipa Levine also helpfully notes that support for eugenics was fostered by a combination of imperial anxieties and racially charged "presumptions of [nineteenth-century] anthropology," and Marius Turda asserts that across Europe eugenics was embraced as "an integral aspect of European modernity" because it offered each nation a means by which to "protect the past from a dissatisfying present [following the Great War], and … guide it into a redeeming future."[26] The related moral justifications for fertility-manipulation schemes have also been addressed by various authors, with a particular emphasis on their perceived social and political utility.[27] My purpose is not to upend prior scholarship, or to offer an exclusive paradigm for either interpreting the moral logic used in defence of fertility-manipulation schemes or for explaining the

[23] Timothy Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England, 1857-1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 142-144.
[24] For example, see Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop*, no. 5 (Spring, 1978): 9-12.
[25] Regarding fears over social change, see Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, xvii.
[26] Philipa Levine, "Anthropology, Colonialism, and Eugenics," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Philipa Levine and Allison Bashford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 56; and Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics (*Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 6, 8.
[27] For example, see Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 93-94.

pervasiveness of support for them. Rather, my work paints a fuller picture of why fertility-manipulation schemes provided such enduring appeal to the middle and upper classes through an examination of understudied facets of the moral logic levied in defence of such schemes. I start my analysis of the moral thought of Anglican leaders not with the final product, but at a more foundational level—with the questions of why women and men were thought to be having the 'incorrect' number of children, and why birthrate patterns were thought to fall under the purview of Anglican leaders. And I differentiate myself from much of the above-mentioned literature by pinpointing commonalities in the moral logic used in defence of eugenic, pronatalist, and neo-Malthusian schemes, which demonstrates how, even though a particular individual or group might reject one category of fertility-manipulation scheme, support for *some* type of scheme proved so appealing in the interwar period. Furthermore, rather than seeking only to demonstrate the pervasiveness of support for fertility-manipulation schemes amongst religious persons, my thesis centres on religious leaders in order to help explain the enduring appeal of such schemes amongst the entirety of the middle and upper classes.

Sources and methods

My thesis draws from a wide range of sources, including the anglo-catholic newspaper the *Church Times*, the Anglican newspaper of record, the *Guardian*, and mainstream newspapers like *The Times* and *Manchester Guardian*. Moreover, I cite several theology journals, such as the *Hibbert Journal*, edited by a Unitarian and home to many theologically liberal writings, *Theology*, an influential publication with a generally anglo-catholic orientation, and the *Modern Churchman*, a journal representing some of the most theologically liberal members of the Church. I also examine a number of published books

and pamphlets written by Anglican leaders, as well as the promotional materials for a birthrate exhibition put on by the anglo-catholic organization, the Church Union.

Other sources include two major reports on the birthrate by the NBRC, published materials from the NCPM, and the journal *National Life*, a monthly periodical of the LNL (an ecumenical organization that opposed birth control and supported pronatalist policies). I likewise draw from various materials published by the MU (which encompassed evangelical and anglo-catholic points of view), the unpublished records of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, the published reports and resolutions of the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences, the papers of Bishop Barnes, the correspondence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Thomas Davidson, the minutes of the Bishops' Meeting, the proceedings of the Convocations of Canterbury and York, and speeches from the annual Church Congress.

The materials of the MU, NCPM, and NBRC, along with articles from theology journals and various published books and pamphlets, help to incorporate laypersons, and particularly the voices of women, into my thesis. And the sources I have selected are intended to provide a representative sample of the political inclinations of Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes (though high-ranking clergymen rarely offered public support for a political party), as well as the various theological camps within the Church—which might be described as anglo-catholic, evangelical, and liberal. These are broad, and in some ways overly generic, theological descriptors, and it is important to recognize that at the time a spectrum of liberal and conservative theological beliefs existed amongst self-identifying evangelicals and anglo-catholics.

I have included the proceedings of various Church leadership bodies to provide insights into the beliefs and actions of some of the most influential clergymen within the Church. The unpublished proceedings of these bodies are especially illuminating, as they

offer a window into frank and unfiltered discussions on fertility-related matters. Due to restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as my own long-term health complications resulting from "Long COVID," my ability to access certain private papers and archival materials was limited. Yet I still managed to engage extensively with primary source materials despite, to name one of many external obstacles, the Lambeth Palace Library closing for 18 months.

My approach to the various sources centres on uncovering the moral logic employed by Anglican leaders to justify their support for specific fertility-manipulation schemes. My goal is to sidestep simplistic evaluations by, rather than focusing on the final product of thought, examining the *process* of moral thought that culminated in Anglican leaders supporting all manner of policies.[28] To aid this examination, I have striven to interpret my sources in the light of broader social and religious trends, economic developments, and geo-political happenings.[29] The careful contextualization of fertility-manipulation schemes is necessary because the schemes examined in this thesis were often reactionary, advanced in response to interconnected social, religious, economic, and geo-political developments that seemingly threatened specific visions of personal, familial, societal, and global flourishing. Also of note, in my thesis I have chosen to eschew the assumption that Anglican leaders wore their religious beliefs as a kind of mask to hide their 'true' motivations. I take the historical actors examined in my thesis at their word—meaning that I assume the moral justifications they offered on behalf of various fertility-manipulation schemes corresponded to their actual beliefs.

[28] This approach is adapted from Jan Goldstein, "Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 1 (February, 2015): 2, 5.

[29] I have also taken into account corresponding developments in eugenic, pronatalist, and neo-Malthusian thought outside Anglican circles that likewise shaped the perception of population needs amongst the women and men examined in this thesis.

Set against a backdrop of a near continual decline in birthrates, this thesis progresses chronologically and thematically, with each chapter examining varying aspects of the moral logic employed by Anglican leaders, and Chapters Three through Five exploring these matters through the lens of a particular kind of fertility-manipulation scheme. Beginning with the Great War and concluding with the early days of the Second World War, the chronological ordering of the chapters helps to chart the rise and fall (and sometimes re-emergence) of various pronatalist, neo-Malthusian, and eugenic proposals within their own social and political contexts. Additionally, the chronological ordering helps to reveal how concerns over specific birthrate patterns fostered an increasing, albeit limited, openness within the Church to the separation of sex from procreation, and, correspondingly, to practices like birth control, sterilization, and intentionally childless marriages. Such openness was partially the result of a desire amongst Anglican leaders to promote and protect what were perceived as higher-ordered moral responsibilities pertaining to procreation, and, relatedly, to actualize specific visions of personal and societal flourishing. In the case of birth control, Woods taught that condoning the practice in limited instances could strengthen the moral credibility of the Church, which he believed was flagging due to the Church's rejection of contraception. Woods imagined the Church could utilize this credibility to convince the hereditarily 'desirable' middle- and upper-class married couples, who he felt were shirking their familial responsibilities, to pursue their vital, God-ordained obligation of giving birth to more children. He expected this pursuit would help actualize his vision of international harmony by way of bolstering British rule across the world.

Population concerns prior to the Great War



Figure 1. Birthrate (births per one thousand population) in England and Wales
Sources: Reports of the Registrar General and the Office for National Statistics

Woods was well aware that during the nineteenth century, the population of England and Wales had increased from 11 million persons to 37 million. This increase was driven by a decline in the mortality rate, as well as by an uptick in the birthrate between the years of 1837 and 1876, when it peaked at an all-time high of 36.3 births per one thousand population (a measure sometimes referred to as the "crude birthrate").[30] Woods was also aware that while the total population continued to grow, by the turn of the twentieth century the birthrate had fallen to 28.5—a phenomenon that did not escape the watchful

[30] All birthrate statistics cited in this thesis refer to births per one thousand population unless otherwise noted.

eye of the popular press and scores of journals at the time. What follows is a fuller sketch of the development, and pervasiveness, of fears over demographic trends within English society prior to the Great War, which will serve to better situate the support for fertility-manipulation schemes amongst interwar Anglican leaders like Woods. Of note, I have not conflated the terms "Britain" and "England" (and related terms) when offering my own analysis in this thesis, but I have chosen to use the terms employed by specific historical actors (who did sometimes conflate "Britain," "England," and related terms) when explaining their particular viewpoints.[31]

As pointed out by Soloway, at the turn of the century periodicals regularly detailed, and editorialized on, the reports about vital statistics put out by the registrar-general, with many drawing comparisons between the declining birthrate in England and the collapse of ancient civilizations.[32] Anna Davin further details that the decline in birthrates at the turn of the century was accompanied by an "infant mortality rate of 163, meaning that for every one thousand children born, 163 did not live to see their first birthday." Motivated in part by a desire to bolster the empire (by way of increasing the total number of persons who might emigrate), care for mothers and infants became a pressing concern for government officials and voluntary societies.[33] Indeed, perceived population needs were often conceived of within a framework of empire, as births (especially amongst the "white peoples" of the empire), deaths, migration, and total land area were all factored into calculations.[34] In the years prior to the Great War, roughly 300,000 British citizens emigrated annually, which was followed by a dramatic decline

[31] This choice was made because certain historical actors were not always clear as to the geographical area they referred to when employing terms like "Britain," and so I have chosen to maintain this ambiguity in certain instances.
[32] For further discussion on relevant demographic information, see Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 3-7.
[33] Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," 10-12.
[34] Bashford, *Global Population*, 19.

after the war.[35] An increase in the population density of the Dominions was considered important not only for the general maintenance and protection of the empire, but also because of a common belief that arable land had to be actively cultivated by a substantial population of white settlers to maintain legitimate claims against European and East Asian powers. In the lead-up to the Great War, therefore, birthrates and other vital statistics were often placed in a comparative, international perspective, being regularly compared to those of Germany, the United States, and countries in East Asia.[36]

Beginning in 1903, the registrar-general recommended the study of corrected fertility rates as a more accurate indicator of domestic population trends. According to Soloway,

> these figures, which enumerated the number of children born annually to married women ages fifteen to forty-five, had been available since mid-century but now took on new significance. Until the 1870s when it reached a recorded peak of 304, the corrected rate had averaged 288 births per 1,000 married women in their childbearing years. Since then the figure had fallen to 234, and showed every sign of continuing on its downward path. Indeed, by 1914 it stood at 191.6 per 1,000, a decline of 37 percent since the prolific year of 1876. The drop in corrected or marital fertility even exceeded the 33 percent slide to 24 per 1,000 in the crude birthrate.[37]

The superintendent of statistics at the General Register Office, T. H. C. Stevenson, was thought to have provided some clues as to why women of childbearing age were having fewer children with the *Fertility of Marriage Census*, which he undertook alongside the decennial census of 1911. Stevenson's data, first delivered in preliminary form to the NBRC, suggested that the birthrate amongst the middle classes was roughly half that of "unskilled" workers. Correspondingly, various studies undertaken prior to the Great War by Karl Pearson, the Galton Professor of Eugenics at University College, London, and his disciples suggested that many of the most fertile people lived in the 'slums' of England's

[35] Jay Winter, "Migration, War, and Empire: The British Case," *Annales de démographie historique*, no. 1 (2002): 147.
[36] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 5-6.
[37] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 6-7.

major cities.[38] This accumulating 'evidence' relating to the so-called problem of "differential fertility" between socio-economic classes indicated to many concerned parties that the decline in the general birthrate could be attributed, at least in part, to a desire amongst the middle and upper classes to preserve, or achieve, a certain standard of living (and perhaps also a corresponding decline in patriotic and religious sentiments). It was also pointed out that, for parents who desired the 'best' for their children, they had to consider matters like the cost of education and 'burdensome' tax rates.[39]

Data on the supposed differences in fertility between socio-economic classes also engendered fears regarding heredity and the 'quality' of the English population. Pearson attempted to legitimize such concerns at UCL. Supported by funds from Francis Galton, regarded by Pearson and many others as the founder of the 'science' of eugenics, Pearson and his team served in the early years of the twentieth century as "the principal source of authoritative eugenic science" and "the scientific benchmark of all eugenic discussion in England."[40] Around the time Pearson stepped into the role as director of the Galton Laboratory for National Eugenics, Sybil Gotto was celebrating the birth of the EES. Founded thanks to Gotto's enthusiasm, the Society was comprised of mostly "university people, and two-thirds of these were biological or social scientists." Membership of the Society totaled just 1,200 people by the Great War, but "80 per cent of the early membership was eminent enough to be included in the Dictionary of National Biography."[41] The Society began to publish its quarterly journal, the *Eugenics Review*, in 1909, but it reached only a limited audience. However, 'qualitative' population concerns prior to the Great War were not restricted to disciples of Pearson or members of the EES—as the colloquial eugenic gospel that 'like begets like' diffused across England

[38] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 9-17.
[39] For example, see National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, vi, 21, 39-40, 93, 140.
[40] Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 38-40.
[41] Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings*, 7-8.

through the reporting of the popular press on matters such as the high rejection rate of army recruits during the Boer War.[42]

Turning towards Malthus and so-called neo-Malthusianism, a small but vocal band of women and men organized as the Malthusian League following the 1877 trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh for their circulation of a birth control tract entitled *The Fruits of Philosophy*. With a medical doctor, Charles Drysdale, serving as president, members of the League sought to promote smaller families, principally by way of the use of birth control, across England (and later the globe).[43] The need to exercise careful control over the birthrate was consistent with the teachings of Malthus, as Lisle Dalton points out that

> Malthus' most famous and enduring idea, the population principle, starts from two simple postulates. First, that food is necessary to human existence. Second, that the 'passion between the sexes' stays at a constant level throughout human history. Recognizing that sexuality quickly begets children that must be fed, Malthus quickly builds to his famous principle – 'the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man' … In human societies, Malthus argued that the principle of population frustrated any attempts at a comprehensive amelioration because population would always be racing ahead of society's ability to nourish itself.[44]

Geoffrey Gilbert adds that "Malthus presented poverty in 1798 as a corollary of the principle of population, and thus a natural feature of even the most economically advanced societies." However, he notes that Malthus later offered the postponement of marriage, during which time individuals were to remain celibate, as a means of lowering the birthrate, which could help diminish the "misery" (i.e., starvation, low standards of

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[42] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, xxiii, 34, 42-43. However, not all 'qualitative' population concerns related to heredity, as some pundits theorized that the overall health of certain groups was deteriorating as a result of environmental factors like 'slum' living, poor nutrition, etc.

[43] For further discussion on the founding of the Malthusian League, see Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 53-57.

[44] Lisle Dalton, "Malthus, Thomas Robert (1766-1834)," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199754670.001.0001/acref-9780199754670-e-541.

living, and disease) and "vice" (i.e., the use of contraception, prostitution, and abortion) that would otherwise function to align the size of the population with available resources.[45]

The founding of the Malthusian League, whose members referred to themselves as "Neo-Malthusians," coincided with the start of the decrease in birthrates across Britain, which members of the League often interpreted as a causal relationship rather than the coincidence it was. In its early years, the League taught that

> poverty was the symptom of racial disease, overpopulation the cause, and contraception the cure ... the more individual workers took responsibility for themselves, reduced the size of their families and, as a result, the number of surplus laborers, the higher their wages would rise, in accordance with the law of supply and demand, and their living conditions improve. The health of exhausted mothers and their frail offspring would get dramatically better and the quality of working-class family life would soar.[46]

In comparison to the writings of Malthus, one thing that was indeed "new" about Neo-Malthusians was their promotion of contraceptives. Even as alarms were raised over declining birthrates, interest in Malthus' teachings, and worries regarding a supposed causal relationship between *overpopulation* and domestic social ills, were not strictly limited to members of the League, nor proponents of birth control, prior to the Great War. Thanks in part to the writings of Keynes on population and unemployment following the Great War, along with a belief that overpopulation was a contributing factor to the conflict, the 1920s witnessed a growing interest in Malthus' teachings.[47] The League itself experienced a brief period of renewal and increased influence during this time with a rebranding and new openness to socialism and other forms of economic thought.[48]

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[45] Geoffrey Gilbert, "Malthus, Thomas Robert (1766-1834)," in *The Continuum Encyclopedia of British* Philosophy, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199754694.001.0001/acref-9780199754694-e-1368.
[46] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 91, 96-7.
[47] Bashford, *Global Population*, 60-61.
[48] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 196.

While the salacious reputation of the League discouraged affiliation amongst Anglican leaders, some of its basic tenets, especially related to the important role birth control might play in limiting the fecundity of the lower classes, and thereby reducing poverty, suffering, and other social ills, did shape the perception of England's population needs amongst Anglican leaders, the most notable of whom was Inge. It is in this sense that I refer to fertility-manipulation schemes as "neo-Malthusian" in this thesis.

The place of the Church in English society

A question that might occur to the reader is why, if fears over birthrate patterns, and support for fertility-manipulation schemes, permeated the middle and upper classes, have I selected Anglican leaders as the primary group I examine in this thesis? One reason is the considerable engagement by these women and men with fertility-manipulation schemes, and also that they provided explicit and lengthy moral arguments in defence of said schemes. Furthermore, I have chosen Anglican leaders because they represented a diverse set of positions on topics like birth control and sterilization, and because the Church functioned as a, if not the, leading moral voice in England during the interwar period.[49] As Matthew Grimley explains, the Church, despite a mostly downward trend in regular attendance during that time,

> was in some ways in a stronger national position after 1918 than it had been during the late Victorian period, because of the relative decline of political Nonconformity. As the Nonconformist political attack abated after the First World War, and disestablishment ceased to be a live issue, the established Church could feel more secure in its national status. It was able to project its national voice without being drowned out by Nonconformist catcalls, and to speak on behalf of the whole Christian nation, Nonconformists included.[50]

[49] I would argue that the Church represented the leading moral voice, but this argument is not central to any of the major claims made in my thesis.
[50] Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 10.

Writing in 2004, Grimley also stated that "It is easy to assume that Britain was as secular in the inter-war period as it is today. It was not. The senior clergy still mattered, commanding significant national respect and attention as political players."[51] In regards to general Christian influence in society, Sam Brewitt-Taylor takes note of a gradual decline in Christian moral culture following the Great War. However, he argues, in line with the sentiments of Callum Brown, that "Christianity remained the dominant force in mainstream British moral culture" at both the elite and popular levels throughout the interwar period.[52] As will be discussed in Chapter Two, I would add to these statements that, even as the Church laid claim to considerable moral and social influence, its dispersed leadership structure meant that it sometimes functioned more as a collection of differing moral voices. The title of "leading moral voice" also requires clarification, as the Church's denunciation of a particular activity or action, such as the use of birth control in 1920, did not necessarily result in a widespread reversal of public opinion or personal behaviour—though, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, its *approval* of birth control in 1930 diminished the moral stigma surrounding the use of contraceptives.

Brewitt-Taylor, drawing from the work of Jose Harris and Gareth Stedman Jones, further indicates that "the social patterns of the 1870s Britain were, broadly speaking, still recognizable" throughout the interwar period.[53] On the other hand, in his book *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, Timothy Jones contends that, for the period between 1857 and 1957, the Church was often "at the forefront of social change in the areas of gender and sexuality."[54] Jones' work challenges secularization narratives, such as the one put forward by Callum Brown, that pit "medico-scientific understandings of sexuality"

[51] Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England,* 10.
[52] Sam Brewitt-Taylor, *Christian Radicalism in the Church of England and the Invention of the British Sixties, 1957-1970: The Hope of a World Transformed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18-19.
[53] Brewitt-Taylor, *Christian Radicalism*, 10.
[54] Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 183.

against entrenched, traditional Christian views on such matters.[55] "Rather than scientific understandings of sexuality replacing religious ones," Jones claims that the twentieth century saw "the two being reconciled, with some surprising results."[56] For her part, Laura Ramsay notes that a small but growing body of work on Christianity and sexuality aligns with Jones against the secularization narrative, and, staking out a bold position, she adds that "British permissiveness" was born partially out of the thinking and advocacy work of interwar Anglican leaders.[57]

Drawing these various strands together, recent literature emphasizes both the continuing influence of Christian moral culture during the interwar period, as well as shifts during that time in the approach by the Church on matters pertaining to sexuality and gender, such as stressing the importance of sex education, emphasizing the sacramental value of the sex act, framing sexuality as a good gift from God to both women and men, and increasing openness to birth control. Where I contribute to the historiography on Christianity and sexuality in the twentieth century, as well as to the broader body of work on secularization, is by exploring the shared mental worlds of a group of Anglican leaders who were very much concerned with perceived, widespread abandonment of traditional morals relating to marriage, sex, and, most importantly for this thesis, procreation. While matters like protecting the permanence of marriage, as well as limiting sex to within the marriage state, weighed heavily on the minds of Anglican leaders, Chapters Two and Three of this thesis reveal how Woods and likeminded allies sought to protect what were perceived as higher-ordered moral goods pertaining to procreation by encouraging an increased openness to birth control within the Church,

[55] Alison Falby, review of *Sexual Politics in the Church of England, 1857–1957*, by Timothy Jones, *English Historical Review* 131, no. 533 (December, 2016): 1562.
[56] Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 7.
[57] Laura Ramsay, '"The Relation of the Sexes': Towards a Christian View of Sex and Citizenship in Interwar Britain," *Contemporary British History* 34, no. 4 (2020): 556-557.

which can in turn provide a fuller picture of how the Church began to 'modernize' some of its teachings relating to sexuality. The desire to protect higher-ordered moral goods also demonstrates the important place assigned to procreative and associated familial obligations within the social thought of the Church, particularly as it related to perceived communal obligations to strengthen the English social order and support the maintenance and expansion of the empire.

Perhaps it is true that amongst each generation of Christian leaders, many are convinced that they preside over a period of pronounced moral decay. However, what stood out during the interwar period was the acknowledgment by influential personalities like Nina Woods, the spouse of Bishop Woods and president of the MU, that Christianity faced stiff opposition from competing and credible moral philosophies, and that many women and men were not only erring in their marital, sexual, and procreative behaviours, but were also increasingly looking beyond Christianity for guidance on these matters. As will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three, it was Nina Woods' husband who warned the bishops of the Anglican Communion that they risked losing all moral credibility on the question of birth control to the likes of Bertrand Russell. Evidence offered in support of the supposed decline in Christian moral commitments included the popularity of 'pernicious' literature, the advertisement of contraceptives, increasing divorce rates (along with legislation expanding the grounds for divorce), and of course, declining birthrates.

In fact there was not a widespread, wholesale abandonment of Christianity, nor a corresponding, widespread embrace of Russell's "new morality" between the wars. Instead, there was a gradual decline in Church attendance and Christian moral culture (as it related to beliefs regarding marriage, procreation, and sexuality), though many Church leaders, as Grimley notes, "lacked our hindsight, and what seems to us like very gradual

decline often seemed catastrophic to them."[58] As will be discussed in Chapter Five, by 1940 the leader of the Christendom Group, Maurice Reckitt, was wondering aloud whether England could any longer be referred to as a "Christian nation." Resulting from the perceived, and in some ways actual, decline in their own moral authority on matters relating to marriage, procreation, and sexuality, Anglican leaders increasingly looked to fertility-manipulation schemes to maintain moral influence. Some Anglican leaders did so in a shared spirit with a myriad of other Christian leaders who were seeking to find ways of navigating "a 'new' or 'transformed' social reality [i.e., a perceived reality shaped by a perceived decline in Christian influence over nearly every aspect of society, as well as other transformational changes like urbanization], which they believed also required an active process of change and adaptation on the part of Christians themselves," while still others "took a more hostile or confrontational view."[59]

To summarize, my thesis offers a qualitative contribution to the historiography on secularization in England, particularly in regards to how declining birthrates, which were thought to indicate a decline in the moral authority of the Church, encouraged an increased openness to 'progressive' views on marriage, sexuality, and procreation—beginning with the qualified approval of birth control by the Church. As noted by Timothy Jones, the theological and moral reasoning used to justify birth control, which in part emphasized the sacramental value of sex for strengthening the marriage relationship, began to "decentre reproduction in Anglican understandings of sex, marriage, and gender."[60] This shift laid the theological groundwork (i.e., the possibility of the separation of sex from procreation) for addressing future matters like voluntary sterilization, which was supported by the bishops of the Church in 1935 not necessarily because of fears of

[58] Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*, 11.
[59] John Carter Wood, "Introduction: Christian Modernities in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century," *Contemporary British History* 34, no. 4 (2020): 505.
[60] Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 132.

Church decline, but in order to protect children from the hereditary 'taints' of their parents. And by 1958, the Lambeth Conference affirmed, based in part on *overpopulation* concerns,

> that the responsibility for deciding upon the number and frequency of children has been laid by God upon the consciences of parents everywhere; that this planning, in such ways as are mutually acceptable to husband and wife in Christian conscience, is a right and important factor in Christian family life and should be the result of positive choice before God. Such responsible parenthood, built on obedience to all the duties of marriage, requires a wise stewardship of the resources and abilities of the family as well as a thoughtful consideration of the varying population needs and problems of society and the claims of future generations.[61]

The increasing openness within the Church to the separation of sex from procreation between 1930 and 1958 aligns with the analysis of Ramsay and Jones as to the ways in which the Church actively participated in reshaping its own positions, as well as societal views more broadly, on sexuality and gender, especially when we consider that Christian moral culture continued to have a significant influence in society through the 1950s. In line with the thinking of Jones, the decentering of sex from procreation likewise paved the way, as will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter of this thesis, for significant reimagining of ethics relating to marriage, gender, and sexuality into the 1960s and beyond.

Regarding the social thought of the Church during the interwar period, Christian socialism proved especially appealing to many Anglican leaders during that time. From its inception in the nineteenth century, the movement was grounded in a mixture of theological and political thought. Christian socialists like William Temple, appointed Archbishop of York in 1929, distinguished themselves from political socialists by shunning the rhetoric of class conflict and specific policies of large-scale wealth

[61] *The Lambeth Conference 1958: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishop, Together with the Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1958), 1.57.

redistribution. They instead advanced general notions of fellowship and cooperation amongst all segments of society. Grimley argues that the differences between political and Christian socialists can be seen in the industrial disputes of 1926. During this time Temple declined to side with striking coal workers, as he predicated his beliefs "on social fellowship and cooperation," and instead he offered to serve as a mediator between the disputing parties.[62] Grimley adds that Christian socialists shared the belief that "economic and political life were not morally neutral."[63] The biblical foundations for the Christian socialist movement came partly from the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation teaches that Jesus, being fully God and the second person of the Trinity, also took on a human nature as He entered into our world through His miraculous birth to the Virgin Mary. By coming down from heaven and entangling Himself in human affairs, Christian socialists believed Christ set an example for his followers as far as caring for more than 'spiritual' matters. The task of the followers of Jesus was to bring about the rule of the kingdom of heaven over all of human life—meaning Christians ought to care about private morality, but equally so economic and social injustices.[64]

Grimley's work suggests that the Church and the state were widely regarded as two pillars on which a just social order might be built. My thesis demonstrates the prominence of a third pillar in the social thought of the Church: the family. The family was widely thought of as the *foundational* basis for a stable social order, and Edward Norman points out that it was on these grounds that Lang could form a non-religious argument against the relaxation of divorce laws in the first half of the 1920s.[65] This thesis

[62] Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*, 36-42, 107-111.
[63] Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*, 39.
[64] Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*, 37-38.
[65] Edward Norman, *Church and Society in England, 1770-1970: A Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 268-269.

reveals that families were thought of as the basis of the social order not only because they functioned as a kind of society-in-miniature, providing support and care for its members, but also because the family was the biological source of a nation's citizens (thereby determining the 'quality' and quantity of its population), and was the principal moral training ground for the nation's citizens. Therefore, *large* families, usually conceived of as at least four children, were thought vital not only to people the empire and prevent the dramatic depopulation of England, but also because children who grew up with multiple siblings were said to be privy to superior moral training, making them in turn superior citizens. It is no wonder, then, that the NCPM chose as its motto the words of King George V: "The foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people, and they will only remain unshaken while the family life of our race and nation is strong, simple and pure."[66]

The use of scripture in support of fertility-manipulation schemes

Most of the people examined in this thesis belonged to the middle and upper classes, and many could boast of elite educations. This group includes bishops, deans, canons, parish priests, MU volunteers and employees, journal editors, lawyers, professors, medical doctors, and social workers. More men than women are included in my work, which is partly the result of the composition of most Church leadership bodies, and the related exclusion of women from ordination. However, women did serve as members of the House of Laity in the Church Assembly after 1919, and, in addition to exercising considerable informal influence on other Church leadership bodies, played prominent roles in promoting fertility-manipulation schemes outside these bodies.

[66] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate,* vii.

Amongst Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes there existed a wide spectrum of political and theological beliefs, and these women and men often employed a mixed economy of moral arguments, drawing from their theological and political traditions, amongst others. Notably, readers of this thesis will likely notice that direct and sustained appeals to the Bible were few and far between. When making explicitly religious arguments, Anglican men and women instead drew from general biblical principles (e.g., "love thy neighbour"), which could be broadly interpreted and applied in light of perceived population needs, as well as from natural law theorizing, Church tradition, and the history of the development of the natural world (e.g., attempts were made to discern the will of God through the study of the history of human evolution).

Evident amongst some Anglican leaders was a willingness to re-evaluate Christian charitable practices, and general support for social welfare schemes, in light of 'scientific' findings related to heredity. As discussed in Chapter Four, given the supposed linkage between heredity and 'undesirable' standards of living, the social worker Josephine Calcutt suggested that the best way to love one's neighbour was to prevent the propagation of the 'unfit' (rather than to provide material resources that might be used to start a family). For Calcutt and likeminded Anglican supporters of sterilization, the problem was not so much that mainstream Christian moral culture was on the decline, but rather that it was misguided, or not authentically Christian, in its support for state and private relief that supposedly promoted individual (and 'individualistic') conceptions of human purpose above communal ones.

Painting with the broadest of brushes, a correlation can be made between liberal theological inclinations and an openness to neo-Malthusian and negative eugenic policies (i.e., eugenic efforts aimed at restricting the fertility of 'undesirable' groups). In the case

of support for negative eugenic policies, political affinities were not as accurate an indicator, as, for example, Bishop Woods, a committed Christian socialist, and Inge, an arch-Conservative, found common ground on the need to restrict the fertility of certain segments of the population. Broader openness existed amongst the various theological camps in relation to positive eugenic policies (i.e., eugenic efforts aimed at increasing the fertility of 'desirable' groups). Regarding more general pronatalist policies, which did not exclude large portions of the population on eugenic grounds, those typically appealed more to evangelicals and anglo-catholics, and significant support for these policies was offered in the lead-up to the Second World War. With the rise in birthrates following the Second World War, as well as the passing of social welfare policies that many Church leaders interpreted as encouraging larger families, birthrate patterns, at least for a brief period, slid down the list of Church concerns. While perceived population needs were influenced by all manner of economic, political, social, and religious trends, what remained consistent amongst Anglican leaders throughout the interwar period was the belief that all married couples had reproductive obligations to both God and the state. Procreative habits, then, were conceived of not only as a matter of personal morality, but also of national importance.

The proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes examined in this thesis, including laypersons and members of the clergy, typically did not possess formal education in disciplines related to eugenics or demography—which raises the question of how Anglican leaders understood and asserted themselves as 'experts' on birthrate-related matters. One way of so doing was by grounding their claims relating to the population needs of England and the empire in supposedly authoritative sources, including government reports on sterilization and mental 'defect,' statistics from the registrar-general, and the work of notable academics like Pearson and R. A. Fisher (the latter also

an Anglican layperson). Another way, especially for clergymen, was through participation in organizations outside Church structures, such as the LNL and NBRC. Capitalizing on the credibility ascribed to these organizations, this approach empowered clergy to subsequently assert themselves as 'specialists' on any number of subject matters within the Church. Furthermore, Anglican leaders often framed 'disconcerting' procreative trends as the result of moral and theological failings. Which enabled them, as moral and theological authorities, to present themselves as uniquely positioned to provide the answers to why married couples were having the 'incorrect' number of children and how population trends might be reversed.

Concerns amongst Anglican leaders related to birthrate trends were not without precedent prior to the first half of the twentieth century—and interest in the quantity and 'quality' of the population during the twentieth century certainly predated the start of the Great War.[67] Similarly, interest in birthrate patterns did not vanish following the start of the Second World War, as demonstrated by the evidence gathered by the Royal Commission on Population (which was established in 1944), and the emergence of anxieties relating to matters like environmentalism and overpopulation in the 1950s. Why then focus on the interwar period? One reason is the status of the Church as a preeminent Christian moral voice in English society during that time. Another reason is that the losses resulting from the Great War served to exacerbate pre-existing concerns held by Anglican leaders, as well as other concerned parties, relating to population 'quality' and quantity, and also because those losses drew the attention of an increasing number of Anglican leaders towards birthrate-related trends. Additionally, I have chosen the

[67] For example, see Arthur Winnington-Ingram, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy and Churchwardens of London in St. Paul's Cathedral, October 19, 1905: At His Primary Visitation of the Diocese of London* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., Ltd., 1905), 33; and William Boyd Carpenter, "Heredity and Social Responsibility," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress: Held at Cambridge, on September 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th, 1910*, ed. Rev. C. Dunkley (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910), 166.

interwar period because of the preponderance of specific fertility-manipulation schemes proposed by Anglican leaders during that time, the emergence of a tentative consensus amongst Anglican leaders as to the population needs of England in the lead-up to the Second World War, and the fact that public concern in England during the twentieth century over birthrate patterns reached its peak between the wars.

Overview of chapters

Following the chronological and thematic ordering of the thesis, Chapters One and Two look at the interrelated questions of why Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes believed birthrate patterns fell under their purview, and why they believed married couples were having the 'incorrect' number of children. Through an examination of two reports on the birthrate produced by the NBRC, I establish in Chapter One that Anglican leaders widely believed that sexual morals, family life, and national interests all fell under the province of the Church. The findings of the NBRC help to make sense of Anglican involvement with the commission, and more broadly the question of why Anglican leaders believed birthrate patterns fell under their purview, by highlighting the alleged ways in which contemporary birthrate patterns imperiled all three spheres over which they were supposedly called to preside. In Chapter Two I offer a brief overview of the condemnation of birth control by the Church at the 1908 and 1920 Lambeth Conferences, and then examine several emerging moral considerations that prompted increased openness to birth control within the Church throughout the 1920s. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to tracing the moral logic offered by Bishop Woods, who also served as the president of the NCPM, in defence of his campaign in favour of birth control. As mentioned, Woods, who was the preeminent proponent of birth control within the Church, believed that birthrate patterns were in misalignment with personal

and societal flourishing due to a widespread rejection of 'authentic' Christian teachings on human purpose. He further posited that the qualified approval of birth control would furnish the Church with the requisite moral authority to combat these unchristian teachings and convince married couples belonging to the middle and upper classes to serve God and country through childrearing.

The next three chapters examine the moral justifications for fertility-manipulation schemes directed, in order, at specific socio-economic classes, persons with supposed intellectual disabilities, and, in the lead-up to the Second World War, the great majority of the English populace. Chapter Three, which completes the story of Woods' successful campaign to secure the approval of contraception at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, highlights near-utopian futures that Woods, along with senior clergy like Inge and Lord William Cecil, Bishop of Exeter, believed could be realized by either expanding the use of birth control amongst the lower classes, or by limiting its use amongst the middle and upper classes. Relatedly, I explain how these Anglican leaders drew upon national and international promises of flourishing to justify class-based fertility-manipulation schemes as disinterested acts of benevolence towards the 'suffering' and 'disadvantaged' at home and across the empire. Notably, with the Church's approval of birth control came the intentional silencing of the MU by high-level Church leadership, as that organization strongly opposed the Lambeth Conference's declaration. And Woods' campaign in favour of contraception also reveals a common belief amongst Anglican leaders in regards to their own racial superiority over 'backwards' races rooted not in heredity, but 'superior' morals.

Chapter Four is framed around the campaign between 1929 and 1935 to legalize voluntary sterilization, a cause spearheaded by the EES. That campaign was supported by Professor Leonard Hodgson, Rev. J. P. Hinton, and Calcutt. Hodgson believed that the

propagation of persons with 'diminished' mental capacities (who were deemed incapable of the 'foresight' needed to use birth control appliances) worked against God's supposed desire to perfect humanity in body, mind, and morals. Calcutt and Hinton taught that the propagation of such persons contravened God's desire for all persons to live 'full' and 'meaningful' lives. All three further agreed that most Christians had not embraced God's purpose for their lives, which was to partner with Him in pursuing the above ends. By 1935, the majority of bishops, along with both archbishops, followed the lead of Calcutt, Hinton, and Hodgson by voting to affirm that voluntary sterilization was consistent with Christian ethics. Chapter Five looks at the efforts of anglo-catholic leaders, most of whom were associated with the Christendom Group, to increase the birthrate amongst nearly all segments of the population. Starting around 1936, a "depopulation panic" emerged across England, which served to discredit the campaign for voluntary sterilization. The panic was in part a response to: (1) a decline in birthrates amongst all segments of the population; and (2) the aggressive pronatalist policies adopted by the German government. Men like Reckitt, the founder of the Christendom Group and editor of the journal *Christendom*, along with Rev. J. V. Langmead Casserley, argued that the decline in the birthrate was the result of a disordering of society away from God's designs, which they believed had led to a dramatic decline in genuine Christian faith. This in turn was thought to have encouraged a turn away from children towards 'selfish' ends. Rejecting the notion that the teachings of the Church on marriage and sexuality needed to be 'modernized,' anglo-catholics like Casserley and Reckitt sought to reinvigorate the birthrate through schemes aimed at the rechristianization of England's populace. Casserley believed such an approach would encourage men and women to repent of their abandonment of parenthood and embrace God-ordained, gender-specific responsibilities pertaining to family life and procreation—and he based these responsibilities on what he

believed were essential differences in the natures of women and men. An increase in birthrates, it was hoped, would serve as the basis of a Christian social order, and the renewed social order would itself serve as a blueprint for other nations to follow at the close of the war.

The pervasiveness of support for fertility-manipulation schemes

By following the process of moral thought amongst Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes, this thesis provides an account of how these men and women conceived of their own place in interwar English society. During that time, numerous Anglican leaders expressed concern over the apparent misalignment between birthrate patterns and personal and societal flourishing. Many of these same men and women believed the moral authority of the Church was on the decline. My thesis demonstrates that these women and men were convinced that the causal factors underlying undesirable birthrate patterns and the decline in their own moral authority were one and the same: a societal-wide struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose. My examination of the moral logic offered by Anglican leaders also helps to explain the pervasiveness and enduring appeal of fertility-manipulation schemes across England, the rest of Europe, and North America, as key aspects of the moral arguments put forth by Anglican leaders were shared by religious and non-religious proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes. Specifically, widespread efforts to manipulate birthrates were regularly justified as a means of aligning procreative behaviours with 'correct' articulations of human purpose, and efforts to regulate fertility were also regularly conceived of as part of a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose.

Naturally, it was not that all proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes believed that at the bottom of the apparent misalignment between reproductive behaviours and

personal and/or societal flourishing was a theological problem. But it could be said that these persons of varying religious (or non-religious) persuasions regularly framed their moral thinking related to 'qualitative' and quantitative population measures in broadly existential terms—or those relating to the meaning and purpose of human existence. And as will be discussed at greater length in the conclusion of this thesis, the framing of birthrate patterns in existential terms helps to explain the pervasiveness of interest in them because of what such matters were perceived to represent. As mentioned previously, birthrate patterns could signify tangible 'proof' of the waxing or waning of a particular set of existential values, or the judgment amongst a particular group of people pertaining to where meaning and purpose might be found in life. Relatedly, the relationship drawn between birthrate patterns and human purpose can also help to explain the pervasiveness of fertility schemes in that these schemes could serve to identify a definite subversive element, associated with ends other than the 'flourishing' of the entire community or nation, that could be blamed for any number of societal problems.[68]

Present-day birthrate concerns

As birthrates continue to decline across Europe and North America in the present day, and life expectancy remains relatively high, hundreds of contemporary think-pieces have addressed one significant consequence of these trends: pensions and related social welfare programs are in peril. In response to data indicating that funds for many of these programs will run dry over the next five decades, some economists have advocated: (1) incentivizing migration from countries with relatively high birthrates and; (2) more aggressively subsidizing the costs associated with the rearing of children. An important

[68] Expanding on this point, birthrate patterns could provide 'data' from which one could make non-falsifiable, or at least difficult-to-falsify, claims as it related to who was responsible for any particular problem a society might be facing.

and overlooked set of statistics in the global conversation regarding the shrinking size of families is procreative patterns prior to the Second World War. Between 1870 and 1940, birthates fell dramatically not only in England, but also across much of Europe and in the United States. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that pronatalist campaigns, along with hypotheses for why birthrates may be on the decline, are not unique to the twenty-first century.

Thus far, contemporary governments have largely operated under the assumption that the expenses associated with raising children serve as the principal barrier to increasing birthrates. However, when the matter of declining birthrates is viewed through a historical lens, it is not surprising that so many contemporary financial schemes have proven ineffective, as most historic schemes also failed. And because past and present financial schemes have proven equally ineffective, rather than simply bolstering present schemes, it is important that the question of *why* birthrates are falling be revisited in the midst of contemporary public policy conversations. Relatedly, and of immense importance, the question of when, if ever, it is moral for governments to seek to raise birthrates also needs to be examined at length. This question is complicated by the argument put forth by some commentators that global trends relating to declining fertility should actually be understood as *good news*—as lower birthrates equate to lower greenhouse gas emissions. And for the purpose of combating climate change, some pundits promote active measures to reduce fertility in certain parts of the globe.

My thesis suggests that past historical actors concerned with declining birthrates would largely concur that at the heart of contemporary discussions and trends relating to declining birthrates is an existential, rather than economic, question. And as informed by my historical research, the question of human purpose in the present day has both a corporate and individual dimension. The corporate dimension is clearly evident, albeit

rarely explicitly acknowledged, in current discussions regarding the future of pension schemes. That is, with the future of such schemes in doubt, one might ask whether an individual is morally obligated to bring children into the world as a tangible means to care for one's community (broadly defined). The question of human purpose also relates to conceptions of the "good life" amongst individuals. As children place natural limitations on parents, one might ask if it is the right use of an individual's finite time and resources to invest in others rather than in pursuits like a career, the arts, travel, etc. Such choices appear to be at odds with the financial needs of governments, creating an apparent contest between communal and individual conceptions of human purpose and human flourishing—which raises all manner of potential ethical dilemmas. The aim of my thesis is not to be prescriptive as it relates to answering the question of human purpose. However, my work does suggest that current public policy discussion would benefit from restoring the question of human purpose to the heart of contemporary conversations over declining birthrates in order to protect individuals and groups of people from some of the unintended (or intended) side-effects of modern fertility-manipulation schemes.

Chapter One:

Shepherds of Sexual Morals, Family Life, and National Interests, 1916-1920

On 25 June 1920, the Bishop of Birmingham, Henry Russell Wakefield, led a delegation to the offices of the newly formed Ministry of Health. Accompanied by Mary H. Clay, a representative of the Mothers' Union (MU), Wakefield presented the Minister of Health, Christopher Addison, with a report addressing the precipitous decline in British birthrates over the previous five decades. As reported by *The Times*, the bishop informed Addison that "few subjects affected more seriously the prosperity of the country than that of securing the proper growth of a capable population." He explained that the matter was especially urgent because the war had culled a significant portion of the male population, adding that many of the dead were of the "highest and best qualities." Amongst other suggestions, Wakefield urged Addison to consider how the state might incentivize early marriage, and he hoped that any pronatalist measures would prove particularly effective amongst "the less wealthy people of the middle classes," from whom "the very best type of children" might be expected. While taking care not to commit to Wakefield's proposal, Addison praised the report, noting that the "valuable work" had been produced without financial aid from the state.[1]

The delegation's warm reception by the Ministry of Health marked the end of five years of discontinuous investigation by the National Birth-Rate Commission (NBRC). Following the publication of the 1920 report, the *Baptist Times* predicted that the NBRC would "rank as one of the most important Social Service Commissions that has been appointed in any community," and the *Evening Standard* proclaimed that the "nation owes a deep debt to the public-spirited private citizens who have passed and produced

[1] "Disease and the Birth-Rate," *The Times*, June 26, 1920.

this report."[2] Bolstered by favourable remarks from the press, the NBRC tended to overestimate its influence on private behaviours and national politics. Nevertheless, the commission, in conjunction with its parent organization the National Council of Public Morals (NCPM), an ecumenical body concerned with the racial, spiritual, and moral "regeneration" of the British race, did function as a major clearing house for popular-level information relating to the 'quality' and quantity of the British population in the 1910s and 1920s.

The NCPM and NBRC disseminated birthrate-related facts and opinions through annual meetings, the publication of articles, books, and pamphlets, and the promotion of a film entitled *Where Are My Children?* Most notably, the NBRC also produced two widely discussed reports on the birthrate, the aforementioned work from 1920 and another four years previously. These reports, which drew upon dozens of interviews with various experts, consolidated findings from a variety of disciplines, and helped to set the terms for popular-level discussions regarding the causes and effects of, as well as possible remedies to, contemporary birthrate trends. The NBRC prided itself on its supposed ideological and political neutrality, but from its inception prominent Anglican churchmen led the commission, including Wakefield, Bishop William Boyd Carpenter, and W. R. Inge. Anglican women like Clay, along with the trailblazing medical doctor and public health expert, Mary Scharlieb, also served in key roles, and in 1921 the NCPM could boast of more than a dozen bishops as vice presidents.

In the light of extensive Anglican involvement with the NBRC, the two reports provide expansive windows into the reasons why many Anglican leaders believed that birthrate patterns fell under their respective purviews. The question of why Anglican

[2] Quotations found in National Council of Public Morals, *To Save the British Race* (London: The Dangerfield Printing Co., Ltd., 1921), 17.

leaders believed they possessed the right to concern themselves with the procreative behaviours of married couples (including the behaviours of non-Anglicans) lies at the foundation of the moral logic put forth by these leaders in defence of various fertility-manipulation schemes. Before one can assert specific reasons for interfering with the procreative behaviours of others, she or he must first answer the question of why such behaviours fall under their authority. In this chapter I argue that the findings of the two NBRC reports help to make sense of Anglican involvement with the commission, and more broadly the question of why Anglican leaders believed birthrate patterns fell under their purview, by highlighting the supposed ways in which contemporary birthrate patterns imperiled sexual morals, the wellbeing of the family, and, as the NBRC repeatedly emphasized, the existence of the empire.

By the turn of the twentieth century, a conceptual framework was available to Anglican leaders that pictured the Church and its leaders as stewards not only of family life and sexual morals, but also of national interests. With the Church widely imagined as caretaker over these three spheres, figures like Clay and Wakefield presumed birthrate patterns fell under their jurisdiction because, as demonstrated in the NBRC reports, they believed that these spheres were endangered by the number of children born per family, as well as the alleged means by which many married couples chose to limit the size of their families. While notions of the Church as caretaker over sexual morals, the family, and national interests will be examined separately in this chapter, there existed significant overlap between all three spheres in the minds of Anglican leaders.

In regards to sexual morals, the NBRC reported in 1916 that the declining birthrate could be explained in part by the widespread use of contraceptives amongst the

middle and upper classes.[3] The MU drew similar correlations in its various publications between an increase in the use of birth control and slumping birthrates—as did the bishops of the worldwide Anglican Communion at the 1908 Lambeth Conference. The NBRC reported in 1920 that the use of contraceptives was "regarded by a large number of persons as wrong, and has been condemned by the Christian Churches and the Jewish religion."[4] One reason birth control was widely condemned by religious leaders, including the majority of Anglican clergymen during the first two decades of the century, was because its usage amongst the married supposedly discouraged "sexual self-control" amongst themselves and the unmarried.[5] Therefore, declining birthrates were thought to provide evidence of, as well as engender, sexual malpractice.

Declining birthrates were also said to imperil family life by way of a reduction in family size. Smaller families troubled the NBRC because of its belief that larger families served as the best school for citizenship. In contrast, a decision to have only one child was said to foster selfishness amongst parents and their sole offspring. It is little wonder, then, that Clay and the MU took notice of falling birthrate patterns, as the promotion of Christian family life, with the ensuing moral development of children for imperial citizenship, was central to the mission of the MU. Lastly, and perhaps least intuitively, Wakefield and Inge, along with the majority of the Anglican leaders examined in this thesis, also imagined the Church as a caretaker over national interests, including the flourishing of the empire. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Anglican leaders conceptualized this relationship in a variety of ways (and not all of them agreed on the

[3] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate, Its Causes and Effects: Being the Report of and the Chief Evidence Taken by the National Birth-Rate Commission, Instituted, with Official Recognition, by the National Council of Public Morals—For the Promotion of Race Regeneration—Spiritual, Moral, and Physical* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1916), 21.
[4] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood: Being the Second Report of and the Chief Evidence Taken by the National Birth-Rate Commission, 1918-1920* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1920), xliii.
[5] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, xlvii.

population needs of Britain or the empire). However, as made clear by the work of the NBRC, what Wakefield, Inge, and Carpenter shared in common was the belief that birthrate patterns fell under their purview because

> the life of the nation and the race is maintained and renewed, and the continuity necessary for progress is secured, by parenthood. The natural capacity for parenthood thus imposes a moral task, as it involves a social trust, and therefore cannot be regarded as a merely individual interest to be determined solely by personal inclination.[6]

The mass casualties resulting from the Great War, the devastation wrought by the Spanish flu, and the steep drop in birthrates during the war led the NBRC to sound an alarm over the future of the empire, and in 1920 it issued an urgent plea to women, declaring that "it is for the women of the Empire to save the Empire by securing its continuance for the fulfillment of its beneficent mission in the world."[7] To better explore how the war and imperial concerns shaped perceptions of population needs amongst Anglican leaders, this chapter begins with a brief overview of the two NBRC birthrate reports, and is then followed by an examination of how the framework of the Church as a shepherd of sexual morals, family life, and national interests encouraged the belief amongst many Anglican leaders that birthrate patterns fell under their authority.

The NBRC birthrate reports

The NBRC presented its first report in June 1916 to the President of the Local Government Board, Walter Long.[8] Operating under the auspices of the NCPM, the work of the NBRC had been followed by the press since its first meeting in October 1913. The start of the war engendered a heightened sense of urgency amongst commission members, which only increased as birthrates continued to decline and casualties mounted. "If the

[6] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, xlviii.
[7] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, lxxvi.
[8] The Ministry of Health subsumed the responsibilities of the Local Government Board in 1919.

need for work of this kind were great before," Long stated upon reception of the report, "it is ten times greater now that this war has come." He added a hearty thanks to the members of the NBRC for their work, going as far as to compare their efforts to those of soldiers on the battlefield.[9]

The NBRC had been formed under the direction of James Marchant, a Presbyterian minister and director and secretary of the NCPM. Marchant regularly worked across denominational lines, and previously served as head of the National Social Purity Crusade, which sought to combat public and private expressions of sexual vice. The purpose of the NCPM was to continue these efforts and to achieve a broader goal outlined in its slogan, which was no less than the "regeneration of the race—spiritual, moral, and physical."[10] For his public service, Marchant received the honor of K.B.E. in 1921. Carpenter served as the chairperson of the first iteration of the commission (in addition to his role as president of the NCPM), but his health forced him to resign, and Inge subsequently stepped into the role. Figures of significant social stature like Carpenter and Inge were important to the NBRC because the commission lacked official affiliation with the government. Its credibility depended on the medical doctors, social reformers, religious leaders, scientists, and sympathetic government bureaucrats who sat on, and presented evidence to, the commission.

Amongst other objectives, the first iteration of the NBRC set out to "discover data" that might help reveal why birthrates had plummeted across Britain over the previous forty years. Commission members were especially eager to determine whether slumping birthrates resulted from a deliberate choice amongst married couples, or, more alarmingly, if the natural fecundity of the British people was ebbing away.[11] Subsequently

[9] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood,* v-vi.
[10] For further discussion on Marchant, see Richard Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 23.
[11] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate,* vi.

published for the public under the title *The Declining Birthrate: Its Causes and Effects*, the first report of the NBRC suggested that the decline in the birthrate was principally due to the middle and upper classes choosing to limit the size of their families. It added that the "physical and mental inferiority" of the most fertile segments of the lower classes to the middle and upper classes was "indisputable."[12] According to the NBRC, the primary reason for the restriction of family size amongst the middle and upper classes was the desire to attain, or maintain, a certain standard of living.[13]

The NBRC noted that the birthrate in England and Wales had declined from 36.3 in 1876 to 23.8 in 1912 (and that a similar pattern could be found across Northern and Western Europe). While lacking data on English birthrate trends after 1912, the report implied that the Great War would result in a "dysgenic" effect on the population, as war inevitably exposed "to the risk of death a larger proportion of the more virile, the physically stronger, and, so far as the voluntary method of enlistment prevails, the more public-spirited of the male population." However, the commission elsewhere in the report expressed ambivalence towards the claims of eugenists, arguing that most differences in physical health and mental acumen between the social classes could be best explained by environmental factors.[14]

The first NBRC report sought to maintain some level of neutrality on the question of whether an increase in the British birthrate was desirable, but an addendum to the report (signed by both Clay and Wakefield) eschewed such non-partisanship. According to the addendum, a rise in the birthrate was desirable because more emigrants needed to be shipped off to the "vast territories over which the British flag waves, e.g. in Canada and Australia," which were said to be "very sparsely peopled." Underpopulation

[12] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 44-5.
[13] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 41-2.
[14] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 43-5.

supposedly robbed the entire empire of raw materials and food, and put its 'benevolent' mission at risk. "For the sake of the backward types even that they may be advanced by our influence to a better standard of life and thought," the addendum asked rhetorically, "should we not desire the preservation and advancement of our people?"[15]

Continuously declining birthrates and mounting wartime casualties exacerbated and further popularized pre-existing concerns within and outside Anglican circles relating to the quantity and 'quality' of the population.[16] The *Church Times* put a voice to growing Anglican concerns in 1916, when, in reference to a report from the Registrar General indicating that the first quarter of 1915 witnessed the lowest English birthrate on record, it asserted that "one lesson for ourselves … is this: that infant life must be preserved and the birth-rate increased."[17] Following the armistice, Rev. G. D. Rosenthal informed a gathering of the MU that the English birthrate had been declining since 1876, and explained that "when we add to this the heavy rate of infant mortality, and the appalling loss of life in the war, we can readily understand that we are faced with a danger of the most serious and threatening kind."[18] Before and after the war, France was often offered up as a case study as to what might happen to Britain if birthrates did not increase. The MU informed readers of a 1916 issue of *Mothers in Council* that France had lost its position of worldwide dominance due to a diminished birthrate, and that likewise Britain could not continue to lay claim to its own empire when portions of it were so sparsely populated.[19] Marchant noted in his own work that the birthrate had begun to fall in France

[15] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 74.
[16] For further discussion on these matters outside Anglican circles, see Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 1995), 138-139.
[17] "Summary," *Church Times*, April 7, 1916. The *Church Times* also expressed concern that infant mortality rates had increased at home in 1915, while Germany supposedly enjoyed a growing population and declining mortality rates.
[18] Rev. G. D. Rosenthal, "An Englishman's Home: A Sermon Preached at the Cathedral Church, Birmingham, on Tuesday Last," *Church Times*, March 26, 1920.
[19] Norman Maclean, "The Empty Cradle," *Mothers in Council* 26, no. 103 (July, 1916): 136, 140.

in 1845, and at the time of his writing in 1917, he claimed that the French death rate had come to exceed the birthrate. Tracking the relationship between geo-political influence and birthrates, Marchant noted that between "1800-1812 France overran Europe; in 1870 she surrendered to the German hosts, and to-day, had it not been for her alliances and our observing our plighted word to Belgium, this present war would have had most fatal consequences in the destruction of her independent civilization." If France had maintained its birthrate, he added, it would likely not have needed Britain's assistance in combating Germany in the present war.[20]

Animated by the effects of the war, the second iteration of the NBRC was convened in 1918 under the leadership of Wakefield. Wakefield, an active Liberal in politics, evidenced a keen interest in various social issues throughout his career, including taking the chair of the Christian Counter Communist Crusade following the Bolshevik Revolution and leading the National Committee for the Promotion of the Break-Up of the Poor Law. In his role as president of the NCPM, Wakefield had conducted an inquiry into cinema (which concluded with a call for state censorship) prior to the second iteration of the NBRC.[21] As was the case with the first NBRC report, a series of formal interviews with various experts and an assortment of published works served as the second report's principal sources of data. Entitled *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, the 1920 report summarized little new statistical evidence. However, the report did express eugenic concerns relating to differential birthrate patterns, and it also reported that the war had caused the birthrate to plummet to an all-time low of 17.7 across England and Wales in 1918. According to the NBRC, the fall in the birthrate during the war years equated to approximately 550,000 "loss of births" in England (compared to an estimated 3.5 million

[20] James Marchant, *Birth-Rate and Empire* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1917), 21-22.
[21] Stephen G. Parker, "Wakefield, Henry Russell (1854-1933)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/70369.

in Germany). The commission further warned that, as of April 1919, the natural increase of the population of England and Wales had ceased. Thanks to the declining birthrate, coupled with the loss of life wrought by the Spanish flu, during the six-month period preceding April 1919 the NBRC estimated that deaths had exceeded births by roughly 126,500. However, the report suggested that the chief factor in deaths outstripping births was neither the physical separation of married couples due to the war nor influenza, but rather the conscious choice by the married to employ contraceptives.[22]

The NBRC cautioned that the loss of nearly 1 million of the "fittest" British men in the Great War had severely "impoverished our male stock," and also contributed to a significant imbalance in the numbers of males to females.[23] In order to redress these pressing population problems, the NBRC committed large portions of its report to identifying causes, such as venereal disease and malnutrition, and possible solutions, including encouraging breast feeding and state-funded treatments for syphilis, to the problems of miscarriages, stillbirths, and infant deaths. According to the NBRC, the grounds for promoting various treatments for syphilis, measures which generally aligned with those endorsed by the broader social hygiene movement, rested on the premise that the commission was "primarily concerned with the birth-rate, and from that point of view with the need for the birth of healthy children, who will survive their infancy and youth, and will in turn produce healthy offspring."[24] For their part, the bishops of the Province of York lent support in 1917 to the promotion of infant-welfare initiatives as a means of ameliorating the negative effects of declining birthrates at home and across the empire.[25]

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[22] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, xxxvi, xli, lxxviii.
[23] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, xlix.
[24] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, cxi. For more information on the social hygiene movement and the treatment of venereal disease, see Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 147-150.
[25] *The York Journal of Convocation: Containing the Acts and Debates of the Convocation of the Province of York, in the Sessions of February 8th and 9th, 1917* (York: W. H. Smith & Son, 1917), 41-46, 52.

The NBRC flatly denied to its readers that any sort of danger existed in relation to the overpopulation of Britain, the empire, or the world more broadly (though some nations outside the empire could be categorized as overpopulated). Rather than facing a Malthusian apocalypse, one of the most pressing population problems was said to be that only 60 million "white people" lived in the empire, with 45 million of those dwelling in the United Kingdom. Tasked with governing "one quarter of the whole earth," wherein lived "countless native races," the commission advised that, unless current birthrate trends were reversed, a real possibility existed of losing the empire in the not-so-distant future. As one practical step towards resolving this dilemma, along with the related imbalance of males to females, the report suggested that the government take a more active role in encouraging the emigration of young women to the Dominions. In addition, the report encouraged the government to conduct an empire-wide census in 1921, and as part of this project the NBRC wanted the government to include an audit of "local food supply" in order to determine how many emigrants ought to be sent to various parts of the empire.[26]

Shepherds of sexual morals

Upon its founding, the NCPM subsumed several social purity societies (for which the term "social" stood in place of "sexual"), and in 1911 the council published a widely disseminated "Manifesto on Public Morals."[27] A sizeable cohort of Anglican leaders signed the declaration, giving public approval to a variety of broad initiatives aimed at raising standards of sexual and procreative conduct amongst the "People of Great and Greater Britain." In addition to promoting negative eugenic measures directed at the

[26] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, xlix, lxxiii-iv, xl, clviii.
[27] For more information on the founding of the NCPM, see Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 182.

"feeble-minded," as well as encouraging an increase in the birthrate through the "moral education of the young," the manifesto also warned against the corrupting influences of "pernicious literature."[28] Fears over such literature, and matters like prostitution and the social intermingling of unmarried men and women without 'proper' supervision, pervaded the great majority of social purity societies, and the Church promoted its own social purity platform at the turn of the twentieth century through organizations like the White Cross League and the Girls' Friendly Society.

Worries amongst Christian leaders over public and private expressions of sexuality date back to the beginnings of Christianity—and such concerns can be explained in part by an equally long tradition of linking the holistic flourishing of persons with the observance of certain standards of sexual behaviour.[29] To be in right relationship with God was said to be a prerequisite to the flourishing of souls, and this right relationship necessitated obedience to the moral commands of God—including the ones relating to sexuality and marriage.[30] In the early years of the twentieth century, concerns over adherence to biblical standards of sexual behaviour (as articulated by the social purity movement) prompted Anglican leaders, including the collective bishops, to seek to redress birthrate patterns. And even as the Church sought to promote increasingly positive views of sexuality in the 1920s and 1930s, declining birthrates continued to suggest to concerned parties like the MU that the English populace was increasingly turning away from the clear teachings of the Church pertaining to the meaning and purposes of sex.

[28] "Manifesto on Public Morals," *Prevention: A Quarterly Journal on Public Morals* 4, no. 1 (July, 1911): 74-75.
[29] For example, see Acts 15:29 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. All Bible citations and quotations in this thesis are taken from the *New International Version*.
[30] Here I am not speaking in salvific terms, or in regards to the idea that one might "earn" their salvation through careful obedience, but rather in reference to a more general notion that impaired fellowship with God results from willful disobedience on behalf of Christians.

The common threads drawing together social purity societies included the championing of "sexual restraint and self-control" and the stigmatization of "all forms of non-marital sexuality, in particular prostitution."[31] Proponents inside and outside the Church also stressed a single standard of sexual behaviour for men and women.[32] Sue Morgan indicates that the social purity movement emerged immediately out of the campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, which secured its goal after two decades of toil in 1886.[33] Amongst other provisions, the acts empowered police to arrest women suspected of prostitution and subject them to forced medical examinations to determine if they were carrying a sexually transmitted disease—yet the acts did little to address the issue of demand, or to punish the men soliciting women for sex.

Proponents of social purity measured the prevalence of sexual malfeasance through methods like tracking the spread of venereal diseases and scrutinizing statistics relating to prostitution, but accumulating data pertaining to falling birthrates provided another method that proved popular after 1900. For example, the Encyclical Letter from the 1908 Lambeth Conference, along with the accompanying report from the Committee on Marriage Problems, asserted that the use of contraceptives engendered marital infidelity, and, more broadly, that birth control discouraged sexual self-restraint and a general kind of self-sacrificial disposition. Drawing upon evidence that indicated birthrates were on the decline across the English-speaking world, the letter added that there undoubtedly existed widespread use of "artificial means for the avoidance or prevention of childbearing." With these concerns in mind, the gathered bishops of the

[31] Hunt, *Governing Morals*, 77.
[32] For more information on the use of the apparatus of the state to secure social purity goals, see Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Feminism, Sex, and Morality* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001), 95-123.
[33] Sue Morgan, '"Wild Oats or Acorns?" Social Purity, Sexual Politics, and the Response of the Late-Victorian Church," *Journal of Religious History* 31, no. 2 (June, 2007): 152.

Anglican Communion declared birth control to be hostile to national welfare and a grave threat to character development.[34]

Following the 1908 Conference, the bishops of the Church drew their own direct correlation between the decrease in birthrates, the use of birth control, and the spread of sexual malfeasance. In an anti-birth control tract entitled *The Misuse of Marriage*, the bishops claimed that "drugs and instruments" designed to restrict "the procreation of children" were chiefly to blame for the sudden drop in the domestic birthrate. Like a woman or man prone to excessive drinking, the bishops supposed that the use of birth control functioned as a conduit towards immoral sexual behaviour, and particularly so for men. The tract argued that men ought to be prepared to endure long periods of abstinence within marriage, but the use of birth control enabled the circumvention of this duty, which in turn led many men to adopt a degrading view of their wives—seeing them increasingly as means to indulge their sexual urges.[35] And even as birth control found increasing acceptance within the Church in the 1920s and 1930s, proponents and detractors of contraception worked together to restrict the sale and advertisement of contraceptives for the purpose of limiting their licentious influence amongst the unwed.[36]

There exists good reason to doubt the one-to-one correlations drawn between declining birthrates and the use of birth control.[37] In particular, the work of Kate Fisher and Simon Szreter, which draws upon a number of interviews with persons who were married during the relevant time periods, suggests that middle-class birth control literature was not widely read by the working class, and that significant distrust of birth

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[34] *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion: Holden at Lambeth Palace, July 6 to August 5, 1908: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1908), 38, 58. For further discussion, see Timothy Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England, 1857-1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 144-6.
[35] *The Misuse of Marriage* (originally printed by Wayre & Son, Ltd. in 1914 for private distribution within the Church). Found reprinted in National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birthrate*, 383, 385.
[36] See, for example, Resolution 18 of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, printed in *The Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1930), 45.
[37] The early decline in British birthrates followed a general trend across Europe.

control devices persisted amongst married couples throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Fisher and Szreter also argue that the method of *coitus interruptus* was the mainstay of family limitation amongst married couples.[38] During this time, a variety of mechanical options were legally available, including sheaths, caps, diaphragms, and, later on, latex condoms. Concurrently, other non-mechanical means like abstinence and abortion were also utilized by married couples to limit the size of their families. Fisher points out elsewhere that the best evidence suggests that as few as 2 percent of those married before 1910 used birth control appliances. This number rose steadily, though not equally amongst all social classes, to 37 percent of the cohort marrying between 1935 and 1939 (with caps and condoms being the most widely employed devices).[39]

Following the publication of *The Misuse of Marriage*, the two published NBRC reports addressed the morality of the use of birth control at length, taking into consideration the wellbeing of souls and matters of national interest. In the end, the reports, drafted under the guidance of Wakefield and Inge, both of whom were inclined to oppose the restrictive position of the Church on birth control, did not unilaterally condemn the practice (with the first report taking a more favourable view towards birth control than the second). However, the NBRC reports by no means encouraged the use of birth control. The first report stated that widespread agreement existed amongst Roman Catholic and Anglican clergymen in opposing birth control, and added that, while their denominations did not stake out official positions, most Nonconformists also believed the practice to be immoral. Many commission members who sat on the first iteration of the NBRC wanted to issue a direct denunciation of birth control, but Inge admitted to using his position "high handedly" to instead issue rebuttals to several arguments against

[38] Kate Fisher and Simon Szreter, '"They Prefer Withdrawal": The Choice of Birth Control in Britain, 1918-1950," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 2 (Autumn, 2003): 263, 288.
[39] Kate Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex, and Marriage in Britain., 1918-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 111, 123.

contraception.[40] The second iteration of the commission, free from the influence of Inge, indicated that the spread of birth control knowledge across all segments of society was, on the whole, "highly injurious" to sexual morals and the interests of the nation. While the report claimed that the "Christian Churches" widely condemned birth control, it acknowledged growing public opposition to the position of Christian denominations. In order to help inform ecclesiastical positions, and more generally the practice of married couples, the report outlined various popular arguments made for and against birth control. As previously mentioned, one of the reasons listed by the report as to why Christian denominations opposed birth control was the "demand for chastity" made by God upon both the married and unmarried. According to the report, Christian churches supposed that the use of birth control, which was said to be directly correlated to the plummeting birthrate, lowered the standard for sexual self-control amongst the married, and its use by married couples also supposedly set an injurious example for the unmarried. Although the report ultimately tipped its hand against contraception, several commission members, including Clay and Scharlieb, believed it had not gone far enough, and in an addendum to the report they unambiguously endorsed the arguments listed against contraception from the main report.[41]

Shepherds of the family

In 1895, the founder and first president of the MU, Mary Sumner, declared to the members of the MU that the family was

> an institution above all other institutions … founded by God Himself as the basis of human existence, the central institution upon which the life of the community rests and around which all social life vibrates, and in which, day by day, the character and habits of the coming race are being

[40] Inge to Ellis, 1 July 1918, Havelock Ellis Papers, Box 1, Stirling Library, Yale University. Quoted in Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 104-5.
[41] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, xliii-xlviii, clxii.

hourly formed.[42]

For Sumner, who represented the mainstream of Church thought at the turn of the century, the answer as to who was chiefly responsible for the wellbeing of the family, on which so much was thought to depend, was clear: mothers.[43] In contrast, the role of fathers in the family, while still considered important, was often minimized in secular and sacred discourse through a comparatively minimal amount of discussion on the topic.[44]

As noted by the historian Cordelia Moyse, Sumner launched the MU in 1876 because she considered motherhood to be "one of the greatest and most important professions in the world," but after scrutinizing available resources she came to the conclusion that "there was no profession which had so poor a training for its supreme duties."[45] The first membership card of the MU represented an effort to rectify the situation by asking mothers to pledge to remember that "children are given up, body and soul, to Jesus Christ in Holy Baptism and that your duty is to train them for His Service." By signing their membership cards, mothers further agreed to prepare their children for service to Jesus Christ by discouraging "bad angry words," "unsafe companions," and "dangerous amusements."[46]

The MU's emphasis on the role of mothers in the moral formation of children, as Moyse points out, represented a continuation and expansion of trends born out of

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[42] Quoted in Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present (*London: SPCK, 1994), 90-91.
[43] For further discussion of the teachings of the Church on the role of mothers, see Gill, *Women and the Church of England*, 91. For discussion on Sumner specifically, see Cordelia Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism, and Globalisation, 1876-2008* (London: The Boydell Press, 2009), 46-8. My summary of the work and teachings of the MU in this section is greatly indebted to Moyse.
[44] For further discussion, and an overview of recent literature, on the public discourse around fatherhood in the first half of the twentieth century, see Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 16. For discussion on the teachings of the MU regarding fatherhood, see Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, 47.
[45] Mary Sumner, "Mary Sumner's Own Account of the Founding of the Mothers' Union and Parochial Work at Old Alresford," Archive of the Mothers' Union, MU/MSS/1/2, Lambeth Palace Library. Quoted in Moyse, A *History of the Mothers' Union*, 22-23.
[46] Text of early membership card reprinted in Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, 253-254.

evangelical revivalism from the first half of the nineteenth century. Similarly to their revivalist predecessors, the MU taught that "women had God-given attributes and qualities which qualified them for different roles [than men] in God's Kingdom," and these attributes were thought to include "gifts of devotion, self-sacrifice and nurture which made home and family their natural habitat."[47] The teachings of the MU relating to mothers and the moral formation of children struck a chord at home and abroad, with membership rolls soaring to 316,000 by 1909, and then expanding to over 650,000 by the Second World War.[48] Sumner's precepts found a favourable reception in part because public discourse regarding the family at the turn of the twentieth century (which was of course partially shaped by the MU), while not ignoring their value to the empire, often stressed the intangible worth of children over any economic benefits to parents.[49]

By 1919, the MU enjoyed significant influence not only amongst laywomen, but also senior Church leadership. That year, Clay, a member of the Central Council of the MU and head of its Watch Committee, appeared as a witness before the NBRC.[50] In the mind of Clay, her right to address birthrate trends was grounded in her role as a steward of family life. This role was also broadly self-assigned amongst senior Church leadership, with the Committee on Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality arguing at the 1920 Lambeth Conference that "all will agree that there can be no subjects of greater importance than those connected with the sacredness of the family. The family is God's first institution upon earth, the Cradle alike of Church and State." The committee added that wherever family life was "dishonoured … there, we may be sure, society is rotten at

[47] Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, 46.
[48] Moyse notes that over time the MU expanded its conceptions of the place and role of women in God's kingdom. For more information, see Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, 46-49.
[49] Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood, and English Society, 1880-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10-11.
[50] According to Moyse, the Watch Committee was responsible for monitoring "all public policy bearing on marriage and the protection of home and children." Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, 120.

the core," and it described the rejection of parenthood as one common means of dishonoring the "sacredness" of the family.[51]

Clay based the "direct" opinions on the causes and effects of the declining birthrate that she relayed to the NBRC on answers to a questionnaire that the MU distributed to local branches across England—and she openly acknowledged the small sample size from which she drew. Nevertheless, she contended that the answers received by the MU accurately represented the majority position of its 500,000 members.[52] According to Clay, women cited multiple reasons as to why parents chose to limit the size of their families, including "love of pleasure," "dislike of responsibility," and "the wish to enjoy life without the hinderance or the limit upon liberty of children." When asked if large or small families were "better," Clay claimed mothers overwhelmingly favoured the former, noting that they believed children from large families, meaning five or more children, typically "enter life having learnt to live with others, to bear and to forbear. They are happier, pleasanter to deal with, and less self-conscious, fussy and exacting." In contrast, Clay reported that an only child faced immense obstacles to their moral formation.[53] In keeping with the long-held belief of the MU, she made clear that while large families provided an excellent school of virtue for children, MU members still believed "that the good large family depends on the good mother."[54]

As a means of increasing family size, Clay suggested that parents ought to be directed to encourage their children to pursue parenthood for themselves, and one relevant precept parents were encouraged to pass down was that procreation was a "duty to God and country." In the mind of Clay, adhering to this duty would not only help to

[51] *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion: Holden at Lambeth Palace, July 5 to August 7, 1920: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1920), 108.
[52] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, 394.
[53] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, 394-396.
[54] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, 395.

people the empire, but also properly form young people for imperial citizenship by way of learning to share, compromise, and sacrifice in the context of a large family. Such goals dovetailed neatly with Clay's description of the main purposes of the MU, which were said to include the equipping of mothers to raise spiritually and morally sound children for the benefit of the empire and the British race.[55]

Drawing upon Clay's testimony, the second report of the NBRC condemned the declining birthrate on the grounds that large families could boast of the "healthiest" and "happiest" existence. Anticipating the future sentiments of notable Church leaders throughout the interwar period, including those of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, the commission added that "family life, especially where there are children, is the finest and best school of virtue." The NBRC further explained that families with multiple children provided the preeminent training ground for "the duties of citizenship," and functioned to encourage moral discipline amongst parents. As a means of counteracting the pernicious spread of contraceptives, the commission elsewhere asserted that the "value of family life" to the maintenance of the nation and empire ought to be stressed to all young persons.[56]

Shepherds of national interests

At the height of the Great War, Marchant, writing in a book entitled *Birth-Rate and Empire*, called attention to a supposed shift in the outlook of the British people regarding procreation. "The question of having children," he wrote with regret, "is now held to be entirely a matter for the individual parents to decide and not the Church or State."

[55] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, 398, 399, 406. Hesitant husbands and wives could be persuaded to embark on the journey of parenthood, Clay theorized on page 406 of the report, if it was stressed that they might give birth to boys and girls who would receive acclaim for their service to God and country.
[56] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, l, xliii.

Marchant found this rejection of authority especially troubling in light of concurrent demographic trends. By his estimation, the "white population" of the British Empire—tasked with governing 13 million square miles—was stretched to its limits. But despite the urgent need for more citizens of the empire, he observed that the domestic birthrate continued to plummet as middle- and upper-class parents abdicated their religious and patriotic duties. How best to populate the Dominions and colonies with healthy (and white) citizens, Marchant subsequently concluded, was the "most vital problem for the future of our Empire."[57]

Marchant's words reflected similar worries expressed by Anglican leaders like the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, prior to the war. Speaking to the clergymen of his diocese in 1905, the bishop warned that England's populace was declining in numbers, physique, and morals. Winnington-Ingram further advised his audience that unless drastic, eugenic-based steps were taken, the "glorious heritage" of England's world-wide influence would "slip from our nerveless fingers to-day."[58] Similarly, Carpenter, speaking prior to the formation of the NBRC, informed the 1910 Church Congress that while fertility declined in "Western" nations, "the East is growing in consciousness of strength, in alertness of perception, in supple power of adaptation, in vigour, self-denial, and numbers." Unless the middle and upper classes increased their numbers, and the 'unfit' limited theirs, the bishop cautioned that Australia would be lost.[59] Likewise, the Bishop of Gloucester, Edgar Gibson, alerted the gathered clergy of his diocese in 1913 of a "world-danger" brought about by the deliberate restriction of

[57] Marchant, *Birth-Rate and Empire*, 7-8, 2-4.
[58] Arthur Winnington-Ingram, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy and Churchwardens of London in St. Paul's Cathedral, October 19, 1905: At His Primary Visitation of the Diocese of London* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., Ltd., 1905), 33.
[59] William Boyd Carpenter, "Heredity and Social Responsibility," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress: Held at Cambridge, on September 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th, 1910*, ed. Rev. C. Dunkley (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910), 166. The Church Congress was an annual meeting of laypersons and clergy who met to discuss clerical, religious, and social topics of interest to the Church. The congress possessed no official authority over any aspect of Church life.

children. He proclaimed that if birthrates continued to decline, the "English-speaking peoples, diminished in numbers and weakened in moral force, should commit the crowning infamy of race-suicide, and so fail to fulfil the high destiny to which, in the providence of God, they have been manifestly called."[60] As employed by Gibson and others, the term "race suicide" often referred to a voluntary diminution of numbers amongst the white population of the British Empire, that was in turn thought to provide an opportunity for a higher birthrate nation—such as Germany or China—to subsume Britain's place of influence in the world.

The search for solutions to the population problems outlined by Marchant and likeminded Anglican allies resulted in the creation of the NBRC, and, spurred on by the losses of the war, also prompted its reconstitution in 1918. Anglican leaders like Carpenter and Wakefield joined the NBRC because they understood the role of the Church in society to include that of shepherd over not only sexual morals and family life, but also national interests. A tradition of Anglican support for the maintenance and expansion of the British Empire dated back to the seventeenth century. At that time, few could have predicted that three hundred years later Britain would be governing one quarter of the earth's land. While the great preponderance of Anglican leaders in the first half of the twentieth century were not blindly loyal to the state, clergymen like Bishop Theodore Woods, along with the senior leadership of the MU, heralded the empire for more than the captive markets and raw materials it provided. Echoing the words of their predecessors, these women and men supposed that the empire functioned as God's instrument for divinely appointed activities like the spread of the Gospel, the education of

[60] "Race-suicide," *The Times*, October 8, 1913.

'backwards' peoples, and the establishment of global peace.[61] For the likes of Woods, the fortunes of the British Empire were therefore intimately linked with the advancement of God's purposes on earth, and securing these divine purposes was one prominent way in which interwar Anglican leaders vindicated their self-assigned roles as caretakers of national interests.

Seemingly in line with stories from the Bible, efforts to obey God through the maintenance and expansion of the British Empire did not go unchallenged. Britain faced stiff economic competition from the growing markets of Germany and the USA around 1900, and interrelated imperial rivalries called further geographical expansion into question. Additionally, struggles in the Boer War suggested the military prowess of Britain lagged behind that of other global powers.[62] Fears within and outside the Church over the precarious state of Britain and its empire carried into the Great War, and during this time Winnington-Ingram, whose words mirrored state-funded propaganda, framed the war as a religious conflict, with the British Empire on the side of God against unchristian ambitions.[63]

Even as the British Empire expanded after the Great War, the NBRC cast doubt on its future in light of domestic birthrate trends and the heavy casualties inflicted by the conflict. In the second report, the commissioners put their fears bluntly before their readers:

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[61] Stewart Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics, and Society in the United Kingdom, 1815-1914* (London: Routledge, 2008), 2-3; and Hilary Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c.1801–1908* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5-6. For discussion on the MU and empire, see Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, 80-86.

[62] For more information on the headwinds faced by Britain, see Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 1-3, 13.

[63] For more information on the framing of the war as a religious conflict, see Keith Robbins, *England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales: The Christian Church 1900-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106, 120, 148; and David Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain: The National War Aims Committee and Civilian Morale* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 97. For further discussion of Winnington-Ingram, as well as the response of the Church as a whole to the war, see Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014).

> in the event of a war similar to that which we have just experienced, what would happen to us with a greatly reduced birth-rate? Surely all we have would be taken, and we must become slaves … Moreover, what would happen to our Empire?[64]

As one means of securing the future of the empire, the report argued that families across the empire ought to move from cities to arable land located either in their home countries or abroad. Once settled on the land, the commissioners supposed that children would quickly come to be viewed as economic assets to married couples—which would encourage an increase in the birthrate of the white population in countries like Australia and Canada. However, the NBRC feared that any proposal was doomed to fail because of a pervasive love of comfort found across Britain and the Dominions—but that did not mean the empire was without hope. The recent partial political enfranchisement of women, the commissioners explained, offered a light in the midst of racial darkness.[65]

Trusting to the influence of organizations like the MU, the NBRC hoped that enfranchised women, working together as a "mass," might direct the British government, along with the hearts of young women, towards the causes of motherhood and emigration by promoting the idea that the "greatness of an Empire consists … in the possession of healthy men and women who will enable it to maintain its position and influence among the nations." Maintaining influence through an increased birthrate was thought to be vital because the commissioners believed the British Empire had a "sacred" role to play across the globe. And it was imperative that women, the commissioners supposed, led the way in ensuring a bright future for the empire. "It is for the women of the Empire to save the Empire," the report proclaimed, "by securing its continuance for the fulfillment of its beneficent mission to the world."[66]

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[64] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, lxxiii.
[65] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, lxxiii-lxxv.
[66] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, lxxvi.

In a leaflet drafted by Clay for the purpose of explaining her birthrate enquiry to local MU branches, she similarly argued in 1919 that women had an important and urgent responsibility to help increase the birthrate. By lobbying in favour of better housing and financial support for mothers, she believed women could in turn help secure the future of the British race at home and across the empire. "The new trust of the vote," Clay informed MU members, endowed women with a "sharing rule in the country," and revealed to them that, "as citizens, we could do more and must do more" to advance the teachings of Jesus regarding the duty of parenthood.[67] Clay warned MU members that England faced both 'qualitative' and quantitative population problems. It was true that fewer babies had been born in 1917 than 1907, but also of concern to Clay was that a significant percentage of children now supposedly came from "unskilled labourers and the ne 'er-do-wells," as well as from the "weak-minded" and "hopeless."[68] The next year, Clay would also write in an MU periodical that an increase in the domestic birthrate was urgently needed to prevent the loss of the colonies to "teeming races of other colours."[69]

Drawing together concerns over sexual morals and national interests, the second NBRC report also asserted that sexual impropriety hastened the spread of venereal disease—and the reader could easily infer that such actions had a deleterious impact on population size at home and across the empire. As implied by the NBRC, soliciting prostitutes (a widely discussed problem during the war) and other forms of sexual malfeasance could be identified as a common cause of the spread of venereal diseases. The spread of these diseases supposedly led to the death of scores of infants, which of course in turn limited the number of potential emigrants.[70]

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[67] Mary H. Clay, *The Mothers' Union Birthrate Enquiry: Leaflet 2* (Winchester: Warren & Son, Ltd., 1919), 3. Found at Lambeth Conference 1920, LC 135, Lambeth Conferences, Lambeth Palace Library.
[68] Clay, *The Mothers' Union Birthrate Enquiry*, 3, 5.
[69] Mary H. Clay, "The Higher Call," *Mothers in Council* 31, no. 119 (July, 1920): 131.
[70] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, lxxix, xcviii, cvi, cxxvii-cxxx.

The place of the Church in society: the established church and a national conscience

In addition to justifying their positions as shepherds of national interests in the context of the divine mission of the empire, Anglican leaders, including Wakefield, also did so by drawing attention to the position of the Church as the established church of England. However, this does not mean that all proposed or actualized fertility-manipulation schemes promoted by Anglican leaders during the interwar period involved some form of government intervention—as the pulpit and pen were regularly employed by the likes of Wakefield, Woods, and Clay to directly encourage or discourage procreation amongst specific segments of the population. According to Matthew Grimley, during the interwar period the Church broadly believed that, as "the national Church," it was "indispensable to national life." However, he is careful to add that "Anglican assertions that the Church was truly national, or that there was widespread support for it in the nation, were more often defensive than bombastic," and that the Church had to work tirelessly during the interwar period to justify its right to address many social and political issues. Furthermore, the efforts of the Church to address matters of national interest were not always welcomed by political leaders. For example, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and multiple Conservative MPs expressed indignation at senior Church leadership for their interference in the industrial disputes of 1926.[71] Less hostility was shown to the Church in relation to its addressing of birthrate matters, however, as politicians widely considered Anglican leaders to be the natural caretakers of matters pertaining to sexual morals and family life.

A sense of perceived national responsibility as the established Church can help to explain why a busy man like Wakefield would take time out of his schedule to lead the

[71] Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 14, 116-121.

NBRC. Speaking in 1915, Wakefield informed the clergy of his diocese of Birmingham that he thought it right to consider "the national side of our Church in this land and how best we may further the interests of the people amongst whom we live, bearing in mind that our responsibility is far wider and deeper in England than is that of any other religious Body."[72] Later Wakefield explained that the responsibility of the Church towards matters of national interest was greater than that of other religious bodies because

> it is the essence of the Establishment of a Church in any land that she should care for matters outside her own immediate interests. In fact, she could not really carry out her office unless she guided the nation on moral and social questions, as well as in regards to modes of worship.[73]

Wakefield believed that other Christian denominations were willing and eager to follow the lead of the established Church "in matters which concern the general well-being of the State." He was careful to note that such an assertion did not mean the Church must always stake out a progressive stance on any particular issue. Instead, the Church ought to focus on promoting certain key principles. One such principle was the importance of parenthood (as it was intimately tied to the economic and political goals of the state). More specifically, Wakefield contended that the Church ought to encourage parenthood amongst the middle and upper classes, claiming that "when the great experts tell us about the fall of the birth-rate just in those classes where it is the most desirable there should be good-sized families, one is tempted to ask whether the Church has sufficiently emphasized in her teaching the parental duty."[74] Other Anglican leaders supposed that calls for more children needed to be supplemented with tangible support, and, in line with this sentiment, the bishops suggested in *The Misuse of Marriage* that "Christian men" should advocate for improved housing and fairer wages.[75] The MU similarly declared its

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[72] Henry Russell Wakefield, *Charge Delivered by the Bishop of Birmingham at His Primary Visitation on June 16th, 1915 and on June 17th, 1915* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915), 8.
[73] Wakefield, *Charge Delivered by the Bishop of Birmingham,* 39.
[74] Wakefield, *Charge Delivered by the Bishop of Birmingham,* 39-42.
[75] *Misuse of Marriage*, 387.

intent in 1919 to support "economic and social improvements as will encourage parents to undertake the great adventure of rearing a family."[76]

Anglican leaders also grounded notions of the Church as a shepherd of national interests by drawing an analogy between the Church and an individual's conscience. As far back as 1838, future Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone had argued in favour of Church establishment on the grounds that the Church provided the state with a conscience by "bringing down from heaven a divine principle of life."[77] Similarly, speaking at the 1896 Church Congress on the topic of the Church "as an expression of the conscience of the nation," the Medical Officer of Health for Wolverhampton, H. Malet, argued that

> the Church should be a moral guide and teacher in every affair of life; a National Church, especially so in affairs of national interest. Whenever any great social, industrial, or commercial question with a moral aspect is to the fore, the Church, as such, should in some way give an authoritative expression of her opinion about it.[78]

Anglican leaders during the interwar period also argued that the Church ought to function as the conscience of the nation (which was thought to entail either one, or both, of the responsibilities of directing the apparatus of the state and the English populace towards moral ends) because it functioned as a steward of the teachings of Jesus. As the conscience of the nation, women and men, such as the one-time NCPM vice-president and former Dean of Durham, J. E. C. Welldon, held that as "the individual Christian affects the circle in which he lives and moves, so the Church should affect the State."[79] For his part, Inge claimed that the Church ought to be the

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[76] "The Mothers' Union Birthrate Enquiry," *Workers' Paper* 1, no. 67 (July, 1919): 110.
[77] W. E. Gladstone, *The State in its Relations with the Church: Volume I*, 4th ed. (London: John Murray, 1841), 115. For further discussion of Gladstone's work, see Ian Tregenza, "State and Church," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. Judith Wolfe, Joel Rasmussen, and Johanes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 239.
[78] H. Malet, "The Idea of a National Church, Both as the Expression of the Conscience of the Nation, and as an Integral Part of the Church Catholic," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress: Held at Shrewsbury, on October 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th, 1896*, ed. Rev. C. Dunkley (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1896), 75.
[79] J. E. C. Welldon, *The Church and the World* (London: Skeffington & Son, Ltd., 1932), 15-16.

> conscience of the nation, holding up, as a shining light, the standard of values which Christ came to earth to reveal … It is not enough that the individual should be willing to sacrifice himself for the institution; the institution also ought to be willing to sacrifice its tangible interests for the society which, in the name of its Master, it exists to elevate and redeem.[80]

Likewise, Woods instructed members of the MU to have more children, and to encourage their boys to become clergymen, on the grounds that the "Church is the soul of the State [i.e., one of its functions is to direct the state towards moral ends], and to Strengthen the Church is to Strengthen the nation, the empire, the world, whose servant it is."[81]

The metaphor of the Church as moral conscience, which Grimley indicates was especially prevalent in the 1930s, provided extensive flexibility to Anglican leaders in regards to which public matters they could choose to take up.[82] The reason for this was that any number of ends could be deemed 'moral'—including encouraging sexual purity, fostering family life, and securing certain national interests. "The Church of Christ ought to be as an angel in the State," Welldon explained, "inspiring thoughts of duty and charity, fostering brotherhood, elevating character, seeking to create in all men the spirit which shall cause them to think of others no less than of themselves."[83] Additionally, as an "angel" of the state, Welldon believed the Church was right to concern itself with what he believed was a grave threat to the nation: the difference in fertility amongst the social classes. Specifically, Welldon worried that the lower classes were bringing children into the world for whom they could not properly provide. For these men and women, he asserted that "no reform is more necessary in the present day than that the sense of parental responsibility should be quickened." Additionally, Welldon asserted that the fertility of certain groups ought to be permanently restricted. "Christians need, I think, feel no scruple in asserting that those members of society," he argued, "who are imbeciles

[80] W. R. Inge, *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems* (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1930), 10-11.
[81] Theodore Woods, "New Year Message," *Mothers in Council* 38, no. 141 (January, 1926): 2-4.
[82] Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*, 201.
[83] Welldon, *Church and the World,* 37.

or feebleminded, or who suffer from a disease which must in all human probability wreck their children's lives, should be prevented by sterilisation from begetting children."[84]

Hope for reversing birthrate trends

The second report of the NBRC expressed dismay at the pervasive selfishness that had supposedly spread like a disease amongst first the upper classes, leading to their rejection of large families, before slowly infecting nearly all segments of society. However, as mentioned, the commission was not without hope, as the partial enfranchisement of women was seen as just the kind of change needed to usher in a political and cultural climate more favourable towards children. Furthermore, the NBRC noted that early data suggested the birthrate in England was on the rise following the armistice.[85] Optimism similarly pervaded amongst many Anglican leaders both before, and immediately after, the war. For example, in his 1915 diocesan address Wakefield implied that although the middle and upper classes—who were widely considered to be the persons most loyal to the Church—had lost their way in regard to procreative behaviours, they were still willing to follow clear Church teachings on the matter. The problem, it appeared to Wakefield and many others, was a lack of emphasis by the Church regarding the duty of parenthood, rather than the more troubling possibility of a decline in the recognized authority of the Church amongst the English people.[86]

For his part, the scientist, agriculturist, and committed Anglican layperson, W. C. D. Whetham, argued that, while other methods of increasing the birthrate were likely to prove futile, appeals to religion held much promise. Speaking at the 1912 Church

[84] Welldon, *Church and the World*, 35-36.
[85] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood*, xxxii, xli.
[86] Wakefield, *Charge Delivered by the Bishop of Birmingham*, 41.

Congress, Whetham claimed that while the birthrate was declining across the English-speaking world, the

> average number of births maintains almost its normal level among families of known Roman Catholic faith, and has fallen much less than elsewhere among the Anglican clergy. Such facts … point to the one motive which seems strong enough to counterbalance the prevalent desire for fewer offspring—the motive of religious feeling.[87]

Whetham and his wife Catherine had previously written the popular-level work *The Family and the Nation* in 1909, which warned of the eugenic dangers of differential fertility and argued in favour of traditional roles in the family for husbands and wives. Working together, the couple helped to popularize the notion that the more well-to-do needed to contribute a minimum of four children to maintain the 'quality' and quantity of the domestic population.[88] Whetham, who was a member of the informal Anglican organization the Modern Churchmen's Union, was convinced that the middle and upper classes were avoiding parenthood in order to improve, or sustain, a certain standard of living. He noted to the Church Congress that "economic and legislative rewards" could not "stay the plague of empty cradles" because the government did not have the resources to offset the entire costs associated with raising children. "The religious motive alone," Whetham concluded, "seems effective with normal mankind in exalting the future welfare of the race above the temporary welfare of the individual."[89]

The 1919 annual report of the NCPM also struck a note of hopefulness in regards to the birthrate. "We rejoice that at long last the problems of racial morals are now seen to be paramount and of an immediate duty of the whole nation," the NCPM informed its

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[87] W. C. D. Whetham, "The Declining Birth-Rate," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress: Held at Middlesbrough, on September 30th, October1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, 1912*, ed. Rev. C. Dunkley (London: George Allen & Co., 1912), 170.
[88] W. C. D. Whetham and Catherine Whetham, *The Family and the Nation: A Study in Natural Inheritance and Social Responsibility* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 133-134, 139; and Whetham, "The Declining Birth-Rate," 173. The married couple also published the work *Heredity and Society* in 1912.
[89] Whetham, "The Declining Birth-Rate," 169-174.

readers and benefactors. The report added that the "peace and progress of mankind" was not ultimately dependent on "schemes of social reconstruction," including the ones supported by the NCPM and NBRC for the purpose of increasing birthrates. Instead, what was needed was a "new spirit in society" in relation to matters like procreation and obligations to the state. And the NCPM expressed confidence that, if a "moral ideal" and "effective religious inspiration" could be put forward, this was indeed possible.[90]

Following the war Inge supposed, in his typical contrarian fashion, that birthrates would continue to fall. Inge held that the middle and upper classes limited the size of their families not out of selfishness, but rather prudence in the face of heavy taxation levied to pay for social welfare services for the overly fertile, "parasitic" segment of the English population—whom Inge described as the "waste products of our civilisation." However, he also held to his own brand of optimism, as he anticipated that the current social order would soon be destroyed by its own follies, and would then slowly be replaced by a simpler, more agrarian state of affairs that benefited from significantly diminished birthrates amongst the lower classes.[91]

Despite Inge's opposing viewpoint, optimism continued to permeate the writings of many Anglican leaders immediately following the war, especially as birthrates briefly climbed upwards (moving from 18.5 in 1919 to 25.5 in 1920, before falling the next year to 22.4). But many of these same women and men believed the Church faced a ticking clock. Such fears were stoked by the writings of Meyrick Booth, the psychologist and self-proclaimed Protestant, who wrote the widely cited article "Religious Belief as Affecting the Growth of Population" in 1914. Like Whetham, Booth argued that no population was able to maintain itself when married women bore less than four children,

[90] National Council of Public Morals, *To Save the British Race*, 10.
[91] W. R. Inge, "The Future of the English Race," in *Outspoken Essays*, ed. W. R. Inge (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920), 99-103. Inge's essay was first published during the war.

and his article suggested that Protestant birthrates in England had already fallen below this number. In contrast, Jews and Roman Catholics were said to maintain significantly higher birthrates, which Whetham believed could be explained in part by the Roman Catholic denunciation of birth control.[92] Booth's article suggested that declining birthrates put not only the future of the British Empire at risk, but also the influence (and very existence) of the Church. While many believed the middle and upper classes may be willing to listen to Church teachings on procreation, Booth's work also suggested to concerned clergy that the Church had only a limited period of time to counteract 'troubling' birthrate trends. Similar fears were shared by both Anglican lay leaders and members of other denominations, as discussion at the 1917 Presbyterian Synod of England indicated that Roman Catholics were having more children than Protestants, and the MU asserted in 1919 that declining birthrates posed a threat to national welfare and the influence of the Church.[93]

Conclusion

Drawing from a framework that pictured the Church as a shepherd of sexual morals, family life, and national interests, many Anglican leaders during the interwar period presumed that procreative behaviours fell under their purview because contemporary birthrate patterns supposedly threatened all three spheres over which they were called to preside. One such pattern was the decline in birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes, and, as evidenced by the two NBRC reports, figures like Scharlieb believed that

[92] Meyrick Booth, "Religious Belief as Affecting the Growth of Population," *Hibbert Journal* 8, no. 3 (October, 1914), 142, 150, 152, 154. The differences in birthrates amongst religious groups were said to reflect the general differences in fertility between the social classes in England. Whetham equated adherence to Roman Catholic and Jewish religious beliefs with the lower classes, and Protestant expressions of faith with the more well-to-do.
[93] "Presbyterian Synod: The Church and Moral Questions," *Manchester Guardian*, May 9, 1917; and "The Mothers' Union Birthrate Enquiry," 110.

this decline resulted from the widespread use of birth control. The supposed widespread use of birth control by the middle and upper classes worried many Anglican leaders because it was thought to discourage sexual restraint amongst the married and unmarried, hinder the moral training of children within the context of family life, and place the future of the empire at risk. Notably, the loss of life, and concurrent decline in birthrates, associated with the Great War functioned to intensify and popularize 'qualitative' and quantitative population concerns amongst Anglican leaders. In part, this was because the rapid decline in the birthrate was immediately followed by an expansion of the empire at the close of the war—which engendered a belief amongst Anglican leaders like Mary H. Clay that Britain would be unable to supply a sufficient number of emigrants (and perhaps also a sufficient number of eugenically 'desirable' emigrants) to continue to lay claim on its foreign territories.

At the conclusion of the war, Soloway points out that the practice of birth control was considered by many population pundits to be firmly entrenched within English married life. At the same time, he notes that "while the proportion of people married increased steadily in the 1920s, the size of their families continued to decrease to 2.1, a figure even lower than the 2.4 children born to the cohort married during the war."[94] As the 1920s progressed, seemingly intractable procreative trends encouraged some eugenists to turn from pronatalist efforts amongst the middle and upper classes towards the restriction of fertility amongst the lower classes. However, for Anglican leaders who were concerned with the 'quality' and quantity of the population, such as Woods, there still existed a belief that the birthrate amongst the middle and upper classes could be altered. Turning from the question of why Anglican leaders believed birthrate patterns fell under their authority, Chapter Two will next explore the related matters of why Woods

[94] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 164, 175-177.

and other Anglicans believed married couples were having the ‘incorrect’ number of children, as well as how the middle and upper classes might be persuaded to limit their use of birth control and give birth to the ‘right’ number of children.

Chapter Two:

Declining Birthrates and a Declining Church, 1920-1930

Shortly after the 1930 Lambeth Conference, the Church published the reports and resolutions produced by the gathered bishops of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Presided over by the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, the work of the decennial Conference held no official claim over any province within the Anglican Communion, the worldwide network of regional church bodies in fellowship with the See of Canterbury.[1] Resolutions adopted by the Conference instead provided counsel to bishops, clergymen, and laypersons scattered across the globe. The reports in turn elucidated the theological and moral reasoning underpinning the resolutions.[2]

Tucked away in the printed collection was the report of the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex. Drafted principally by the Bishop of Winchester, Theodore Woods, the report expressed alarm over the rejection of Church teachings: "in many quarters Christian morality is receiving the treatment frequently accorded to Christian doctrine," it said. "It is disowned and even repudiated."[3] Such a sea change was said to be the result of a rapidly advancing "hedonistic and materialistic philosophy" that promised self-fulfillment and immediate gratification. This "process of secularisation," the report cautioned, was not limited to Britain, but was "advancing in almost every country in the world." Turning towards birth control later in its report, the subcommittee supposed that many unmarried couples, swept along by secularism, now employed contraceptives to

[1] Provinces "in communion" with the See of Canterbury also recognized the archbishop of Canterbury as their spiritual head.
[2] For further discussion on the procedural aspects of the 1930 Lambeth Conference, see Theodore Woods, *The Faith and Witness of the Church in this Generation* (London: James Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1931), 11-13.
[3] *The Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1930), 86.

facilitate distasteful sex acts. Birth control was also thought to be "frequently used to avoid the responsibilities of parenthood," and so it had "become a danger to many civilised nations by a disproportionate reduction of their best stocks."[4] Absent from these statements was any note of optimism. No longer, it would appear, could the Church simply redouble its efforts of encouraging married couples to have more children and expect to be obeyed. Evidence cited at the Conference for the decline in the moral authority of the Church included the popularity of subversive media, increasing divorce rates, and, despite the calls to parenthood made at the 1908 and 1920 Lambeth Conferences, the fact that birthrates had trended downwards for nearly all of the 1920s.

Chapter One established that many Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes understood trends in the birthrate to fall under their respective purview because they regarded themselves as shepherds of sexual morals, family life, and national interests. But why did Anglican leaders believe couples were having the 'incorrect' number of children? Chapter Two argues that key to the moral reasoning of Anglican leaders in their defence of fertility-manipulation schemes was the belief that the public and private perils associated with birthrate trends were part of a larger struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose in English society.

Had a casual reader of the published reports and resolutions been unfamiliar with the proceedings of the 1930 Conference—which the English press covered at length—she or he may have been surprised to discover that the same subcommittee which warned of the moral and national dangers associated with birth control also submitted a resolution to the Conference in favour of contraception. Following lengthy debate, the gathered bishops voted 193 to 67 in support of the limited approval of birth control, though pointed disagreement amongst Anglican leaders continued through the 1930s and past the Second

[4] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 86, 90.

World War. The pronouncement (designated as "Resolution 15") struck a decidedly different tone from the rebuke of birth control issued by the 1920 Lambeth Conference. In contrast to an "emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means" to avoid conception, the majority of bishops present at the 1930 Conference broke with centuries of Church tradition and affirmed the permissibility of birth control for married couples who felt a moral obligation to forgo both "parenthood" and "complete abstinence."[5] Reflecting years later on the vote of the bishops, the Roman Catholic physician and outspoken critic of contraception, Halliday Sutherland, assessed the 1930 Conference as a capitulation to sweeping changes in English society. "We saw the white flag raised over Lambeth Palace," he lamented.[6]

One reason Resolution 15 has drawn interest from contemporary scholars is because it is widely thought to mark a turning point in the liberalization of Church positions on sexuality. In recent decades multiple authors have followed the lead of Sutherland by identifying economic, religious, cultural, and medical developments within English society that may have encouraged Conference delegates to bypass Church tradition and vote in favour of birth control.[7] These developments included greater recognition of the medical dangers associated with child birth, high unemployment, growth in "class consciousness" amongst previously underrepresented socio-economic groups, and increased participation by women in political and religious debates.[8] I address several of these developments at length, but the principal aim of this chapter is to provide

[5] *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion: Holden at Lambeth Palace, July 6 to August 5, 1908: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1908), 44; and *Lambeth Conference 1930,* 43-44.
[6] Halliday Sutherland, *Control of Life* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, Ltd., 1944), 109.
[7] For example, see Richard Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 253-4; Timothy Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England, 1857-1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 152; and Theresa Notare, "A Revolution in Christian Morals: Lambeth 1930" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2008), 6-7, 529-531.
[8] For further discussion on several of these matters, see Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 137, 145, 152.

a window into the moral defence of fertility-manipulation schemes through an examination of Bishop Woods' efforts to secure the qualified approval of birth control within the Church. However, by examining this moral reasoning, it is also possible to gain a more complete picture of how the shift in the Church's position on birth control came about. And as will be discussed in later chapters, this shift did indeed lay the theological groundwork for the liberalization of many Church positions pertaining to marriage and sexuality throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Naturally, not all Anglican leaders engaged in birth control debates concerned themselves with 'qualitative' or quantitative population questions. However, as exemplified by Woods, those who did often agreed on the answer to why procreative trends appeared to be in misalignment with personal and societal flourishing. Placed in the context of Church debates over birth control in the 1920s and early 1930s, the question could have been posed as follows: what common impetuses encouraged middle- and upper-class married couples to limit the size of their families? As evidenced by Woods, and by figures like Josephine Calcutt, Maurice Reckitt, and the Bishop of Birmingham, Ernest Barnes, Anglican proponents of all manner of fertility-manipulation schemes agreed that men and women were not having the 'correct' number of children (however that might be understood) because they were turning away from 'authentic' Christian teachings regarding the purpose of a human life. Along these lines, Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes throughout the *entirety* of the interwar period commonly conceived of their struggle to manipulate birthrates—by regulating access to birth control or through any number of other fertility-manipulation schemes—as part of a larger struggle in English society over the ends to which human beings ought to direct their lives. Relatedly, a common theme in the moral logic offered up by Anglican leaders in the interwar period was the notion that schemes to increase or decrease

birthrates represented tangible means to combat ‘false’ teachings and champion Christian prescriptions for the kind of life that was thought to be worth living. Efforts to promote fertility manipulation schemes should therefore not be separated from the perceived obligations of Anglican leaders to shepherd sexual morals, family life, and national interests. Such efforts can be made intelligible when viewed as means by which bishops, clergymen, and laypersons sought to fulfill their pastoral responsibilities.

In the context of interwar England, Woods and other Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes regularly thought about human purpose in a communal sense, relating it to an individual’s God-ordained obligation to serve and strengthen her or his respective community (broadly defined). As will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four, many Anglican leaders also framed the question of human purpose in an individual sense, relating it to matters like the proper enjoyment of the pleasures God made available to humankind, as well as personal moral and spiritual development. And on occasion Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes blamed their counterparts in opposing theological and political camps for propagating ‘false’ teachings on human purpose that undermined the ‘qualitative’ and quantitative population needs of Britain and the empire.

Woods is the central character of Chapters Two and Three, but the story of this chapter begins 16 years before the start of his birth control campaign—beginning with the declarations issued by the 1908 Lambeth Conference. I then examine three moral considerations, which rose to prominence due to perceived and actual changes in English society, that helped to shape Woods’ birth control platform and make the shift in the Church’s position on birth control possible, though not inevitable. As exemplified by Maude Royden, Marie Stopes, and Lord Dawson of Penn, these considerations included the physical and economic wellbeing of mothers, the so-called “problem” of the

difference in fertility between the social classes (which was associated with various social, economic, and political difficulties faced by Britain), and the perceived decline in the moral authority of the Church. The remainder of this chapter analyzes the emergence of Woods as the leading proponent of birth control in the Church, with a particular focus on the moral logic he employed in support of his campaign. The resolution of Woods' campaign is examined in Chapter Three where, in addition to further exploring his concerns over the encroachment of 'hedonism,' I also evaluate claims put forth by Anglican leaders relating to how various positions on birth control could be equated with acts of charity toward the 'suffering' and 'disadvantaged' at home and abroad.

Woods has been largely overlooked by past scholarship, but he is deserving of the attention afforded by Chapters Two and Three for being the (previously unsung) principal actor responsible for the shift in the Church's position on birth control. He advanced his birth control agenda with several aims in mind. These included easing economic and physical hardships faced by mothers and limiting the use of contraceptives by unmarried couples. However, Woods' chief aim, rooted in eugenic thought, was to reverse the decline in fertility amongst the middle and upper classes. His intent was not necessarily to increase the size of the population at home, but rather to ensure the more well-to-do comprised a greater percentage of English citizens and to strengthen the empire by encouraging middle- and upper-class married couples to produce more sons and daughters that could be sent abroad.

According to Woods, the call of the Church to parenthood fell on deaf ears because the condemnation of birth control by the Church had subverted its own moral authority, as many found it to be a meritless position. This in turn was said to encourage the adoption of 'hedonistic' notions of human purpose rooted in self-gratification. In contrast, Woods believed that the qualified approval of birth control would furnish the

Church with the needed moral authority to combat unchristian teachings and convince the middle and upper classes to live out their God-ordained communal purpose of serving the state through rearing large families. In this way, the cautious approval of birth control at the 1930 Lambeth Conference can be understood as an attempt by Woods to enact a nationwide fertility-manipulation scheme.

The correlation of declining birthrates with a broader decline in devotion to Christian conceptions of human purpose (in favour of self-interests) was common amongst Anglican leaders in the first two decades of the twentieth century. However, the 1920s witnessed an increase in claims by Anglican leaders that there existed a widespread, intentional rejection of Church teachings, and that Christianity faced a competing and credible moral philosophy (commonly referred to as the "new morality"). The problem was not thought to be simply the relaxing of Christian commitments, but now also a widespread turning away from these commitments towards an entirely different belief system.

Throughout the 1920s, the proceedings of various Church bodies, along with published sermons, Anglican newspapers, and theological journals, abounded with discussions of how men and women were increasingly ignoring the moral teachings of the Church. The *Guardian* argued at the beginning of the decade that England was witnessing "a revolt against moral conventions in relation to sex."[9] Writing in 1923, Dr. Mary Scharlieb agreed that the sexual morals of the nation were on the decline, and many Church leaders, including the likes of Charles Gore, the retired bishop of Oxford, expressed similar sentiments as the decade progressed.[10] Additionally, the retired medical officer to the Local Government Board and former member of the National Birth-Rate

[9] "The Week," *Guardian*, October 8, 1920.
[10] Mary Scharlieb, "Religion and Marriage," *Theology* 7, no. 39 (September, 1923): 166-167; and Charles Gore, *Christ and Society: Halley Stewart Lectures, 1927* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 188.

Commission (NBRC), Arthur Newsholme, observed in 1924 that Christian denominations no longer held the same sway over the sex-related decision making of the general populace.[11] However, while a growing number of Anglican leaders feared that young persons were abandoning Christian teachings in favour of those of the new morality, few Christian leaders from any denomination presumed that the *majority* of women and men were devoted secularists. Outside Anglican circles, the *Methodist Recorder* argued in 1924 that "most men are not radical unbelievers," but instead "only unbelievers in organized religion."[12] While disagreement existed amongst Anglicans over the extent to which this assertion accurately reflected the English populace, most agreed that the standing of the Church as a moral authority on matters pertaining to marriage and sexuality had not improved between the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences.

A decline in the perceived moral authority of the Church led to a shift amongst Anglican leaders in regards to the perceived utility of fertility-manipulation schemes, which provides insight into how these leaders sought to maintain influence in society. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, fertility-manipulation schemes were commonly conceived of as complementary to the teachings of Anglican leaders on procreation. But as Chapters Two and Three will demonstrate, as more Anglican leaders came to believe that their recognized moral authority did not allow them to speak *ex cathedra*, fertility-manipulation schemes came to be increasingly viewed by these leaders as a substitute for the Church's moral authority.

[11] For further elaboration on the views of Newsholme, see Arthur Newsholme, "The Moral Aspects of Social Hygiene," *Hibbert Journal* 12, no. 2 (January, 1924): 285.
[12] Quotation found in "Signs of the Times," *Modern Churchman* 11, no. 12 (March, 1922): 627.

The 1908 and 1920 Lambeth Conferences

As discussed in Chapter One, the mainstream of Anglican thought in the early twentieth century, informed by Church tradition, vital statistics, medical opinion, and notions of social purity, stood against birth control.[13] The grounding for this position came in part from the Book of Common Prayer, which, drawing from the work of Augustine 1,500 years before, stated that marriage was for the rearing of children, avoidance of sexual sin, and mutual comfort and support.[14] Birth control, it was widely thought, worked against the first two goals of marriage. Though disagreement existed on the matter, limiting intercourse to what may be referred to as the "safe period" during a woman's menstrual cycle was considered by many clergymen as permissible, as the practice was deemed "natural" and said to require significant self-control. However, as a general course of action within married life, the bishops of the Church (drawing from interpretations of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas) taught in *The Misuse of Marriage* that the sex act and "the course of nature [i.e., conception of children] should be recognized as God's ordering," and typically should not be separated from one another.[15] As outlined to the NBRC by the Roman Catholic Vicar-General of Southwark, Rev. W. F. Brown, the position of the Roman Catholic Church was largely in line with the one set out in *The Misuse of Marriage*.[16]

Amongst Roman Catholics, one common way of grounding objections to birth control, and specifically claims relating to the "course of nature," was by appeals to the

[13] For further discussion, see Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 132-149.
[14] For further discussion on how Protestants drew from, and also amended, the work of Augustine, see John Witte, "The Goods and Goals of Marriage," *Notre Dame Law Review* 76, no. 3 (April, 2001): 1046-1047.
[15] *The Misuse of Marriage* (originally printed by Wayre & Son, Ltd. in 1914 for private distribution within the Church). Found reprinted in National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate, Its Causes and Effects: Being the Report of and the Chief Evidence Taken by the National Birth-Rate Commission, Instituted, with Official Recognition, by the National Council of Public Morals—For the Promotion of Race Regeneration—Spiritual, Moral, and Physical* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1916), 384-385.
[16] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth*-Rate, 390. According to Brown, one reason sex was not to be separated from procreation was because the primary end of marriage was thought to be the begetting and raising of children.

natural law. Further discussion on natural law theorizing will be offered in Chapter Five, but according to Henry Davis, a Jesuit professor of moral theology in the first half of the twentieth century at Heythrop College, birth control could be said to violate the natural law, or "the sum total of duties, whose knowledge we derive from our understanding of our nature and of our relation to all other beings." Beginning from the standpoint that the purposes of human faculties were revealed by "the good they necessarily achieve by their normal activities," Davis further asserted that the "conjugal act is designed by nature, i.e., ultimately by the Divine plan, for the benefit of the species." Therefore, he supposed that birth control ought to be condemned because its usage was "opposed both to the primary purpose of the sexual act in marriage [i.e., procreation] and to its social relation."[17]

While direct and sustained appeals to the natural law were more prevalent amongst Roman Catholic leaders, Anglican (and especially anglo-catholic) opponents of birth control, including the authors of *The Misuse of Marriage,* along with Gore and representatives of the MU, regularly made reference to procreation as the "natural ends" of sex.[18] However, while natural law theorizing helped to undergird Anglican opposition to birth control, in-depth, technical discussions of the natural law did not feature prominently in most Church debates over contraception following the 1920 Lambeth Conference.[19] Also of note, the mainstream of Anglican thought found much in common with Roman Catholic teachings as they related to calls for abstinence during the first half of the twentieth century. When clergymen like Brown and the Anglican Bishop of Southwark, Hubert Burge, encouraged abstinence for persons wishing to limit the size of

[17] Henry Davis, "Contraception: Its Moral Aspects and Implications," *National Life* 2, no. 5 (September, 1932): 60.
[18] For further elaboration on Gore's views, see Charles Gore, *Lambeth on Contraceptives* (London: Mowbray Publishing, 1930), 3.
[19] According to Theresa Notare, many Anglican clergymen had turned away from the natural law as a means of grounding their moral theology by the turn of the twentieth century. For further discussion, see Notare, "A Revolution in Christian Morals," 5-6.

their families, they were both asking married couples to refrain from any form of sexual contact (and not only penile-vaginal intercourse).[20]

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, members of the Modern Churchmen's Union (MCU) proved to be amongst the Anglican leaders most open to the practice of birth control. In support of contraception, members of the MCU regularly drew upon the work of Malthus and his contemporary disciples. The MCU, founded originally as the Churchmen's Union for the Advancement of Liberal Religious Thought in 1898, included both clergymen and laypersons dedicated to advancing a theological platform known at the time as "modernism."[21] Members of the MCU often espoused the most liberal strain of thought within the liberal camp of the Church, and they were a regular source of anxiety for high-level Church officials due to the propensity of figures like H. D. A Major, the long-time editor of the MCU journal, the *Modern Churchman*, to publicly question beliefs long thought to be essential to the Christian faith. As the Oxford theologian and self-described Modernist, C. W. Emmett, noted in 1922, modernists were united around a common approach to constructing their respective theologies rather than by a fixed set of truths.[22] Emmett informed his readers that "any given modernist may or may not believe in the Virgin Birth, or the empty tomb," but they agreed that "we can no longer appeal to the authority of the Bible, creeds or church as something fixed or decisive." To keep the attention of women and men—who were inundated with all manner of scientific findings and contemporary moral claims—modernists argued that religion needed to be "interpreted afresh." At the same time, modernists desired to reform the Church from within rather than start a separate denomination. Emmett added that

[20] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 393, 438-439.
[21] The term "modernism" could refer to a liberal strain of Roman Catholic thought, but in this context the term refers to a primarily English, and more specifically (though not exclusively) Anglican, strain of thought.
[22] Emmett equated the entire liberal wing of the Church with modernist theology, but noted many liberals would not refer to themselves as modernists—and therefore I have chosen to not conflate the terms.

modernists were "prepared to welcome without reserve the results of historical criticism and scientific discovery with their new outlook on the world."[23] Following Emmett's train of thought, many ideas espoused by the Malthusian League proved attractive to members of the MCU, including W. R. Inge, because they represented a 'scientific' and 'objective' approach to solving societal problems.

The historian Timothy Jones notes that there was little debate over contraception at the 1908 Lambeth Conference, where the bishops voted in favour of the following resolution: "The Conference regards with alarm the growing practice of the artificial restriction of the family, and earnestly calls upon all Christian people to discountenance the use of all artificial means of restriction as demoralising to character and hostile to national welfare."[24] The report expounding on the resolution claimed that the increase in the use of contraceptives, which supposedly imperiled the English-speaking peoples by significantly reducing birthrates, was the result of a "loss of the responsibility to God for the fruits of marriage." Rather than seeking to fulfill the 'divine' purpose of the English-speaking peoples (i.e., to spread their 'beneficent' rule across the world), it was supposed that married couples (and especially those in the middle classes) shirked their familial responsibilities to pursue the misguided ends of social prestige or various forms of pleasure. In turn, married couples risked medical ailments associated with the use of birth control, character enfeeblement, and the "deterioration" of the race as a result of the disparities in the birthrates of the "inferior" and "superior" stocks. However, the report, along with other Conference documents, did not indicate a hopeless situation. The collective documents suggested that birthrate trends could indeed be reversed, and, as one means of doing so, the Conference Encyclical Letter called for Anglicans across the

[23] C. W. Emmett, "The Modernism Movement in the Church of England," *Journal of Religion* 2, no. 6 (November, 1922): 562-563.
[24] *Lambeth Conference 1908*, 56; and Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 134-135.

English-speaking world to condemn birth control with "the whole force of their Christian character."[25]

Jones indicates that the 1920 Lambeth Conference witnessed an uptick in debate over contraception, with some bishops arguing that the limited approval of birth control was necessary to protect the health of mothers and children. However, the bishops ultimately voted in favour of Resolution 68, which declared that

> The Conference, while declining to lay down rules which will meet the needs of every abnormal case, regards with grave concern the spread in modern society of theories and practices hostile to the family. We utter an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the grave dangers - physical, moral and religious - thereby incurred, and against the evils with which the extension of such use threatens the race. In opposition to the teaching which, under the name of science and religion, encourages married people in the deliberate cultivation of sexual union as an end in itself, we steadfastly uphold what must always be regarded as the governing considerations of Christian marriage. One is the primary purpose for which marriage exists, namely the continuation of the race through the gift and heritage of children; the other is the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control. We desire solemnly to commend what we have said to Christian people and to all who will hear.[26]

The report accompanying the resolution warned that "there is sad evidence at the present time of a widespread lowering of moral conditions." One piece of evidence offered in support of this claim was the decrease in birthrates (in addition to an increase in venereal diseases and divorce). The slackening of moral standards, according to the report, was partially the result of widespread ignorance regarding the Church's teachings on marriage and "purity," along with the dearth of general educational opportunities pertaining to human reproduction. The report added that the goal behind the resolutions on marriage and sex submitted to the Conference, including the one

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[25] *Lambeth Conference 1908*, 144-5, 146, 147, 38.
[26] *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion: Holden at Lambeth Palace, July 5 to August 7, 1920: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1920), 44. For more information on the debate over birth control at the 1920 Lambeth Conference, see Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 135-136.

condemning birth control, was to offer guidance to "those who long to see nations fit for their great world responsibilities," and also to those "who know they cannot fulfill God's purposes [including the building up of one's nation and encouraging the fellowship and work of Christians across the world] unless they have learned, whether in married or single life, to be straight and clean before God and man."[27]

Changing tides

No sooner had the 1920 Lambeth Conference come to a close than a chorus of voices rose up to demand that the Church reject Resolution 68 and endorse birth control. Many of these voices came from outside the Church, but increased public opposition from Anglican leaders quickly became evident—with some clergymen going as far as to invite Marie Stopes, the famed birth control proponent, to speak to their congregations.[28] Writing in the journal *Theology*, Leonard Hodgson, the Dean of Divinity at Magdalen College, Oxford, implored the bishops not to endorse the unfettered use of birth control, but rather to retract their condemnation of its limited use amongst married persons who were convinced the practice was "justified in the sight of God." When calling for the bishops to reconsider Resolution 68, Hodgson stood in line with the mainstream of thought amongst Anglican opponents of the Church's position on birth control by insisting that the preferred marriage path remained one free from the use of contraceptives.[29]

The growing number of clergymen and laypersons who opposed the negative stance of the Church on birth control can be explained in part through the lens of three normatively charged considerations. These three considerations included the physical and

[27] *Lambeth Conference 1920*, 107-108, 109.
[28] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 238, 240.
[29] Leonard Hodgson, "Birth-Control and Christian Ethics," *Hibbert Journal* 22, no. 1 (October, 1923): 73-74.

economic wellbeing of mothers, differential birthrate patterns amongst the social classes (which was associated with various geo-political and economic difficulties faced by Britain), and the perceived decline in the moral authority of the Church. According to Jan Goldstein, normatively charged considerations (referred to hereafter as "moral considerations") constitute the moral parameters of a discussion or debate in a given place at a given time. Additionally, Goldstein contends that moral considerations constitute "lines of force" that galvanize individuals to varying degrees, and also interact dynamically with one another in ways that affect "their ultimate impact."[30]

Drawing from several well-known Anglican and non-Anglican critics of the Church's position on birth control, the following sections examine how the considerations of the declining moral authority of the Church, differential birthrate patterns, and (increased) concerns over the economic and physical wellbeing of mothers affected the birth control debate within the Church. Notably, these considerations did not make a change in the position of the Church *inevitable*, but only *possible*. It was Woods who navigated the various loci of power within the Church to successfully champion Resolution 15. As shifting moral considerations reframed the birth control debate, Woods firmly aligned himself with the belief that the 'problem' of middle- and upper-class couples using birth control to shirk the responsibilities of parenthood was fundamentally theological in nature. Woods held that many married couples did not reject the Church's teachings on parenthood because they were inherently any less moral than preceding generations. Rather, he believed that many of the Church's teachings pertaining to sexuality had not taken into account contemporary changes in society. The resulting impression given by the Church was that sex was a shameful matter, while society-at-

[30] Jan Goldstein, "Toward an Empirical History of Moral Thinking: The Case of Racial Theory in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 1 (February, 2015): 5.

large had come to view sex in a more positive light. In response, disillusioned young persons turned to 'hedonistic' philosophies preached by secular prophets, and thereafter found themselves wandering from the path of self-sacrifice and service into the abyss of cheap forms of self-fulfillment. In line with the thinking of Woods, Church bodies like the Advisory Board for Moral Welfare sought to reframe Church teachings relating to sex and marriage during the 1920s and 1930s around the joy that could be found in monogamous marriages and the raising of children.

Lord Dawson of Penn and the declining authority of the Church

On an unseasonably warm October evening, Lord Dawson of Penn rose to speak to the 1921 Church Congress on the topic of "Sex Relationships." Senior Church leaders held Dawson in high regard, as he was a committed layperson and previously served as a physician to the king (he would later also provide medical care for Archbishop Lang). Associated with decorum and polite society, Dawson set aside his good manners and took aim at the belief that the Church possessed the requisite moral authority to persuade young married couples to completely forgo the use of birth control. "First, I will put forward with confidence the view that birth control is here to stay," he announced to the crowded room. "It is an established fact … although the extent of it can be and is being modified, no denunciations will abolish it."[31] Similar claims regarding the fixity of birth control had previously been advanced by numerous proponents of contraception, including the Medical Officer of Health for Leicester, Dr. C. K. Millard.[32]

Anglican supporters of birth control throughout the 1920s had good reason to believe in the entrenched nature of the practice, as birthrates declined following the

[31] Lord Dawson of Penn, "Christian Morals: Sex Relationships," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress: Birmingham, October 11th to 14th, 1921* (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1921), 198.
[32] "Birth Control: A Discussion," *Eugenics Review* 12, no. 4 (January, 1921): 291.

condemnation of contraception at both the 1908 and 1920 Lambeth Conferences. Between 1909 and 1919, the birthrate dropped from 25.8 to 18.5, and from 1921 to 1931 it fell from 22.4 to 15.8. As previously mentioned, the NBRC reported that the decline during the 1910s was largely due to an increase in the use of birth control amongst the middle and upper classes. For its part, the Anglican newspaper the *Guardian* described the drop in the birthrate in 1921 as a "religious problem," adding that the fundamental question parents needed to ask themselves when deciding whether to have children was what exactly was the purpose of a human life, or, put another way, parents had to settle for themselves the question of "why are we born?"[33]

Speaking to the Church Congress, Dawson noted that for Britain to maintain its place of influence in the world, married couples would need to raise up at least three children. But by refusing to disentangle sexual relations from procreation, Dawson believed the bishops at the 1920 Conference had alienated young people through the promotion of a "joyless" kind of marital love. "Fortunately," Dawson added, the sexual relations championed by the Church stood "in contrast to the real thing as practised by clergy and laity." He further implored the bishops to reject Resolution 68 and approach birth control in a manner informed by "modern knowledge" and "unhampered by traditions."[34]

Dawson painted a picture of a Church whose recognized moral authority was in severe decline. The association of Anglican feminists known as the League of the Church Militant concurred with this assessment, arguing in the pages of the *Church Militant* that the Church's position on birth control was alienating scores of young men and women.[35]

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[33] "The Week," *Guardian*, March 14, 1918. The question of "why are we born" was taken from James Marchant, *Birth-Rate and Empire* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1917), 201.
[34] Dawson, "Christian Morals," 200, 196,
[35] Edith Picton-Turbervill, "The Church and the Younger Generation," *Church Militant* 11, no. 130 (March, 1923): 19.

Speaking more broadly, the *Modern Churchman* suggested that "cowardice" and "conservatism" could explain why the Church had "not prospered much of late years."[36] The moral consideration of the perceived decline in the authority of the Church was later understood by Woods to tilt the scales in favour of birth control for two reasons: (1) the anti-birth control position of the Church was thought to contribute to this decline; (2) the decline was thought to necessitate a new approach to addressing the 'misuses' of contraceptives.

According to Dawson, the bishops at the 1908 and 1920 Lambeth Conferences were right to say that birth control was being exploited for dissipated ends. Where the bishops had gone wrong was in thinking they could entirely prohibit its use. Drawing together various parts of his speech, it is evident that Dawson's suggested approach, which was championed in a cautious, modified form by Woods several years later, was for the Church to approve of birth control as a means to help young married couples foster thriving sexual relationships. This trade-off would empower the Church to engender public opinion against the misuses of birth control, as couples would be more willing to heed Church teachings relating to how the 'selfish' use of birth control imperiled the nation.[37] The notion that the Church needed to update aspects of its teachings to keep the ear of the middle and upper classes regarding the importance of parenthood was not new, as W. C. D. Whetham had argued the same point a decade earlier at the Church Congress.[38] But what Dawson stressed to his audience was that compromise was not a choice, it was the only route available to the Church.

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[36] "Signs of the Times," *Modern Churchman* 11, no. 12 (March, 1922): 627, 628. The *Modern Churchman* made these comments in the course of a discussion regarding Dawson's speech to the Church Congress.
[37] Dawson, "Christian Morals," 198, 200.
[38] W. C. D. Whetham, "Heredity and Social Responsibility," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress: Held at Cambridge, on September 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th, 1910*, ed. Rev. C. Dunkley (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910), 171. Whetham was speaking in general terms about the need for the Church to 'update' its theology, and not specifically about birth control.

By using his position of respectability and influence to advocate for birth control, Dawson established a beachhead on which likeminded Anglican leaders could take up the cause. One such person was Woods, whose birth control platform drew heavily from the work of Dawson. Dawson's speech also signalled to high-level Church leadership that the recognized authority of the Church to dictate sexual behaviours was likely on the decline, and that the question of the moral permissibility of birth control was far from settled. In response, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, drew attention to Dawson's speech several months later at the Bishops' Meeting.[39] Davidson explained that many of the Church faithful found themselves "puzzled" as to whether the use of birth control was morally permissible. A small committee of "younger bishops" was subsequently formed to advise the Bishops' Meeting on the question of whether the Church ought to issue any further pronouncements on contraception in the wake of the 1920 Lambeth Conference.[40] The committee, evidencing the greatest level of division amongst the bishops to date, informed the Bishops' Meeting several months later that they were unable to agree on a suggested course of action. Not to be dissuaded, William Temple, then bishop of Manchester, pleaded with his colleagues for more openness to contraception, and the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, responded with a stern warning against associating the Church with licentious birth control "propaganda." Taking control of the conversation, Archbishop Davidson hinted that Resolution 68 may need revising in the future, but he determined, with the affirmation of his fellow bishops, that no new steps ought to be taken at that time.[41] The issue lay dormant for only a few months before being taken up at the 1924 Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship

[39] The Bishops' Meeting, chaired by the archbishop of Canterbury, brought together bishops from across England and Wales to help advise the archbishop on practical and theological matters.
[40] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Wednesday, May 17th and Thursday, May 18th, 1922, BM 7, Bishops' Meetings, Lambeth Palace Library.
[41] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Tuesday, May 15th and Wednesday, May, 16th, 1923, BM 7.

(COPEC), which set in motion Woods' emergence as the foremost advocate of birth control within the Church.

Prior to convening in the spring, COPEC, which was the brainchild of Temple, commissioned twelve reports relating to domestic social and economic difficulties. The work of the ecumenical conference centred on determining how the findings of these reports could advance a Christian vision of social reform (primarily along Christian socialist lines), and Woods was invited to deliver the opening sermon.[42] Woods' Christian socialist commitments, in addition to his eugenic beliefs, help explain his concerns over the declining moral authority of the Church. Goals like alleviating poverty and fostering fellowship across class lines could only be realized if Christian socialists like Woods retained their standing as credible moral leaders.

Prior to the convening of the conference, the Committee on Sex Relations was tasked with evaluating the morality of birth control, but their report offered no definite conclusions. Conference delegates were later able to reach some level of agreement when, during a general session, the 1,200 gathered men and women adopted a resolution calling for Christian denominations to "thoroughly" investigate the question of birth control in order to provide "definite guidance to perplexed consciences."[43] As an expression of dissatisfaction with the position staked out by the 1920 Lambeth Conference, delegates voted several days later to forward the birth control resolution to Davidson.[44] The moral authority of the Church was once again called into question in a public Christian forum, this time under the leadership of William Temple—whom many presumed would serve as a future archbishop.

[42] For more information on COPEC, see G. I. T. Machin, *Churches and Social Issues in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 32-35.
[43] "C.O.P.E.C.: The Week's Meetings at Birmingham," *Church Times*, April 11, 1924.
[44] "C.O.P.E.C.: The Future," *Church Times*, April 17, 1924.

The rebuke of Resolution 68 by COPEC is reflective of the confused leadership structure within the Church at the time. The archbishop of Canterbury possessed limited official authority over bishops and clergymen who chose to voice their opinions on any number of political, ethical, or theological subjects. Indeed, clergymen regularly took to the pulpit and pen to publicize all manner of views on topics like the Prayer Book and the role of women in the Church. Therefore, when speaking of the Church as a prominent moral voice in English society during the interwar period, widespread agreement (though not always unanimity) could be found on topics like abortion or the use of contraceptives by unmarried couples. However, in regards to many other pressing matters, bishops, rank-and-file clergymen, and influential laypersons did not speak as one voice. This was true even when canon law outlined an official position of the Church on matters like divorce and remarriage. And as the years following the 1920 Lambeth Conference demonstrated, a majority vote by the bishops of the Anglican Communion on an ethical or theological matter did not prevent dissenting Anglican leaders from publicly expressing their views.

Maude Royden and the wellbeing of mothers

Central to the sense of urgency expressed by the COPEC delegates over birth control was the rising moral consideration of the health and material wellbeing of mothers. This moral consideration received increased attention thanks to the advocacy of female proponents of birth control. Timothy Jones points out that, from the late nineteenth century, laywomen actively participated in Church Congresses, and in 1914 women were once again made eligible to sit on local parish councils. Beginning in 1919, after women had achieved partial political enfranchisement, laywomen in the Church began to secure more direct

influence over Church affairs. An important step in this direction occurred that year with the creation of the Church Assembly by Parliament.[45]

As Jones indicates, the formation of the Church Assembly placed the power to draft legislation affecting the Church directly in the hands of bishops and elected clergy and laypersons (though Parliament reserved the right to strike down measures passed by the assembly). Despite concerted opposition within the Church, women secured the right to serve in the Church Assembly prior to its first meeting, and when the assembly convened for the first time in 1920, 40 of the 357 members of the House of Laity—one part of the three houses—were women.[46] However, women were not eligible for ordination, and so they did not participate in the birth control discussions that took place at the Lambeth Conferences and the Bishops' Meetings. Nevertheless, as women secured increased recognition as persons capable of governing the affairs of both the Church and state, the amplified voices of female birth control advocates came to significantly shape the thinking of Woods in regards to the relationship between birth control and the health and wellbeing of mothers. For their part, both the League of the Church Militant and the Workers' Birth Control Group, the latter having been established at the 1924 Conference of Labour Women, equated free access to birth control with public health concerns.[47] However, the Labour Party leadership, fearful of offending Roman Catholic constituents, avoided adding birth control to its official party platform.[48]

Regarding the dangers associated with childbirth, the League of the Church Militant, along with many proponents of birth control, asserted that bringing a son or daughter into the world was more dangerous for women than was working in a coalmine

[45] Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 74, 79, 81.
[46] Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 82.
[47] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 285. Access to birth control was also correlated by members of the Workers' Birth Control Group with full citizenship and equality for women.
[48] Harold Smith, "Sex vs. Class: British Feminists and the Labour Movement, 1919-1929," *Historian* 47, no. 1 (November, 1984): 26.

for men.[49] Warnings over both the economic and physical wellbeing of mothers rested on other hard numbers, as Britain faced not only high unemployment rates throughout the 1920s, but between the years of 1921 and 1926 maternal mortality rates in England and Wales increased from 3.91 deaths per one thousand births to 4.12.[50] As issues relating to the economic and physical plight of mothers, and in particular those belonging to the lower classes, became more widely known, a compelling moral case emerged for the liberalization of the Church's position on birth control.[51] Did not Jesus call the Church to care for the "least of these"? And were not "the least of these" better cared for through increased access to birth control? Following this train of thought, the maverick Anglican preacher, feminist, and key leader of the League of the Church Militant, Maude Royden, contended in 1924 that a lack of affordable housing required poor mothers to limit the size of their families. She further claimed that repeated childbirth posed a grave threat to the physical health of mothers, and that the subjection of working-class women to repeated childbirths "condemned" them and their offspring to lives of hardship. Royden, who described herself as a reluctant supporter of birth control, also noted that it was not in the interest of the "sanctity of human life" to fill the world with 'unwanted' children.[52]

As female birth control advocates increasingly drew attention to the role birth control might play in improving the lives of mothers, it is important to note that—as evidenced by the Mothers' Union (MU)—a substantial portion of laywomen (and laymen) most devoted to the Church continued to support the historic position of the Church on birth control. For its part, the MU was ready to agree that women had a right to limit the number of children they brought into the world. But following the 1920 Lambeth

[49] For example, see Maude Royden, "The Ethics of Birth Control," *Church Militant* 12, no. 150 (June, 1924): 106.
[50] Audrey Leathard, *The Fight for Family Planning: The Development of Family Planning Services in Britain, 1921–74* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980), 37.
[51] Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England*, 145.
[52] Royden, "The Ethics of Birth Control," 104, 105, 107, 109.

Conference, the MU continued to argue that contraceptives posed grave personal and national dangers and had no place in the sex lives of Christian married couples.[53] As evidence, the MU made regular references to the declining birthrate, which, following an uptick after the war, had fallen from 25.5 in 1920 to 18.3 by 1925.

Marie Stopes and the 'dangers' of differential fertility

The distinguished botanist Dr. Marie Stopes established a thriving second career with the publishing of *Married Love* in 1918. The book, which offered an in-depth guide for enhancing sexual pleasure within the marriage state, went through seven printings in a year.[54] Stopes capitalized on the success of *Married Love* to release a manual on contraception, entitled *Wise Parenthood*, later that year.[55] These books rocketed her to international fame, and Stopes soon found herself as the leading birth control advocate in England. She was a fierce critic of Roman Catholic and Anglican opposition to birth control, and regularly sought to recruit Church leaders to her side. To this end, shortly before the 1920 Lambeth Conference Stopes sent a tract called *A New Gospel* to senior Church leadership.[56] Regarding Stopes' own religious beliefs, Lesley Hall notes that she "rejected formal Christianity, though she had some sympathy with the Society of Friends, and believed herself to have had personal communication with the Deity."[57]

A New Gospel described an anointing Stopes claimed to have received from God for preaching a gospel of enriching marriages through the use of birth control. "My Lords, I speak to you in the name of God," she wrote in her introduction. "You are his priests. I

[53] For example, see "The Mothers' Union: The Evils of Birth Prevention," *Church Times*, December 9, 1927. For further discussion on the views of the MU, see Cordelia Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism, and Globalisation, 1876-2008* (London: The Boydell Press, 2009), 127-130.
[54] Stopes cited difficulties associated with her first marriage as the inspiration for writing *Married Love*.
[55] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 211-213.
[56] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 237.
[57] Lesley A. Hall, "Stopes [*married name* Roe], Marie Charlotte Carmichael (1880-1959)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36323.

am his prophet. I speak to you of the mysteries of man and woman."[58] Her work represented a direct challenge to the moral authority of the Church, as she claimed to speak more authoritatively on behalf of God than any clergyman or Church body. Following the Conference, Stopes founded the first birth control clinic in England, which offered free services (including the distribution of female caps) aimed at working-class families in North London. The total number of private clinics in England, sponsored by various charitable organizations, expanded quickly in the latter half of the decade, but by 1930 only 35,000 women had solicited their services.[59] This low number can be explained in part by the preference of many married couples to use non-mechanical methods to prevent pregnancy. Another contributing factor was the social stigma associated with entering a birth control clinic.

Outside of private clinics, the Ministry of Health opposed the distribution of birth control information in its maternity and infant welfare centres throughout the 1920s. One common reason given by the Ministry of Health was that it did not have approval from Parliament to distribute such information.[60] Additionally, while the medical community increasingly cast doubt upon the health dangers associated with contraceptives as the 1920s progressed, the Ministry feared public backlash over the allocation of funds towards what was perceived as a highly controversial matter amongst the general public.[61]

Related to Stopes' work of establishing birth control clinics, she regularly spoke of the economic plight of lower-class mothers and the health hazards associated with

[58] Marie Stopes, *A New Gospel: A Revelation of God Uniting Physiology and the Religion of Man* (Surrey: David Dyer, 1920), 3. Found at Lambeth Conference 1920, LC 142, Lambeth Conferences, Lambeth Palace Library.
[59] Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 39.
[60] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 293-294.
[61] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 302.

childbirth.[62] Stopes often addressed these matters within the context of the importance of the "happiness" of families, and in her mind, happiness and physical, mental, and economic wellbeing were inseparable. Speaking to more than 2,000 people at a rally in 1921, she explained to her audience that "by birth control I mean not merely the repression of lives which ought not to be started, but the bringing into the world of healthy, happy, desired babies."[63] Stopes' birth control advocacy was influenced by eugenic and neo-Malthusian thought, and she was at different times a member of the Eugenics Education Society and Malthusian League. Her population goals, which Stopes held to be intertwined with the health and happiness of families, included raising the overall 'quality' of the population by ensuring that 'healthy' middle- and upper-class parents contributed a greater share of children to the total population. Addressing the moral consideration of the differences in fertility amongst the classes, Stopes complained in her work *Radiant Motherhood* that the middle classes faced high taxation, and so could only afford to bring "one or two" children into the world. In contrast, she claimed that "society allows the diseased, the racially negligent, the thriftless, the careless, the feeble-minded, the very lowest and worst members of the community, to produce innumerable tens of thousands of stunted, warped and inferior infants." In the mind of Stopes, if this 'problem' was not addressed, England would face "the utter deterioration of our stock."[64]

As mentioned previously, the NBRC raised awareness regarding the 'problem' of differential fertility in 1920 when it reported on the work of the Registrar General's

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[62] Clare Debenham, *Marie Stopes' Sexual Revolution and the Birth Control Movement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 70, 89, 105; and Stephanie Greene, *The Public Lives of Charlotte and Marie Stopes* (London: Routledge, 2015), 183-216.
[63] Quoted in Greene, *The Public Lives of Charlotte and Marie Stopes,* 194.
[64] Marie Stopes, *Radiant Motherhood: A Book for Those Who Are Creating the Future* (London: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1921), 235-236, 238. For further discussion on the connection between feminist, eugenic, and neo-Malthusian discourses, as well as an overview of relevant secondary literature, see Susanne Klausen and Alison Bashford, "Fertility Control: Eugenics, Neo-Malthusianism, and Feminism," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics,* ed. Philipa Levine and Alison Bashford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 98-115.

Office to separate effective fertility rates according to the earnings of five tiers of workers (arranged according to their "social grade"). While the data had not been made widely available as of 1920, the most up-to-date estimates were said to indicate that the total contribution of children by the first tier, consisting of members of the middle and upper classes, were reproducing at half the rate of the lowest tier of "unskilled workmen."[65] The work of the Registrar General's Office remained influential throughout the decade, with the *Modern Churchman* publishing an address by biologist and eugenist Julian Huxley in 1926 that drew upon this research. According to the data cited by Huxley, the bottom tier of workers (consisting of 20 percent of the population) were likely to contribute roughly a quarter of new children to the next generation.[66] While many eugenists continued to worry about supposed differences in fertility between the social classes, others in the 1920s held that such differences were not a particular cause for concern (as many in the 'respectable' working class were said to be now intentionally limiting the size of their families). Nevertheless, eugenists generally agreed that the relatively high fertility of the 'bottom' of the lower classes posed a significant 'threat' to the 'quality' of the English population.[67]

Stopes established the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress (SCBC) in 1921, and her organization soon thereafter outlined the important role birth control could play in improving the 'quality' of the population. Set out as a founding aim of the organization, and reflecting the thoughts of many proponents of eugenics throughout the decade, the SBC declared that it desired to encourage conception amongst

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[65] National Birth-Rate Commission, *Problems of Population and Parenthood: Being the Second Report of and the Chief Evidence Taken by the National Birth-Rate Commission, 1918-1920* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1920), xxxvii; and National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate*, 9.
[66] Julian Huxley, "A Biologists View of Birth Control," *Modern Churchman* 16, nos. 2 & 3 (May & June, 1926): 78. For further discussion on Huxley's promotion of eugenics, see Paul Weindling, "Julian Huxley and the Continuity of Eugenics in Twentieth-Century Britain," *Journal of Modern European History* 10, no. 4 (November, 2012): 482-483.
[67] Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 1995), 167-171.

the "healthy," while at the same time discouraging parenthood amongst those who were "racially diseased, already overburdened with children, or in any specific way unfitted for parenthood."[68] Further emphasizing the important role birth control might play in addressing the 'problem' of differential fertility, the SCBC claimed to promote "Joyous and Deliberate Motherhood, a Sure Light in our Racial Darkness." Woods did not adopt the same kind of aggressive language as did Stopes in regards to denouncing birthrate trends amongst the lower classes, nor did he centre his efforts on promoting the use of contraceptives amongst the lower classes. But he nevertheless was propelled in his support for birth control by the conviction that the most urgent need faced by England was addressing the declining birthrate amongst the middle and upper classes.

Bishop Theodore Woods and *The Ethics of Birth Control*

Prior to COPEC, Woods had been appointed both bishop of Winchester and president of the National Council of Public Morals (NCPM). He previously served as the bishop of Peterborough, and was widely known in religious circles for his promotion of ecumenism and Christian socialism. Woods was theologically liberal and a self-described evangelical, and his public engagement with various social issues secured him a place on the highest rung of the Church hierarchy. Many self-described "liberal evangelicals" coalesced around the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement in 1923, and they were typically united by a desire to move beyond substitutionary beliefs pertaining to Jesus' death on the cross and claims of biblical inerrancy put forth by their more conservative evangelical peers. Under the auspices of the NCPM (which disbanded around 1930), Woods had convened a committee prior to COPEC to investigate the moral permissibility of birth

[68] Taken from the "The Tenets of the C.B.C.," reprinted in Aylmer Maude, *The Authorized Life of Marie C. Stopes* (London: Williams & Norgate, Ltd., 1924), 226.

control. The committee, with Woods in the chair, set out to provide guidance to both Christian married couples and all those who felt "anxious for the ultimate welfare of the nation to which they belong."[69] Following COPEC, Woods' committee, at the request of Archbishop Davidson, took on the additional responsibility of providing guidance to senior Church leadership on birth control. The arrangement was such that Davidson agreed to allow the NCPM to finish its work before he recommended any further actions in response to COPEC, and he also advised Woods that the NCPM report would inform the future policies of the Church on contraception. The only stipulation by Davidson was that Woods add several Anglican leaders to the committee.[70] Davidson tapped Woods and the NCPM to guide the Church due to the infighting amongst the birth control committee appointed by the Bishops' Meeting in 1923. The NCPM was an organization respected by high-level Church leadership, and Woods' committee—comprised of various religious and non-religious experts—could accomplish its work at a greater distance from internal Church politics.

As discussed in Chapter One, the NBRC held that the decline in birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes corresponded with the widespread use of birth control. Additionally, an addendum to the first report captured the general sentiment of the NBRC with its claim that "selfishness" lay at the root of the choice by many in the middle and upper classes to shirk their duties to the nation and empire by refusing to have children.[71] While the NBRC reports did not take a definitive stance on birth control, two NBRC leaders, Inge and Bishop Henry Russell Wakefield, spoke publicly in favour of the

[69] National Council of Public Morals, *The Ethics of Birth Control: Being the Report of the Special Committee Appointed by the National Council of Public Morals in Connection with the Investigations of the National Birth-Rate Commission* (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1926), vii.
[70] Archbishop Davidson to Bishop Theodore Woods, 13 May 1924; and Bishop Theodore Woods to Archbishop Davidson, 11 November 1925, both letters found in Correspondence of Randall Thomas Davidson, Davidson 422, Lambeth Palace Library.
[71] National Birth-Rate Commission, *The Declining Birth-Rate,* 78, 79.

practice. Like Woods, these men were influenced by the findings of the 'science' of eugenics.[72] In the case of Wakefield, *The Times* reported in 1919 that, during the course of a meeting of the NBRC, the bishop asserted that "morally, as well as eugenically, it was right for people in certain circumstances to use harmless means to control the birth rate." One reason for this was that England supposedly did not need an unlimited number of children, "but a sufficient number of the best quality." Furthermore, many children were said to be unnecessarily born into poverty and hardship. Wakefield acknowledged that it was commonly believed that permitting the use of birth control would result in widespread sexual immorality, but *The Times* reported that he countered this claim with a stark rhetorical question: "might it not be possible that there was most danger in leaving things as they were?"[73]

Woods began to explicate his stance on birth control in 1925 with the publication of *The Ethics of Birth Control*. This report was quickly followed up by one Woods produced in cooperation with the Bishops' Meeting, and the two reports together help reveal the reasons why he believed birthrates were on the decline amongst the middle and upper classes across England. The committee that issued the NCPM report on birth control included several high-level Anglican clergymen, as well as figures from the National Free Church Council (Elizabeth Cadbury), the Presbyterian Church of England (Rev. R. C. Gillie), and the MU (Mary H. Clay, who opposed the findings of the committee). In addition, several medical professionals, including the medical doctor Letitia Fairfield and the Medical Officer of Health for Glasgow, A. K. Chalmers, took part in the proceedings. Taking his lead from Dawson (who, along with Royden, was

[72] According to Soloway, Inge had reservations regarding the safety of birth control as late as 1918, but he abandoned these worries by the turn of the decade and came to endorse the use of birth control as a means of controlling the 'quality' and quantity of the population. Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 236.
[73] "Ethics of Birth Control: Bishop Wakefield's View," *The Times*, April 8, 1919.

invited to present testimony to the committee), Woods noted in the introduction to the report that young men and women regularly disparaged the Church for being out of touch with their generation. He added that these young people possessed little regard for authority, which compelled the committee to avoid appeals to past declarations on birth control made by religious bodies. Differentiating his approach from that of bishops at the Lambeth Conference, Woods claimed the NCPM, while starting from a religious foundation, sought to remain unencumbered by prejudices, and instead follow the guides of "thought" and "reason."[74]

Woods' report stressed that Christianity now faced stiff competition from a competing and credible moral philosophy. In the body of the report, the committee suggested the "revolt" of younger generations went deeper than rejecting "theological principles" and "ecclesiastical pronouncements." The committee warned that the "basis of marriage," meaning a permanent union between a man and a woman who were brought together for the principal purpose of the rearing of children, was now called into question. A specific threat to traditional conceptions of marriage identified by the committee was the practice of extramarital sexual intercourse. Such a practice was assumed to be enabled by birth control, which prevented the social stigma of giving birth to children out of wedlock. While birth control made "irregular sexual relations" possible, the report indicated (without explicitly mentioning the word) that a 'hedonistic' outlook on life was the driving force behind the rejection of Christian conceptions of marriage.[75] This outlook was associated with an approach to sexual ethics referred to by the committee as the "new morality." Anglican leaders came to associate the moral logic and propagation of the new morality with the thought of Bertrand Russell. Throughout his literary career, Russell

[74] National Council of Public Morals, *Ethics of Birth Control*, vi-vii.
[75] National Council of Public Morals, *Ethics of Birth Control*, 2-3.

espoused numerous controversial beliefs, including that cohabitation and sexual relations between unmarried couples ought to be considered permissible, provided the man and woman were honest with one another about their intentions. He also suggested that disgruntled married couples with children should not divorce, but upon growing tired of one another the man and woman should be free to find other sexual partners. In the journal *Theology*, L. S. Thornton, an Anglican theologian and contemporary of Woods, asserted that the ethical teachings of the new morality rested on three key assertions: (1) the grounding for morality ought to come from the "facts of human nature"; (2) these facts could be ascertained through the empirical methods of science; and (3) the goal of any moral order ought to be human happiness, "conceived without reference to … a supernatural end."[76] Dora Russell, the spouse of Bertrand, helped bolster the cause of the 'new moralists' with her own teachings that emphasized the importance of sexual pleasure for women, and she sought to promote a sexual ethic rooted in romance and human happiness. In their own marriage, Bertrand and Dora combined "sexual freedom and commitment" by permitting one another to engage in sexual relations with various partners.[77]

The historian Marcus Collins assigns the moniker of "sex radicals" to the group that Woods and his peers would have identified as proponents of the new morality. In addition to Bertrand and Dora Russell, Collins includes amongst the sex radicals novelist Ethel Mannin and the educationalist A. S. Neill. According to Collins, the teachings of the "sex radicals" grew out of the pre-war concept of "mutuality," or the "notion that an intimate equality should be established between men and women through mixing, companionate marriage and shared sexual pleasure." Collins further asserts that increased

[76] L. S. Thorton, "Christian Morality: Reflections Upon the Present Situation," *Theology* 21, no. 126 (December, 1930): 313.
[77] Stephen Brooke, "The Body and Socialism: Dora Russell in the 1920s," *Past and Present*, no. 189 (November, 2005): 166-167, 149.

openness amongst religious and non-religious people in the 1920s to various aspects of "mutuality" was the result of "the resolution of the suffrage question" and "the attenuation of sex antagonism," which he believes was greatly aided by social disruptions from the war.[78] While many Anglican leaders expressed agreement with a limited notion of mutuality, Woods feared that proponents of the new morality were contributing to increasing divorce numbers, the lowering of sexual morals amongst women to the 'base' level of men (and thereby replacing the need for prostitution with consensual, extramarital sexual congress), and the general dissolution of family life.

Set in opposition to the ethos of the new morality, the NCPM committee reminded its readers that "self-gratification is not the true purpose of life." Instead, individual purpose was said to be found in the development of one's moral character, and communal purpose in the pursuit of service and sacrifice for the benefit of the state. One obvious way to serve the state was to rear a large family. "Healthy children, properly trained, are the nation's most valuable asset," the report reminded the reader, adding that many married couples were guilty of self-indulgence for having only "one or two or even three children."[79] At the 1930 Lambeth Conference, Woods and his peers on the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex similarly argued in their report that the Church faced the onslaught of a "hedonistic and materialistic philosophy" that eschewed the primary purpose of life, that being spiritual growth and development. (The report, along with other documents issued by the 1930 Conference, implied that under the pursuit of this individual purpose fell also the pursuit of one's communal purpose, which was conceived of in terms of service to both the Church and nation). Woods' subcommittee warned that the advancing 'hedonistic' philosophy encouraged the pursuit of "pleasure and satisfaction at the

[78] Marcus Collins, *Modern Love: An Intimate History of Men and Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 4, 42.
[79] National Council of Public Morals, *Ethics of Birth Control*, 5, 9, 8.

expense of one's soul." Accompanied by the waxing of 'hedonism' was said to be the waning of Christian moral standards and belief in Christian doctrine.[80] Turning towards birth control, Woods' subcommittee argued at the 1930 Conference that contraception encouraged sexual immorality, and also posed a danger to many "civilized nations" by reducing the number of eugenically desirable citizens. The report implied that many married persons who chose not to have children were guided by a love of pleasure, adding that "married people do wrong when they refuse to have children whom they could train to serve God and add to the strength of the nation."[81]

Woods' framing of the birth control debate influenced subsequent discussions beyond the 1930 Lambeth Conference, even when he was not directly involved. For example, a committee appointed by the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, framed its analysis of birth control in 1931 around the following question: '"What are the main purposes of life as a whole, and what are the values by which purpose is assessed?"' The report asserted that modern "Epicureans" promoted "happiness as the supreme good," which led to a lowering of Christian standards of sexual conduct. In contrast to the teachings of the 'Epicureans,' the report argued that the main purpose of a Christian's life was to advance the Kingdom of God (which could be accomplished by aligning one's behaviour with Christian teachings on sex, marriage, and procreation).[82]

Returning to the findings of the NCPM, that committee endorsed many of the most popular claims made by Anglican proponents of birth control. Among these was the assertion that birth control could not be dismissed out of hand simply for being "unnatural," as the committee asserted that "civilisation itself has been the story of man's control over nature by mechanical means." Furthermore, the committee noted that few

[80] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 186.
[81] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 86, 91, 92.
[82] Educational Committee of the Archbishop's Advisory Board, "Memorandum on Preparation for Marriage," 15-16. Found in Bishops' Meetings Minutes, 2 July, 1931, BM 8.

opponents of birth control objected to the intentional restriction of children by limiting sexual intercourse to the "safe period," and these same critics, it was alleged, typically did not seek to prohibit older couples from intercourse when there no longer existed the possibility of them bearing children. Was it not inconsistent, the report asked, to condone those practices, but at the same time oppose birth control on the grounds that it separated intercourse from procreation? However, the committee was careful to emphasize repeatedly that the rearing of large families was a duty to the state and vital to moral development, and it went as far as to assert that married couples, provided they possessed the requisite financial means, should have "at least four to five children."[83]

At the heart of the conclusions put forth by the NCPM in relation to the moral permissibility of birth control was the beliefs that it was wrong when used for selfish reasons, but that motive, rather than method, ought to be the determining factor. The report expressed uncertainty over the question of whether a married couple who had fulfilled their 'patriotic' duty to the state by producing four or five children ought to be permitted to employ birth control as a means of continuing to foster their sexual relationship (which was said to have a "sacramental" value in regards to strengthening the marriage bond). The committee expressed greater certainty over its belief that the use of birth control was permissible for reasons of economic or medical hardship—but it added that abstinence remained the preferred path (followed by the use of the "safe period").[84]

Revealing the social restraints of the time, the platform of limited support for birth control put forth by the NCPM bore similarities to the one endorsed by the Workers' Birth Control Group. This was particularly true in regards to a shared focus on the economic and medical wellbeing of families, and a dissociation from the rhetoric of

[83] National Council of Public Morals, *Ethics of Birth Control,* 20-21, 10-11, 7.
[84] National Council of Public Morals, *Ethics of Birth Control,* 22-23.

sexual freedom.[85] And taken as a whole, Woods' report expressed ambivalence as to whether the upper and middle classes possessed an inherent hereditary superiority over the lower classes—though on other occasions Woods indicated such an inherent superiority did exist. Rather than focusing on heredity, the report highlighted variances in social utility between the offspring of the respective classes. The committee expressed concern that, as the most valuable contributors to the English economy, the middle and upper classes contributed the fewest number of children to the general population.[86]

Thanks to the credibility assigned to the NCPM, the publishing of *The Ethics of Birth Control* established Woods as a leading expert on contraception within the Church. Woods in turn leveraged his extended influence in January 1926 to persuade the Bishops' Meeting to establish an exclusively Anglican committee to further investigate the matter. The bishops likewise agreed to use *The Ethics of Birth Control* as a starting point for the committee's exploration.[87] A letter from Davidson to Woods later that year reveals that Woods' maneuverings amongst the bishops had bolstered his influence, with the archbishop describing Woods as the Church's "chief authority" on birth control.[88] In addition to Woods, Davidson appointed a handful of other men to the committee, and, operating under the chairmanship of the bishop of Lincoln, the group delivered its report in June 1926. The report differentiated itself from the work of the NCPM by foregrounding specific goals the committee believed the Church ought to concern itself

[85] For example, see *Workers' Birth Control Group* (London: Watsons, 1927). Found at the Archive of the Trade Union Congress, 292/840/1/11, Modern Records Centre, Warwick University, https://wdc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/health/id/1715.
[86] National Council of Public Morals, *Ethics of Birth Control*, 14. Such a line of thinking bears similarities to what Daniel Kevles has referred to as "reform" eugenics. While 'like' was still generally thought to beget 'like,' this strain of eugenic thought (which rose to prominence in the 1930s) held that the relationship between hereditary factors and achievement was not well understood, and that poor housing or other external influences might be equally to blame for disparities in academic or economic success amongst children from varying social classes. For further discussion, see Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 165-175.
[87] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, 20 January, 1926, BM 8.
[88] Archbishop Davidson to Bishop Woods, 14 March 1926, Davidson 422.

with when issuing any future pronouncements on birth control. The goals set forth by the committee included a reduction in divorce and premarital sexual intercourse (problems said to be caused by the spread of birth control and social upheaval from the war), along with the increase of children born to "devout Christians."[89] The report did not initially present these goals as arguments either for or against birth control. Instead, the committee wanted to make clear that any subsequent pronouncements must be crafted for the purposes of inhibiting the subversive effects of birth control on married life and fertility.

The bishops' report went on to offer an argument in favour of the issuing of a clarifying statement on birth control prior to the start of the 1930 Lambeth Conference. Similar to the stance taken by the NCPM, the bishops' committee did not believe that at the present time the Church ought to endorse birth control, but rather that it ought to make clear that it did not condemn the practice in all circumstances. The committee further hoped that an Anglican commission on birth control might be established prior to the Lambeth Conference, with the intent of informing the work of the global network of bishops. Like the NCPM, the committee made clear that the key factor in determining the morality of the use of birth control was motive: why a couple chose to prevent conception, not how they chose to do so, was of paramount importance. According to the committee, the use of birth control was only permissible under the following circumstances: (1) the man and woman engaging in intercourse must be married to one another; (2) the couple must have good reason for considering procreation "undesirable" for an extended period of time. The committee made clear that "selfish ends," such as securing a higher standard of living, did not provide grounds for the use of birth control.

[89] *Report of a Committee on Birth Control: Appointed by the Archbishop in Accordance with a Resolution of the Bishops' Meeting* (Cambridge: Printed for private circulation by W. Lewis, 1926), 3-5. Found in Bishops' Meetings Minutes, 22 June, 1926, BM 8. The report did not make clear how divorce and birth control were related, but presumably birth control was thought to enable and encourage the pursuit of extramarital sexual relations.

What then were considered good reasons for avoiding procreation? The report asserted that it was beyond the sphere of the Church's authority to lay down rigid teachings in regards to this question, adding that the matter ought to be left to the consciences of married couples (who were often operating under the advice of medical experts). The committee further claimed that the "sacramental" nature of sex provided theological justification for choosing birth control as an alternative to long-term abstinence. In line with centuries of Church teachings, the report affirmed that procreation remained the primary purpose of sex, but it set itself apart with the claim that when conception was not desirable intercourse would still be justified in so far as it represented the spiritual union between a husband and wife and served to strengthen that union. Sexual pleasure, however, was discounted as a foundational justification for intercourse.[90]

Returning to where the report started, the committee appealed elsewhere to the moral consideration of the declining authority of the Church. Laying out in nascent form the fertility-manipulation scheme Woods later sought to enact at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, the committee stated that a pronouncement on birth control along the lines proposed in the report would bolster the Church's insistence as to the duty of procreation. This in turn would help secure the goal of an increased birthrate. Increasing the birthrate amongst the Church faithful, equated principally with the middle and upper classes, was important for the committee because of their perceived social utility. That is, the Church faithful were thought to "perpetuate and augment an element of peculiar value in the national life … which is, to say the least, not as large as is desirable." Echoing Dawson's claims from the 1921 Church Congress, the committee contended that the duty of procreation was increasingly ignored due to the condemnation of birth control issued by the 1920 Lambeth Conference. This "absolute" condemnation subverted the authority of

[90] *Report of a Committee on Birth Control*, 6-7, 8, 10, 13-14.

the Church because scores of women and men thought it to be hopelessly outdated.[91] A more measured statement would enhance the moral standing of the Church, thus empowering the Church to persuade the faithful to use birth control less often. The report similarly suggested that such an approach would add weight to the Church's condemnation of the use of birth control amongst the unmarried.[92]

While the bishops discussed contraception amongst themselves, outside the Church the Workers' Birth Control Group was busy lobbying Parliament in favour of the distribution of birth control information in government clinics. Such efforts failed to persuade the House of Commons, but a non-binding motion in favour of the distribution of birth control information passed in the House of Lords in April 1926.[93] No bishop voted for Lord Buckmaster's proposal, though Davidson and Winnington-Ingram were the only ones to vote against it. During the course of debate within the upper chamber, Davidson condemned the motion—but his speech left many with the impression that the Church was moving away from the position on birth control affirmed at the 1920 Lambeth Conference. For his part, Inge held that the vote in the House of the Lords signalled the end of credible opposition to birth control from within the Church.[94]

In light of shifting political winds, as well as other trends that were taken as indicators of an increased acceptance of birth control in English society (including a steady decline in the birthrate), the Malthusian League publicly declared that it had fulfilled its purposes and shuttered its doors in 1927.[95] Outside the House of Lords, momentum in favour of birth control took the form of the Ministry of Health establishing a committee to investigate maternal mortality in 1928, and the National Council of

[91] The 1920 Conference did not condemn birth control in the case of "abnormal" circumstances.
[92] *Report of a Committee on Birth Control*, 4, 12, 13-14.
[93] Leathard, *Fight for Family planning*, 34-35.
[94] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 249-250,
[95] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 206.

Women endorsing state provision of contraceptives in 1929.[96] During the waning years of the decade, Woods and the NCPM further bolstered the birth control cause by publishing a report by medical experts that sought to dispel various claims related to the medical dangers associated with contraceptives. These experts argued that "no impediment should be placed in the way of those married couples who desire information as to contraceptives, when this is needed for medical reasons or because of excessive child-bearing or poverty."[97]

Conclusion

Within official Church structures, Woods was able to leverage the favour bestowed on him by Davidson to submit two reports to the Bishops' Meeting. Yet there were limits to his capacities. After the presentation of the second report to the Bishops' Meeting in 1927, deliberations regarding the response of the Church to the question of birth control were postponed for 18 months. The delay reflects on the poor leadership offered by Davidson in relation to birth control throughout the 1920s. At that time Davidson was nearly 80 years old, in ill health, and preoccupied by pressing matters like the Prayer Book controversy. As Davidson was unable to settle on a decisive course of action on birth control, confusion emerged amongst clergy and laity alike over what exactly his own views were on the topic. Davidson's indecisiveness created a power vacuum that Woods filled with clear moral arguments and definite goals.

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[96] Lethard, *Fight for Family Planning*, 38, 42.

[97] National Council of Public Morals, *Medical Aspects of Contraception: Being the Report of the Medical Committee Appointed by the National Council of Public Morals in Connection with the Investigations of the National Birth-Rate Commission* (London: Martin Hopkinson & Co., Ltd., 1927), 9-13**.** This work followed a publication edited by Marchant, entitled *Medical Views on Birth* Control, that cast doubt on the safety of contraceptives—indicating a potential power struggle between Marchant and Woods. For further discussion, see Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 274-276.

Woods held that his struggle to manipulate birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes was part of a larger struggle in English society over competing conceptions of human purpose. The middle and upper classes, he believed, were shirking parenthood because they had signed on to misguided conceptions relating to the proper ends towards which human beings ought to direct their lives. And in contrast to the pre-war period, he now believed the Church, which was said to have diminished its own moral authority by promoting outdated teachings on marriage and sexuality, faced a competing and credible moral philosophy in the form of the new morality. To combat the new morality, restore the moral authority of the Church, and convince the middle and upper classes to live out their shared communal purpose of serving the state by way of rearing large families, the bishop sought to secure the qualified approval of contraception by the Church. Notably, Woods' chief aim in advancing the cause of birth control was rooted in eugenic thought. Though he cloaked many of his eugenic inclinations until the close of the 1930 Lambeth Conference to avoid undue controversy, as Chapter Three will demonstrate, he held that the middle and upper classes were, on average, hereditarily superior to the lower classes (and especially so in comparison to those who made up the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder). And looking towards the analysis offered in Chapters Three through Five, the moral logic put forth by subsequent Anglican leaders can be understood in part as an appeal to the benefits that could supposedly be realized by aligning the procreative behaviours of various groups with Christian conceptions of human purpose.

When the matter of birth control finally came up for extended discussion at the Bishops' Meeting in June 1928, the bishop of Lincoln was unable to attend. Woods subsequently convinced the bishops to both forgo the discussion and pass a resolution requesting the topic be taken up at the 1930 Lambeth Conference.[98] Davidson would

[98] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, 30 June, 1928, BM 8.

retire the next month and be replaced by the former Archbishop of York, Cosmo Gordon Lang. The newly appointed archbishop of Canterbury quickly began to work behind the scenes to ensure Woods' platform would be placed at the forefront of the Conference.

Chapter Three:

Birth Control as Charity:
Fertility, Class, and Flourishing at the 1930 Lambeth Conference

The 1930 Lambeth Conference brought together 308 bishops from across the world for discussion and debate. The responsibility for selecting Conference topics, along with the chairs of the various committees, fell to the spiritual head of the gathered delegates, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang. The work of the Conference was split between six weeks. The first four weeks consisted of speeches introducing Conference topics, along with the subsequent drafting of resolutions and reports by the various committees (and subcommittees). These documents were then presented to all 308 bishops for their approval during the second half of the Conference. The choice of chairmen was significant because the opinions of the bishops selected by Lang were broadly perceived to be backed by his tacit approval, and these men in turn often wielded significant influence over the drafting of Conference documents. Writing to Marie Stopes in 1929, William Temple, now archbishop of York, informed the famed birth control advocate that steps had been taken at the highest levels of Church leadership to ensure the condemnation of birth control at the 1920 Conference would not be replicated in 1930.[1] Nine months later, Bishop Theodore Woods assumed the chair of both the Committee on the Life and Witness of the Christian Community and its Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex.

Woods' birth control platform was further bolstered by the distribution of two pro-birth control papers to Conference delegates. One of these papers, entitled "The Declining Birthrate and 'Birth Control,'" was drafted by the Archbishop's Advisory Committee on

[1] William Temple to Marie Stopes, 30 November 1929, Stopes Papers, Add. MSS. 58551, British Library. Letter referenced in Richard Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 251-252.

Spiritual Healing (AAC), and its authors included a mixture of clergymen and medical professionals. The Bishop of Southwark, Cyril Garbett, served as chair for the AAC, and W. R. Inge also lent his expertise. The second preparatory paper, entitled "Birth Control," was drafted by Woods, and it set out the general principles on contraception that he intended to put forward at the Conference. Woods haphazardly arranged paper required careful reading, but his principal message was clear: a shift in the Church's position on birth control was necessary to protect and advance higher-ordered moral teachings on marriage, procreation, and sex.[2] Of particular importance, the paper asserted that if the Church were to acquiesce on birth control, middle- and upper-class married couples would more readily receive instruction to rear large families. This call to parenthood was thought to be needed in the provinces of the Communion comprised of predominantly white populations, but Woods held England principally in mind. He added that while birth control was widely employed amongst the middle and upper classes across Western Europe, the Dominions, and North America, "unskilled labourers" lacked the foresight to use contraceptives, and therefore bred "unrestrainedly."[3]

Woods also included a racial dimension to his assessment of birthrate patterns, pitting the decline in numbers amongst the middle and upper classes against the comparatively rapid growth of the "negro" and "yellow" races living in Africa and East Asia. The bishop warned that, left unchecked, these trends would produce results "political and economical which are, to say the least, disquieting."[4] Similarly, the Bishop of Exeter, Lord William Cecil, took to the podium during the early days of the Conference to address the gathered delegates on the supposed 'qualitative' decline of the

[2] Theodore Woods, "Birth Control," Preparatory Papers, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 168, Lambeth Conferences, Lambeth Palace Library.
[3] Woods, "Birth Control," LC 168. Woods did not specifically cite the three regions mentioned above, but the reader would have understood to what parts of the world he was referencing.
[4] Woods, "Birth Control," LC 168.

English race.[5] As a fierce critic of birth control, Cecil surprisingly forwent the opportunity to directly attack contraception. He instead cautioned that the English race, which Cecil deemed to be "one of the greatest races" in the world, was regressing on the evolutionary scale due to disproportionately high birthrates amongst the lower classes. Like Woods, Cecil took a global view of the 'problem' of class-based differential birthrates, arguing that history demonstrated not all races could "progress," and that the 'lower' races spread out across the world desperately needed the guidance of a physically and mentally robust English race. Cecil informed his colleagues that it was therefore essential for the bishops to direct the hereditarily desirable middle and upper classes to give birth to as many children as reasonably possible.[6] Likewise, Woods believed that the strengthening of the English race would prove to be a blessing for 'backward' races plagued by social and political ills.

This chapter completes the story of Woods' campaign to secure the qualified approval of birth control at the 1930 Lambeth Conference. While it will further explore fears amongst Anglican leaders over the encroachment of 'hedonism,' the principal focus of this chapter is on the role that promises of flourishing played in the moral justification offered by Anglican leaders on behalf of fertility-manipulation schemes directed at specific socio-economic classes. Anglican leaders throughout the interwar period imagined all kinds of near-utopian futures, arranged according to their own political and aesthetic preferences, that could be realized by aligning procreative behaviours with Christian understandings of human purpose. And many of the visions of flourishing offered by Anglican leaders shared the common trait, as evidenced by Inge, of harking

[5] In his speech, Cecil was likely referring to the white population of England, along with a broader category of "Anglo-Saxon" persons spread across North America and the Dominions.
[6] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 146, Lambeth Conferences, Lambeth Palace Library.

back to an idealized conception of England's past, during which time Christianity held significant sway over the populace.

Moving away from an analysis in Chapters One and Two of foundational-level moral arguments, this chapter argues that Anglican leaders made use of imagined futures to present various *class-based* fertility-manipulation schemes as disinterested acts of benevolence towards the 'suffering' and 'disadvantaged' at home and abroad. And though this chapter's focus is on socio-economic class, the claim that a particular fertility-manipulation scheme represented a disinterested act of benevolence could be easily applied to schemes aimed at meddling with the birthrate of any segment of the population—including the mentally and physically disabled. For his part, Woods' writings painted a near-utopian future built upon eugenics, imperial thinking, and a racialized notion of English moral superiority. The bishop hoped that, by reducing the use of birth control amongst the middle and upper classes, and thereby increasing the contribution of children to the overall population from these groups, the English race could secure geo-political and economic advantages by outpacing other races in mental aptitude and moral character. Furthermore, Woods desired to bolster the empire by sending more children from the middle and upper classes abroad. As Britain regained global influence, Woods believed the unique, preeminent moral qualities of the English race, purported to be the result of centuries of Christian influence, would ensure that amity replaced racial rivalries across the globe.[7] Moreover, the 'weaker' races, plagued by 'backwards' religions and corresponding cultural and socio-economic problems, would 'advance' politically, culturally, and economically under the tutelage of the 'benevolent' and hereditarily robust English race. Cecil, the son of the imperialist prime minister, Lord Salisbury, offered a modified vision of this near-utopian future that

[7] Theodore Woods, "New Year Message," *Mothers in Council* 38, no. 141 (January, 1926): 3.

grounded the right to wield global influence not in moral superiority, but in 'superior' hereditary endowments.

Turning towards domestic visions of flourishing, the AAC contended in its preparatory paper, which was saturated with neo-Malthusian thinking, that an "unchecked increase of population is never possible."[8] Drawing from the work of John Maynard Keynes, along with that of Thomas Robert Malthus and Charles Darwin, the AAC presented its moral case for birth control in negative terms (i.e., the avoidance of "catastrophes"). However, Inge, a leading proponent of eugenics and neo-Malthusian thought, elsewhere imagined an explicitly utopian vision of Britain's future that could be brought about through a reduction in the lower classes.[9] Similarly, the committed Unitarian and Medical Officer of Health for Leicester, C. K. Millard, along with the medical doctor and Anglican layperson, C. J. Bond, framed their efforts to encourage the use of birth control amongst the lower classes in terms of charity. In the pages of the *Modern Churchman*, Millard imagined a future in which, by expanding the use of birth control amongst the lower classes, the living standards afforded to the offspring of the middle classes would be extended to poor children.[10] Furthermore, he argued that by reducing the numbers of the lower classes, Britain could enjoy a future largely free from unemployment and drunkenness. Providing a succinct summary of the hopes for a better future put forth by Anglican proponents of neo-Malthusian thought, the lawyer, judicial reform advocate, and member of the Modern Churchmen's Union (MCU), Claud Mullins, proclaimed in the *Modern Churchman* that at "the root of all our social and political questions lies the problem of Population."[11]

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[8] Archbishop's Advisory Committee on Spiritual Healing, "Declining Birthrates and 'Birth Control,'" Preparatory Papers, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 168.
[9] "Dean Inge's Utopia," *Argus (Melbourne)*, January 9, 1932.
[10] C. K. Millard, "The Ethics of Birth Control (ii)," *Modern Churchman* 9, no. 3 (June, 1919): 108.
[11] Claud Mullins, "The Problem of Population," *Modern Churchman* 10, no. 4 (August, 1920): 211.

Moral superiority as racial superiority

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, had placed his thumb on the scale against birth control at the 1920 Lambeth Conference by permitting the deliberations of the Committee on Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality to be hosted by the Mothers' Union (MU).[12] In contrast, Lang afforded the MU no such privileged position at the 1930 Conference.[13] While assertive behind the scenes in the lead-up to the Conference, once proceedings began Lang chose to defer to Woods. Yet Conference records indicate that, while Lang attempted to appear impartial, he was committed to passing a resolution in favour of contraception. The archbishop publicly commended the work put forth by Woods' subcommittee, and he bent procedural rules to provide Woods with additional time to accommodate the complaints of bishops opposed to contraception.[14]

On the second day of the Conference, several bishops, including Woods, the Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson, and Lord William Cecil stood before the gathered delegates to deliver preliminary remarks on contraception. Woods took his opportunity to argue that the principal challenge faced by the Conference was not to decide whether birth control devices were moral in and of themselves—which he firmly believed to be the case. Rather, the job of the bishops was to guide men and women in the responsible use of contraceptives. Put another way, the task at hand was to ensure that "man's moral responsibility" was equal to "his capacity for invention."[15] Cautioning his colleagues against repeating the 'mistakes' of the 1920 Conference, Woods also claimed that birth control was certain to be a permanent fixture in the lives of many married couples. Here, and elsewhere during the Conference, Woods attempted to construct a narrative of

[12] "Some Resolutions," *Mothers' Union Journal*, no. 134 (April, 1921): 4.
[13] The MU was invited to supply an expert witness to Woods' subcommittee.
[14] For example, see Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 147.
[15] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference, LC 146.

inevitability around the adoption of a pro-birth control position. The Communion could not expect to halt the use of birth control entirely, he stressed on several occasions, but only direct and limit its usage. Yet Woods took care to avoid the argument of inevitability to justify any and all uses of birth control. He instead insisted that the use of birth control was permissible only if it were compatible with Christian teachings.[16]

Following Woods, Henson took to the podium to warn of the many headwinds faced by the Communion. Though the two men agreed the Church needed to reform its position on birth control, Henson staunchly opposed the Christian socialism propagated by Woods. Theologically, Henson was inclined towards liberal beliefs, though he took pains to distance himself from what he deemed to be the extreme views of the MCU.[17] Speaking at the 1930 Conference, Henson asserted that Christianity no longer served as the "governing principle of our society," and he added that the "great movements which are governing human thought and practice" had little connection with the Christian faith. Furthermore, he informed his peers that "sexual morality is the point of acutest conflict between Christianity and secularised society."[18] Following Henson, subsequent speakers further warned of the waning influence of the Church, called attention to the importance of correcting differential birthrate patterns, condemned 'selfish' avoidance of parenthood, and emphasized that the Church could secure a receptive audience for its teachings on marriage and sex by permitting the use of birth control in limited instances.

Anticipating Henson's proclamations, Woods had warned his fellow bishops about the subversive ideas put forth by Bertrand Russell, and he declared in his opening speech that the English-speaking world faced the rapid "advancing of secularism" and a

[16] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference, LC 146.
[17] Matthew Grimley, "Henson, Hensley (1864-1947)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), https://doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/33825.
[18] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference, LC 146.

decline in the recognized authority of the Church.[19] In his preparatory paper, Woods similarly argued that the bishops of the Communion were called to provide guidance on birth control during a "time when the secularization of life, in all its departments, has been proceeding apace; when material standards increasingly prevail; when the philosophy of hedonism, or at least its practice, is widely adopted; and when Christian ideals of morality are in many quarters discarded."[20]

In the mind of Woods, aligning the procreative behaviours of the middle and upper classes with the supposed will of God was a sure way to secure a flourishing future for untold peoples across the world, and especially so for 'backwards' races. But to understand Woods' vision of flourishing, it is necessary to explore his writings prior to the 1930 Lambeth Conference. Following the consecration of her husband as bishop of Winchester, Nina Woods took up the position of MU branch president for the diocese. Taking advantage of this familial connection, Bishop Woods published an article in January 1926 for the MU on the interrelated matters of the British Empire and the moral superiority of the English race. At the time, the white populations of the empire were securing greater forms of self-government. In 1923, the Dominions, which included Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State, and Newfoundland, were granted the right to determine their own foreign policy. And several months after Woods published his article, the Imperial Conference declared the Dominions to be "autonomous Communities within the British Empire."[21] However, the British still laid claim to a significant number of colonies in Africa, with British rule continuing in parts of South America, the Caribbean, East Asia, and across India.

[19] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference, LC 146.
[20] Woods, "Birth Control," LC 168.
[21] "Report of Inter-Imperial Relations Committee of the Imperial Conference, 1926," reprinted in *American Journal of International Law* 21, no. 2 (April, 1927): 23. For discussion on eugenic thought and practice across the Dominions, see *Eugenics at the Edges of Empire: New Zealand, Australia, Canada and South Africa*, ed. Diane Paul, John Stenhouse, and Hamish Spencer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Writing in *Mothers in Council*, Woods informed MU members that the "royal prerogative of mothers is to create." Mothers were also said to be the first priests, teachers, and leaders of their children. In light of the important role played by mothers in spiritual and moral formation, he declared that it was no "wonder that we use the 'Mother' titles for the great creative societies to which we belong—our Mother Country and our Mother Church."[22] Regarding the Mother Country, Woods believed that to fully appreciate England's greatness one needed only to "go to some country where Christianity is exotic and rare, where the atmosphere is pagan." Having availed himself of this opportunity, the bishop discovered an immense difference in the "mental and spiritual climate" between England and the unnamed, 'unchristian' nation. He admitted to his readers that England, as a "Christian land," often fell short of biblical standards of faith and morality. As president of the National Council on Public Morals, he devoted significant time and energy to addressing these shortcomings. Nevertheless, Woods believed that the moral gulf which divided England "from a non-Christian land is deep and wide." The bishop went on to highlight key characteristics that set England apart:

> a throne unshaken through the vicissitudes of centuries, a constitution built up by some of the wisest statemen that the world has known, a tradition broadening down from precedent to precedent, all that is involved in what we call 'sportsmanship' and 'playing the game,' which means, after all, a fundamental anxiety to be just and fair and generous; these are the properties which we have found in our Motherland, and which we have learned from her.[23]

The "fundamental anxiety" to be just, fair, and generous was central to Woods' conception of the moral superiority of the English race. He held that Christianity had so permeated English society that, while not inherently morally superior to the 'negro' or 'yellow' races, the above moral traits were uniquely ingrained in the English people from

[22] Woods, "New Year Message," 2.
[23] Woods, "New Year Message," 3.

an early age. Based on this learned moral superiority, Woods offered a vision of flourishing to his readership in which a mentally and physically sound English race would justly guide not only the colonies and Dominions, but all peoples of the world. Woods' imagined future did not call for intermarriage amongst the white 'races' and other peoples, but rather he envisioned a global "brotherhood of peace" uniting "East and West." To achieve this vision, the bishop argued that middle- and upper-class English women had a moral obligation to fill empty cradles with "imperial assets." Careful to avoid controversy by making any reference to the hereditary superiority of the middle and upper classes, Woods instead argued that the burden of producing imperial assets fell on the middle and upper classes because these groups possessed the financial means to rear large families. He further posited that Christian middle-and upper-class mothers had a unique calling to rear large families in light of the positive outcomes associated with children raised in religious homes.[24] "It is said that of the names in the Dictionary of National Biography," the bishop triumphantly reported, "no less than 51 percent were cradled in the vicarage and the manse and the parsonage and the rectory."[25] Woods concluded with a special plea for Christian mothers to encourage their children to pursue a career in service to the Church, which the bishop described as the "soul of the state." Therefore, as the logic went, to strengthen the Church was "to strengthen the nation, Empire, and world."[26]

"Yellow peril"

The supposed moral deficiencies of the inhabitants of 'non-Christian' nations played a central role in the rhetoric of Anglican leaders who sought to stoke fears over increasing

[24] Woods, "New Year Message," 3.
[25] Woods also believed that children raised by devout Christian mothers would foster much-needed "Christian public opinion" in regards to pressing national and international political matters.
[26] Woods, "New Year Message," 4.

birthrates in China and Japan. These Anglican leaders, along with their Roman Catholic and Nonconformist counterparts, regularly warned of the possible supplantation of Britain atop the geo-political order by the peoples of East Asia. The American journalist Lothrop Stoddard influenced such rhetoric with the publication of his 1920 work, *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy*. Stoddard's book stood in a long-line of anti-Asian tracts that warned of the so-called "yellow peril," and he drew special attention to industrialization and population growth in Japan and China. By Stoddard's estimation, across the globe "the colored races" outnumbered "the whites more than two to one." He added that the "yellows are the most numerous of the colored races, numbering over 500,000,000." Issuing a stern warning to his readers, Stoddard concluded that "there can be no doubt that at present the colored races are increasing very much faster than the white. Treating the primary race-stocks as units, it would appear that whites tend to double in eighty years, yellows and browns in sixty years, blacks in forty years."[27]

English Christian leaders concerned with birthrates in East Asia included proponents of birth control, such as Woods, as well as critics of the practice, such as the Roman Catholic physician and longtime foil to Marie Stopes, Halliday Sutherland. Echoing sentiments put forth by the MU, Sutherland argued in 1926 that "birth control is not a prevailing vice amongst semi-civilised peoples," and he extrapolated that "the adoption of this practice by civilised nations means that the proportion of civilised to uncivilised inhabitants of the world will be reduced." He added that the growth of the British Empire would not have been possible if birth control had been a widespread practice in the preceding century. Turning to his present day, Sutherland argued there still

[27] Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 6-8. For further discussion relating to the history of fears over the so-called "yellow peril," see John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (London: Verso, 2014).

existed in the Dominions "great empty spaces whose untilled soil and excellent climate await a population." Implying an urgent need to reject birth control and increase birthrates amongst the white peoples of the empire, the medical doctor subsequently offered a racially charged question to his readers: "is that population to be white, or yellow?"[28]

Speaking on behalf of the Church of England Men's Society at the 1913 Church Congress, Rev. J. E. Watts-Ditchfield contended that the high birthrate of the "yellow races," and particularly amongst the people of Japan, was cause for concern because of an alleged lack of religion and morality amongst these peoples.[29] Such statements suggested that if Britain were to lose its position of global preeminence, its 'benevolent' rule and influence would be replaced by a pitiless new order. Taking a slightly more favourable view towards the peoples of South and East Asia, Inge argued that "there is no physical or intellectual inferiority in the yellow races." However, he added that "the moral inferiority of the Asiatic consists chiefly in a callousness about bearing and inflicting suffering, which the Orientals themselves admit."[30] For Cecil's part, he expressed grave misgivings over decreasing birthrates at home and increasing birthrates in India, Japan, and China. He pinned the decline in birthrates on the use of contraceptives, and he labelled England a "decadent" nation. Like Woods, Cecil lamented that the people of England were abandoning Christian teachings, including those relating to the rearing of children, and instead were pursuing misguided conceptions of human purpose, or, as he put it, were "seeking their own pleasure." And as a result of global birthrate trends, Cecil argued that

[28] Halliday Sutherland, *Birth Control: A Statement of Christian Doctrine against the Neo-Malthusians* (London: Harding & More Ltd., 1922), 106.
[29] J. E. Watts-Ditchfield, "The Kingdom of God and the Races," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress: Held at Southampton on September 28th, 29th, and 30th, October 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 1913*, ed. C. Dunkley (London: George Allen & Co., Ltd., 1913), 214.
[30] W. R. Inge, "The White Man and His Rivals," in *Outspoken Essays: Second Series*, ed. W. R. Inge (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1922), 229.

Japan could boast of increased geo-political influence, while Britain suffered from the inverse.[31]

Outside Anglican circles, the lawyer and Nonconformist lay minister, W. Watkins Davies, likewise stressed the moral superiority of the English over and against 'backwards' races. "Is the repugnance which the average Englishman feels for the black man merely a matter of taste (in which case it is idle to argue about it!) or is it a sound instinct based on scientific fact?" Davies asked the readers of the *Hibbert Journal* in 1927. He quickly concluded that scientific facts did not support feelings of "repugnance." In particular, he suggested that most anthropologists rejected the notion, which was later posited in modified form by the Nazis to bolster claims of Aryan racial supremacy, that the accomplishments of the peoples of Western Europe could be attributed to a shared "Nordic" ancestry.[32] Claims relating to Nordic heritage and the interrelated 'superiority' of certain peoples from Western Europe (and the United States) were fiercely championed in the early twentieth century by influential figures like the professor of psychology at Harvard, William McDougall. McDougall theorized that the peoples of Europe could be traced back to one of three races: Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean. Blood from the ancient 'Nordic race,' whose descendants were often said to be preeminent in knowledge, capability, and vigor, supposedly ran in great quantities through English men and women, which ostensibly explained Britain's unparalleled worldwide influence.[33]

While dismissing talk of an ancient Nordic race as pseudo-science, Davies nevertheless asserted that "it is doubtful … whether any responsible person does hold that there is an actual, and substantial, equality between the races of Africa and those of

[31] Cecil was quoted in an account of the annual meeting of the League of National Life, which can be found in "The Annual Meeting of the League," *National Life* 2, no. 10 (December, 1933): 125.
[32] W. Watkins Davies, "Empire and Colour," *Hibbert Journal* 25, no. 3 (April, 1927): 455-456.
[33] William McDougall, *Is America Safe for Democracy?* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1921), 72-73, 105-109. For further discussion, see Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 60-61.

Western Europe as they are at the present day." Broadening his analysis to outside Africa, Davies claimed that the differences between "backwards" and "advanced" races did not lie in hereditary traits, but rather in a "sense of values." He subsequently offered a test for assessing the morality of various races across the world, which consisted of a series of questions regarding the extent to which a particular race valued human life, possessed a "sense of responsibility," and respected women. Singling out the people of China, Davies, in a statement reminiscent of Woods, asserted that Chinese men and women lacked "compassion" and a "sense of fair play." Such a supposed lack of morals indicated that the Chinese race could not be considered equal to the English race. As a proposed way forward, Davies suggested that the "backwards races" of the world deserved "equal opportunity" with Europeans (especially with regard to the treatment of 'backwards' races within European-held foreign territories). He affirmed that 'backwards' nations, provided their people learned from the customs of Western, 'Christian' nations, would one day stand "shoulder to shoulder" with them.[34] Three years later, Woods offered a similar vision of flourishing to his colleagues at the 1930 Lambeth Conference.

A racialized global brotherhood

As chair of the Committee on the Life and Witness of the Christian Community, Woods was tasked with oversight of its Subcommittees on Peace and War, Marriage and Sex, and Race. Concerned especially with matters relating to birth control, Woods only chaired the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex, but his influence pervaded the work of the other two subcommittees. In the report of the Subcommittee on Race, a line of demarcation was drawn between the "dominant" races, implicitly referring to the white inhabitants of

[34] Davies, "Empire and Colour," 458, 459-462. To resolve problems in certain 'colonized' parts of the world, Davies called for intermarriage amongst 'advanced' and 'backwards' peoples.

North America and Western Europe, and the rest of the peoples of the world.[35] The stated goal of the Subcommittee on Race was to stave off emerging economic and political rivalries between the 'dominant' and 'weaker' races. Explaining its theological approach to race relations, the subcommittee argued that the teachings of Christianity should not be limited in their application to private spiritual matters. Rather, in line with Christian socialist thought, they should inform politics, business, and "all of social life." According to the report, the 'dominant' races of the world often overestimated their "own virtues and abilities," which resulted in prejudice against persons who differed "in race, colour, or language." However, in the light of biblical teachings on the unity that Christians shared through their devotion to Jesus, the report asserted that the "stronger races" had no right to exploit other peoples. Instead, these races were obliged to offer education and moral training to the 'weaker' races in order to help raise them up on the "cultural scale" and achieve "self-improvement."[36]

The Subcommittee on Race implied that any wisdom that could be imparted by the 'dominant' races was the result of the centuries-long influence of Christianity, and concluded with a vision of flourishing similar to the one expressed by Woods to the MU in 1926: "modern progress has made the world a neighbourhood; God has given us the task of making it a brotherhood."[37] Conference delegates went on to vote in favour of several resolutions to help ease tensions between the 'stronger' and 'weaker' races. For example, following the general conclusions of Article XXII of the League of Nations Covenant, the gathered bishops affirmed that "the ruling of one race by another can only be justified from the Christian standpoint when the highest welfare of the subject race is

[35] *The Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1930), 95-96.
[36] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 96, 98.
[37] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 98.

the constant aim of government, and when admission to an increasing share in the government of the country is an objective steadfastly pursued."[38]

In the resolutions associated with the three subcommittees overseen by Woods, there was no direct mention of domestic or international birthrate patterns (though Resolution 14 did note that children served as a "vital contribution to a nation's welfare").[39] A reader of the resolutions would therefore possibly have missed the connections Woods drew in his own mind between a near-utopian vision of a global brotherhood, in which the 'weaker races' benefited from the tutelage of the English race, and his desire to bring about this reality through the proliferation of the hereditarily 'desirable' English middle and upper classes. Such obfuscation by Woods was no accident. On at least one occasion prior to the 1930 Conference, he attended a formal gathering hosted by the Eugenics Society.[40] However, unlike his colleagues Bishop Ernest Barnes and Inge, Woods limited his engagement with explicitly pro-eugenic policies so as to minimize controversy over his birth control proposals leading up to the 1930 Conference. Following the Conference, Woods put aside such concerns and set in motion a plan to mobilize the full moral and political force of the Church in favour of an aggressive, class-based eugenics platform.

Acting on his own authority, in the winter of 1931 Woods invited a handful of clergymen and committed Anglican laypersons, including Barnes, Rev. S. A. McDowall, geneticist R. Ruggles Gates, C. J. Bond, and geneticist and statistician R. A. Fisher, to a private conference on eugenics held at his residence. There the delegates agreed to work together to galvanize Church opinion in favour of eugenics, including support for family allowances aimed principally at the professional middle class—who were said to be

[38] Resolution 21, published in *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 45.
[39] Resolution 14, published in *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 43.
[40] Edward Woods and Frederick Mancutt, *Theodore, Bishop of Winchester: Pastor, Prophet, Pilgrim* (London: SPCK, 1933), 282.

limiting the size of their families due to the influence of "selfish hedonism." The more well-to-do were explicitly categorized by Woods and others at the gathering as hereditarily superior to those at the lowest end of the social scale (and it was implied that hereditary worth existed on a sliding scale from the professional middle class down to the 'bottom' of the social ladder). In addition to family allowances, Woods informed his guests that the sterilization of the "unfit" would likely receive widespread support amongst the clergy, and R. A. Fisher contended that the use of contraceptives ought to be encouraged amongst persons with mental and physical 'defects.' In addition, Fisher put forth the notion that the moral impetus for improving the genetic endowment of the race through the redressing of differential birthrate patterns was that of love of neighbour. After several days of discussion, Woods closed the gathering on a note of optimism, declaring that the "human race is on a shining staircase that leads upwards." However, Woods and his peers agreed that Britain would face grave consequences in as little as two decades unless public opinion on population matters came to be guided by altruism, patriotism, and a "larger spiritual vision."[41] Little would come of the confidential eugenics conference, as Woods died the following year, but the gathering demonstrates the resolute commitment of Woods to securing an increase in the fertility of the English middle and upper classes—which he described in a 1931 reflection on the passing of Resolution 15 as the "gravest need" faced by England.[42]

Lord William Cecil offered a variant of Woods' vision of flourishing, which he espoused both during the Conference and after, that grounded the right of a race to wield global influence primarily in its innate mental acumen. Cecil was widely known for his eccentricity and unwillingness to compromise, and his appointment to bishop was said to

[41] "Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics," 7-8 February, 1931, Papers of the Right Reverend Ernest William Barnes, EWB 9:19:31, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.
[42] Theodore Woods, *The Faith and Witness of the Church in This Generation (*London: James Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1931), 27.

have been the result of his independent wealth rather than aptitude or experience.[43] Cecil had a propensity to express harsh views against democracy and political 'agitators,' going as far as to denounce the General Strike as a "great red movement of Bolshevism."[44] In Cecil's imagined future, breeding from the middle and upper classes would ensure that the English race maintained its place at the 'top' of the global racial hierarchy—from where it could bestow the benefits of its 'advanced' civilization to the other races of the world.

At the 1930 Lambeth Conference, Cecil took to the podium following Woods' and Henson's opening remarks. While the two disagreed on birth control, Cecil and Woods shared a common concern over the relationship between the use of birth control amongst the more well-to-do and the overall 'quality' of the domestic populace. Cecil warned his colleagues that most children of the English race were "coming from the types that are least valuable, intellectually and physically." Equating these 'types' with the lower classes, he went on to argue that, "if evolution is a fact," the Conference needed to call for an increase in children born to the more well-to-do so as to avoid a regression in the inborn capabilities of the English race.[45] Likewise, he hoped that the call to parenthood would be taken up across the English-speaking world.

In the mind of Cecil, there existed a great global competition amongst the races of the world, a belief that shared parallels with the work of Karl Pearson. Pearson, a protégé of Francis Galton, was the first Galton professor of eugenics at University College, and there he worked to incorporate the eugenics laboratory into a department of applied statistics. Pearson's work on eugenics earned him a divisive reputation, as he endorsed "brutal competition between nations or racial groups as the means of achieving

[43] For further discussion, see Trevor Beeson, *The Bishops* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 13.
[44] Quoted in J. H. Porter, "Devon and the General Strike, 1926," *International Review of Social History* 23, no. 3 (1978): 348.
[45] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference, 146.

evolutionary progress."[46] Similarly to Pearson, Cecil held that victory in racial competition was won through the intentional maintenance of the numbers and the inborn qualities of a particular race—though he did not advocate the destruction of 'weaker' races. Cecil equated the prospects for the long-term geo-political dominance of Britain with the ability of the English race to continue to "progress," a term which denoted a kind of social evolution in which a particular race, in accordance with its hereditary 'advancement,' made advancements in government, science, medicine, and philosophy. Yet the relative social 'progress' of a particular race was not thought of by Cecil as the grounds on which that race could claim the right to wield global influence. Claims on global influence were instead rooted in a combination of numerical and hereditary superiority, which enabled a particular race to govern through varying forms of coercion.[47] Hence, there existed the very real possibility that a nation like Japan, whose people Cecil deemed to be hereditarily 'inferior' to the English race, could climb their way to the top of the geo-political order through sheer superiority in numbers.

Cecil informed his fellow bishops at the 1930 Conference that the English race needed to progress because there existed "vast races" spread across the world, and he believed that "you must have people who can direct and lead those races." In contrast to Woods, he did not advocate for a model of trusteeship rule, but rather one of continued subservience wherein the 'stronger' races would continually bestow social and technological advancements to the 'weaker' races under their rule.[48] As early as 1910, Cecil had contended that England would soon run short of the rulers needed to properly govern the empire as a result of declining birthrates amongst the persons who "produce

[46] Joanne Woiak, "Pearson, Karl (1857-1936)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), https://doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/35442.
[47] For example, see Lord William Cecil, "A Disaster," *National Life* 2, no. 25 (September, 1937): 328. Cecil did believe that God would remove from Britain the 'right' to wield global influence if its people cared only for their own interests.
[48] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference, 146.

the people who organize and govern the State." Lumping these persons together under the title of the "better class," he held that their superior mental capacities provided the key to solving the problems associated with administering a complex empire. "You can only rule an Empire if you can produce the men who are capable of wisely and equitably ruling it," he declared. Cecil went on to claim that "cowardice on the field of battle, folly in the council chamber, are not so disastrous to an empire as the selfishness which refuses to bear the children that are necessary to make and teach an empire."[49]

Several years after the 1930 Conference, Cecil bemoaned the approval of birth control by the Church, and he also worried over a more general abandonment amongst Christians of a traditional "moral code." In his mind, the widespread use of birth control was now producing a "world-wide disaster," as the global population was drawing from the "lower races." Furthermore, amongst 'progressive' races, the lower classes were said to have become the chief contributors of children—leading to a 'degradation' of these 'higher' races.[50] Cecil based his understanding of the 'problem' of differential fertility on the work of Galton, who he believed had conclusively demonstrated the importance of heredity to mental 'fitness.' In the light of Galton's research, Cecil supposed that "England is not great because we live on a tiny damp island." Rather, he declared that its greatness could be traced back to its "Nordic" ancestry.[51] Cecil believed that the middle and upper classes were the primary torchbearers of this ancestry, and their inherited characteristics had supposedly made the English people an "extremely progressive race." Thanks to the 'progress' made by the English race, the world was said to have "entered an era of greatness unknown before."[52]

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[49] Lord William Cecil, *Science and Religion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), 47-48.
[50] Cecil, "A Disaster," 326, 327.
[51] Cecil also attributed the 'successes' of the English race to a unique mixture of 'Alpine' and 'Mediterranean' ancestry.
[52] Cecil, "A Disaster," 327-328.

Similarly to Woods, Cecil was able to equate his desire to increase birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes with benevolent acts of kindness towards 'weaker' races (he singled out the people of China for inclusion in this group) because he was convinced that the "world grows happier and more educated" under the leadership of 'progressive' races. And he closed his article by reminding his readers of the larger societal struggle in which the fight over birthrates took place. If the middle and upper classes wished to see their nation "progress," Cecil asserted that they must eschew "self-indulgence" and instead follow the path of "sacrifice and self-denial" that was associated with the rearing of children in service to the state.[53]

The vote on Resolution 15

Following introductory speeches at the 1930 Conference, the bishops of the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex went to work drafting resolutions and an accompanying report. According to the post-Conference recollections of a fellow subcommittee member, Woods was chiefly responsible for the documents the subcommittee produced.[54] Once happy with the draft documents, Woods presented his subcommittee's work to all 308 bishops. He encouraged the gathered delegates with the news that, while many young men and women were rejecting the teachings of the Church, these persons could be called back to faithfulness—provided the bishops' advice on matters relating to birth control and procreation better squared with contemporary sensibilities. Woods added that his subcommittee had sought to stress the importance of parenthood, and likewise warn against the selfish use of birth control, which resulted in the diminution of the "stocks which are most needed, by reason of their quality." Further

[53] Cecil, "A Disaster," 328.
[54] Theresa Notare, "A Revolution in Christian Morals: Lambeth 1930" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2008), 360-363.

revealing his eugenic convictions, Woods asserted that the subcommittee believed the choice to prevent the conception of such 'superior' stocks was deeply unpatriotic. The bishop later in his speech informed his peers that the Conference represented the last chance for delegates to exert influence over the use of birth control: "in another ten years' time there will be … an immense extension of this practice, and I submit that to postpone definite counsels till then will be too late." He then drove his point home with rhetorical flourish: "let the Lambeth Conference speak now, or hereafter for ever hold its peace."[55]

The report and resolutions on birth control that Woods presented to the Conference were met with staunch opposition over several days of general discussion. One prominent line of attack was that Christian tradition should not be lightly discarded.[56] Woods' detractors were ready to agree that sexual intercourse was a kind of sacrament. Where some disagreed, in line with the historic position of the Church, was in thinking the sex act was separable from its "primary" purpose of procreation. Woods' proposals also received criticism on the grounds that permitting an alternative to abstinence undermined the dependence of Christians on God's grace to meet life's challenges. Building on this notion, detractors of birth control maintained that abstinence and birth control could not be morally equated, even if both practices were pursued with the same goal in mind. Instead, abstinence represented a "higher," or more Christlike, path. Rigorous debate ensued, with Woods and his allies responding with many of the same arguments Woods had previously put forth in favour of the qualified use of birth control. The objections of critics led to several rewrites of Resolution 15 (as well as of the report and several other resolutions) by Woods and fellow subcommittee members.[57]

[55] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 147.
[56] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 147.
[57] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 147-LC 149. Some bishops who advocated for this view were willing to concede that while abstinence represented a "higher path," the use of birth control was still permissible in certain instances.

In a frank expression of dissatisfaction with his anti-birth control colleagues, the Australian Bishop of Armidale, John Moyes, asserted that contraception represented a "battle-ground" on which the bishops needed to push back against the "worldwide" moral revolt against Christianity. Moyes noted that the immoral use of birth control represented only one expression of this revolt, and he indicated that the Conference needed to stake out a more open stance on contraception to protect higher-ordered moral teachings.[58] By the time Moyes delivered his remarks, critics of Resolution 15 recognized they held a losing hand. After the dissenting bishops brokered an agreement for tallies to be published with the text of the resolution, the Conference approved Resolution 15 by a vote of 193 to 67.[59] The final wording of the statement read as follows:

> Where there is clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, the method must be decided on Christian principles. The primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless in those cases where there is such a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of the same Christian principles. The Conference records its strong condemnation of the use of any methods of conception control from motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience.[60]

The Conference also adopted several other resolutions relating to birth control. These included Resolution 14, which stressed the "duty of parenthood" and the "benefit of the family … as a vital contribution to the nation's welfare." After Resolution 15, the three following resolutions condemned, in order, abortion as an alternative to contraceptives, neo-Malthusian economic propaganda, and the use of birth control by unmarried couples.[61]

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[58] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 149.
[59] Resolution 15 was the final resolution by the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex to be approved by Conference delegates.
[60] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 44.
[61] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 43-44. Resolution 18 also called for restrictions on the sale of birth control.

As discussed in Chapter Two, various social, medical, and religious developments throughout the 1920s forged a societal and intellectual climate that made the passing of Resolution 15 *possible*. However, the vote in favour of contraception was not *inevitable.* This claim is supported by the continuing opposition to birth control from the Roman Catholic Church, which included the issuing of a Papal Encyclical that condemned contraception following the Conference. Furthermore, many Anglican clergymen, along with the leadership of the MU, disagreed with the passing of Resolution 15, and, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury went as far as to issue a report condemning the resolution.[62] Additionally, Lang and other high-ranking Church leaders indicated that the majority of bishops began the 1930 Conference with a bias against birth control.[63]

One important factor that contributed to the Church breaking with the Roman Catholic position on contraception was the role played by Archbishop Lang, as he carefully ensured that birth control would be presented in a favourable light at the Conference. Lang's support also lent social credibility to the pro-birth-control position. His endorsement reduced the social stigma for English bishops, many of whom moved in elite, socially conservative circles, that was previously associated with the support of birth control. Lang's support for birth control was also significant because, as the Primate of All England, he functioned as the spiritual head of all the gathered bishops (a status which helped influence bishops who were ambivalent towards birth control). A different outcome at the 1930 Conference was therefore plausible if Lang had appointed an anti-birth control bishop to chair the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex, or if he had publicly voiced displeasure with the text of Resolution 15 at the Conference.

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[62] Pope Pius XI responded to the 1930 Lambeth Conference with the encyclical *Casti connubii*. The encyclical prohibited the use of all forms of birth control by the married and unmarried.
[63] For example, see *The Chronicle of Convocation: Being a Record of the Proceedings of the Convocation of Canterbury in the Sessions of November 13, 1930* (London: SPCK, 1930), 154.

Resolution 15's ambiguous wording also contributed to the vote in favour of birth control. One phrase that was interpreted in multiple ways following the Conference was the claim that abstinence represented the "primary and obvious method" to avoid "parenthood." Another phrase that proved malleable was the assertion that "Christian principles" ought to guide the use of birth control. These principles, as critics of Resolution 15 pointed out, were not clearly enumerated by Conference delegates. As the obliqueness of Resolution 15 allowed for all kinds of interpretations, the resolution created a wide and welcoming tent for bishops to gather under at the Conference. Bishop Arthur Winnington-Ingram, who chaired the committee that condemned birth control at the 1920 Conference, acknowledged after the 1930 Lambeth Conference that he voted for Resolution 15 on the grounds that it represented a guarded approach to birth control policy.[64]

The most decisive factor in the shift in the Church's position on birth control was the tireless advocacy of Woods. He can be identified as the proximate cause of the passing of Resolution 15, as well as a key factor in the subsequent sanctioning of the resolution by the Church. Both in the lead-up to, as well as during, the Conference, Woods skillfully threaded the needle between antagonistic colleagues and various visions for how the Church might best direct men and women into the new "epoch" inaugurated by contraceptives. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Woods, together with Lang and Temple, also took decisive steps after the close of the Conference to ensure Resolution 15 would be enshrined as the position of the Church. With these maneuvers, Woods inaugurated an expansive fertility-manipulation scheme predicated upon a revision of nearly 400 years of Church teachings. For the remainder of the decade,

[64] Arthur Winnington-Ingram, "The Lambeth Conference of 1930," *Theology* 21, no. 23 (September, 1930): 132-133.

detractors of Resolution 15 would question the wisdom of the resolution in the light of a general trend towards a diminishing birthrate (which dropped from 16.3 in 1930, to 14.8 in 1939).

Woods' goal of increasing birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes is central to understanding his decision to take up the mantle as the foremost advocate of birth control within the Church. At the 1930 Conference, Woods made clear that he found the discussion of matters relating to sexual intercourse to be in poor taste, and he expressed hope that Conference delegates would never again have to address the topic of birth control. While he firmly held that birth control was morally permissible in certain instances, it was the supposed eugenic and imperial perils relating to the decline in fertility amongst the middle and upper classes that provided him with the impetus to overcome his prudery and champion the qualified use of birth control. The bishop's motivations were indicative of the complicated relationship between high-ranking Church proponents of birth control and advocates of what Church figures referred to as the new morality (or persons with exceptionally liberal views on sexuality in general). Men like Woods and Inge shared some eugenic aims with the likes of Bertrand Russell, and these Church leaders also agreed (in a highly qualified manner) that the positions of the Church on marriage and sexuality needed updating. At the same time, Woods and Inge in no way hoped for the complete overthrow of traditional sexual ethics. Woods also understood many of the supposed eugenic perils faced by Britain to be the direct result of the teachings of the 'new moralists.' Therefore, while the 'new moralists' pressured the Church to reassess its teachings on marriage and sex, this reassessment was in and of itself a means to counter the teachings of the 'new moralists' (and so can be understood as part of a larger struggle in English society over competing and seemingly incompatible worldviews). The perceived societal influence of the 'new moralists' also encouraged

some high-level Church leaders to distance themselves from morally and theologically conservative groups on the question of birth control, including the MU.

Timothy Jones explains that, whether intentional or not, the theological and moral reasoning used to justify birth control, which emphasized the "sacramental" value of sex for strengthening the marriage relationship, began to "decentre reproduction in Anglican understandings of sex, marriage, and gender."[65] As one example, the possibility of the separation of sex from procreation, based on a belief in the sacramental value of sex, provided a theological framework that helped to guide future debates over voluntary sterilization (a topic discussed in Chapter Four). And, as previously mentioned, by 1958 the Lambeth Conference voted to affirm Resolution 115, which, based in part on *overpopulation* concerns, declared birth control to be a "right and important factor in Christian family life."[66]

Returning to the proceedings of the 1930 Conference, the vote of the other 192 bishops in favour of birth control does not imply those men all shared the same eugenic convictions as Woods. However, as was the case with Woods, Conference records indicate a widespread distaste for any discussion involving birth control—with many bishops prefacing their remarks with an apology for having to address the matter. Woods was able to convince self-conscious delegates to stake out a clear position in favour of birth control by warning of the encroachment of the teachings of the new morality. Put another way, he convinced many of his peers to set aside their qualms relating to the public discussion of sexual matters in order to help the women and men under their care avoid what were considered to be flagrantly immoral practices, including the refusal to rear children. Following the Conference, one of Woods' fiercest critics, the Bishop of St.

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[65] Timothy Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England, 1857-1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 132.
[66] *The Lambeth Conference 1958: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishop, Together with the Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1958), 1.57.

Albans, Michael Furse, readily acknowledged that the strategic shift in the Church's position on birth control represented a deliberate attempt to "stem the tide of growing laxity" in regards to marriage, sex, and contraception.[67] Moreover, little opposition was offered at the Conference to the notion that upper- and middle-class married couples ought to be having more children. And most notably, Resolution 14, the report of the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex, and the Encyclical Letter approved by Conference delegates (a document that outlined the main teachings of the Conference) are all rightly read as supporting Woods' desire to increase birthrates in the English-speaking world. Therefore, the proceedings and documents of the 1930 Conference demonstrate that a bishop present at the Conference did not necessarily need to adhere to eugenic dogma in order to agree with Woods that large, Christian families were a benefit to the home, nation, empire, and Church.

Domestic visions of flourishing

Woods took pains to distance himself from neo-Malthusian rhetoric that presented birth control as a panacea for large-scale economic problems. Reflecting his affinity for Christian socialism, the bishop believed that poverty, inadequate housing, and widespread unemployment were best solved through measures like more inclusive economic policies and social welfare schemes. His dislike of neo-Malthusian teachings, along with the briefest of references to his proposed solutions for a myriad of economic and societal ills, were enshrined in Resolution 17 at the 1930 Conference:

> While the Conference admits that economic conditions are a serious factor in the situation [the perceived need amongst married couples for birth control], it condemns the propaganda which treats conception control as a

[67] A. A. David and M. B. Furse, *Marriage and Birth Control* (London: James Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1931), 43. The vote of the other 192 bishops does not necessarily imply a reluctant surrender to changes in British or American society. Bishops on either side of the argument in 1930 did not indicate that the pervasiveness of birth control represented a valid justification for its use. And Conference proceedings offer no reason to question the sincerity of the moral arguments presented by the various bishops in favour of birth control.

> way of meeting those unsatisfactory social and economic conditions which ought to be changed by the influence of Christian public opinion.[68]

Despite Woods' personal beliefs, the preparatory paper drafted by the AAC, which advanced many neo-Malthusian arguments, did strategically complement his pro-birth control position in the lead-up to the Conference. Woods approached the matter of birth control in his preparatory paper from the perspective of a bishop charged with the spiritual care of women and men lost in a haze of moral confusion. The AAC, on the other hand, approached the topic through the lenses of economics and medicine—and its paper, entitled "The Declining Birthrate and 'Birth Control,'" was directed exclusively to the bishops of Britain. Drawing upon the work of economists and medical professionals, the AAC framed its support of birth control as an act of benevolence towards multiple parties, including unborn children imperiled by abortion and overworked mothers. Taken together, both preparatory papers represented a deliberate attempt to sideline as many objections to birth control as possible prior to the start of the Conference.

Regarding the relationship between birthrates and prevailing economic conditions in England, the AAC argued that the growth in the English populace during the nineteenth century—rising from 9 million in 1800 to 38 million in 1921—was made possible by a unique set of favourable circumstances which had run their respective courses. Citing John Maynard Keynes, the AAC implied that this population surge, rather than promoting economic growth, could now be causally linked with unsatisfactory standards of living.[69] The historian M. W. Kirby notes that during the 1920s Britain enjoyed economic growth "as good, if not superior, to that of the late nineteenth century."[70] However, during this time Britain's economy began to fall further behind the

[68] *Lambeth Conference 1930*, 44.
[69] Archbishop's Advisory Committee on Spiritual Healing, "The Declining Birthrate and 'Birth Control,'" LC 168.
[70] W. M. Kirby, *The Decline of British Economic Power Since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2006), 29.

United States, and new and robust competition emerged from Japan for Asian markets. The 1920s also witnessed high unemployment amongst the insured workforce in Britain. This number peaked during the decade at 15.6 percent, but the problem of unemployment grew even worse in the 1930s, with that decade witnessing an unemployment rate as high as 22.8.[71]

Between 1923 and 1924, Keynes and William Beveridge, then director of the London School of Economics, exchanged a series of articles addressing the role birth control might play in alleviating the economic problems faced by Britain. Due to a supposed lack of evidence, Beveridge rejected Keynes' contention that "the authority of economic science can be invoked for the intensification of these [birth control] practices as a cure for our present troubles," and elsewhere he argued that Europe was capable of sustaining an increase in population.[72] While Keynes' work was widely cited by proponents of neo-Malthusian schemes, opponents of birth control regularly drew from the work of Beveridge to argue that contraception (and declining birthrates) exacerbated the economic problems faced by Britain.

Drawing upon the work of Keynes, the AAC warned in its preparatory paper that Britain needed to consciously limit its population or it would soon face all manner of "catastrophes." To strengthen their case, the committee offered the wisdom of Charles Darwin, who asserted in *The Origin of Species* that "there is no exception to the rule that every organic being increases at so high a rate that if [it were] not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by a progeny of a single pair."[73] Darwin's claim came to shape

[71] Kirby, *The Decline of British Economic Power*, 143.
[72] Quoted in John Toye, "Keynes on Population and Economic Growth," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 21, no. 1 (January, 1997):13. For further discussion on Keynes and Beveridge, see Alison Bashford, *Global Population: History, Geopolitics, and Life on Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 61-62.
[73] Quotation taken from Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859), 64. Square brackets are original to the quotation as found in the preparatory paper.

the framework employed by many proponents of neo-Malthusianism when assessing problems relating to population size in the first half of the twentieth century. As Alison Bashford points outs, the three key variables that animated many discussions relating to population size in the first half of the twentieth century were births, deaths, and migration (discussion of this last variable also encompassed the matter of total land area).[74] For the AAC, which held that some means of limiting the population had to be employed, the choice of conscious limitation against so-called Malthusian "positive checks" on population growth (such as the spread of disease) was an easy one—but how were birthrates to be controlled? The report argued abstinence was not a viable option for many married couples, leaving the choice of birth control, which prevented life, or abortion, which was said to "destroy a life." Once again, the answer was self-evident.[75]

While not directly endorsing any particular birth control method, the AAC also offered a short memorandum in favour of the qualified use of birth control written by the medical professionals from the committee. The memorandum argued that married couples had a moral right to limit the size of their respective families when childbirth posed significant health risks to either the mother or future children, and that the limited use of certain kinds of birth control appliances did not pose any serious health risks for most married couples. In contrast, the AAC claimed that abstinence often proved detrimental to mental health, and that the practice could also lead to the break-up of marriages. The memorandum further asserted that no "safe period" existed during which time couples could engage in sexual intercourse without the risk of pregnancy. While denouncing the "selfish" avoidance of parenthood, the AAC went on to explain to the bishops that from a "medical standpoint there are various grounds which are to be regarded as legitimate

[74] Bashford, *Global Population*, 19.
[75] Archbishop's Advisory Committee on Spiritual Healing, "The Declining Birthrate and 'Birth Control,'" LC 168.

reasons for the use of contraceptive methods." These grounds included heart disease, kidney disease, "child-bearing in excess of the strength of the woman," and a strong likelihood of passing on hereditary defects.[76]

Inge's utopia

While the AAC's case for birth control was presented in negative terms, following the 1930 Lambeth Conference Inge imagined a more constructive vision of the future. By 1931, Inge, who was known popularly as the "Gloomy Dean," had served as the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral for two decades. The role of dean of St. Paul's had long been associated with prolific writers, and Inge certainly lived up to this legacy. Through the publishing of numerous books and a weekly column for the *Evening Standard,* Inge advocated for a staunchly conservative political platform and a slew of modernist theological teachings (and he was at one point the most widely read Anglican author in Britain).[77] Regarding his politics, Matthew Grimley notes that Inge longed to "return England to the culture and values of the nineteenth-century country parsonages of his youth."[78] To achieve such ends, he regularly advocated for the careful management of population size. And as early as 1913, Inge outlined his general position on the relationship between the size of the domestic population and the wellbeing of Britain, arguing that "if the increase in the population could be entirely stopped, the most difficult of our social problems would be in a fair way to be solved."[79] In May 1931, he expanded on this notion when offering up a utopian vision of flourishing to the Royal Institution.

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[76] Archbishop's Advisory Committee on Spiritual Healing, "The Declining Birthrate and 'Birth Control,'" LC 168.
[77] It should be noted that not all modernists identified with Inge's politics. For further discussion, see Jane Garnett, "Hastings Rashdall and the Renewal of Christian Social Ethics, c. 1890–1920," in *Revival and Religion Since 1700: Essays for John Walsh*, ed. Jane Garnett and Colin Matthew (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1993), 297-298.
[78] Matthew Grimley, "Inge, William Ralph (1860-1954)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34098.
[79] W. R. Inge, "Depopulation," *Eugenics Review* 5, no. 3 (October, 1913): 261-2.

Speaking under the title "The Future of the Human Race," Inge asked his audience to imagine with him what Britain might look like in the year 3000 A.D. (provided the 'ruling' class agreed to work together for the betterment of society). "The optimum population of Great Britain has been fixed at 20,000,000," he dreamed. "People shall not live in crowds. No persons are allowed to have children without certificates of mental and physical fitness. Large families are neither approved nor desired. Physical perfection is cultivated."[80]

With a fixed population of 20 million people, Inge's imagined future suggested an important place for birth control (as he did not believe prolonged periods of abstinence within marriage were advisable for most couples, and he did not condone sterilization). With the intentional reduction in numbers amongst the lower classes, Inge imagined taxation would be minimal because social welfare programs would no longer be needed. Crime would also cease to be a widespread problem, with repeat offenders being summarily euthanized. Additionally, married couples who demonstrated 'good' eugenic heritage would be rewarded with widespread public acclaim.

Later in his lecture, Inge informed his audience that Christianity shared the same aim as the 'science' of eugenics as it related to perfecting the human person in body, mind, and morals, and that the role of religion in society was to "co-operate with other elevating influences in holding up and inculcating the higher values [including the 'progress' or 'development' of human beings]."[81] As far back as 1909, Inge had likewise argued in the pages of the *Eugenics Review* that, similar to the 'science' of eugenics, the "aim of Christian ethics, is, quite definitely, the production of the 'perfect man.'" Inge added that the word "perfect" was best translated as "full-grown, complete, and entire,"

[80] "Dean Inge's Utopia," *Gloucester Citizen*, May 30, 1931.
[81] "Britain in 3000 A.D.," *Dundee Courier*, May 30, 1931.

and therefore the perfect man was one "who has realized in himself the ideal of what a man should be."[82] In support of this assessment of Christian ethics, he reminded his readers that it was Jesus who had said '"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect.'" In addition, he cited St. Paul's prayer on behalf of followers of Christ: "'I pray God that your spirit and soul and body may be preserved entire and without blame unto the coming of Christ.'"[83]

Several months after his speech at the Royal Institution, the BBC invited Inge to deliver a similar lecture under the title "What I Would Do with the World." In his radio address, he indicated that, given the powers of a global dictator, he would immediately alleviate unemployment in Britain by way of state-aided colonization. As part of the dean's plan, over the course of the next twenty years unemployed persons would be directed to Australia. There men and women would be set up in communal villages modeled after rural English life prior to the Industrial Revolution. Inge also proposed the formation of an international body known as the "League of All Nations," which would be tasked with the regulation of the global population. "A nation which took no steps to check the multiplication of its worst stocks would be an offender against the progress of humanity, and pressure might be brought to bear upon that nation," he explained to his audience. Ostensibly as means of preventing their reproduction, Inge also indicated that all across Britain "the idle rich, tramps, and others of no occupation would be required to wear an ignominious badge."[84]

While not made explicit in the utopian visions put forth by Inge, undergirding his neo-Malthusian convictions was a belief that efforts to reduce the fertility of the lower classes equated to performative acts of care towards the vulnerable and downtrodden. For

[82] W. R. Inge, "Some Moral Aspects of Eugenics," *Eugenics Review* 1, no. 1 (April, 1909): 33.
[83] Inge, "Some Moral Aspects of Eugenics," 33.
[84] "Dean Inge's Utopia," *Argus (Melbourne)*, Jan 9, 1932.

example, he warned in 1919 that any nation with a high birthrate "may be so much weakened in physique by under-feeding as to be impotent from a military point of view." He added that it was no accident of history that the least successful nations in the Great War boasted the highest birthrates.[85] Therefore, in the mind of Inge, the restriction of fertility amongst the lower classes could be equated with the protection of civilian populations from the ravages of war. As alluded to by the AAC report, Inge also believed that encouraging the use of birth control amongst the poor could protect unborn children from abortive practices and alleviate the economic plight of the lower classes. And for Inge, it was imperative that the findings of scientists, economists, and demographers, along with general Christian precepts, inform poverty-reduction initiatives. In light of these beliefs, the dean let loose a tirade in 1922 against a widespread "anti-scientific temper" that supposedly manifested itself in opposition to birth control. Inge described this pervasive temper, which he believed to be the greatest threat faced by England, as an amalgamation of "self-interest and prejudice and mob-contagion and sentiment and the wish to believe." He added that individuals who possessed such a temper despised both "authority" and "science." In contrast, "eugenicists" believed society must be guided by "scientific principles" or face catastrophic consequences. Inge informed his readers that "we can understand, though we profoundly disagree with, those who oppose us on sacrosanct authority … we know where we are with the man who says 'Birth-control is forbidden by God; we prefer poverty, unemployment, wars of extermination ... to any interference with the universal command to increase and multiply.'" On the other hand, he asserted that eugenists "have no patience with those who say we can have unrestricted and unregulated propagation without these consequences."[86]

[85] W. R. Inge, "The Future of the English Race," *Edinburgh Review* 229, no. 468 (April, 1919): 221.
[86] W. R. Inge, "Eugenics," in *Outspoken Essays: Second Series*, ed. W. R. Inge (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1922), 255-6.

Living up to his reputation as a contrarian, Inge also linked his desire for a reduction in the numbers of the lower classes with concern for the wellbeing of the 'oppressed' middle and upper classes. He argued in 1919 that 'dole receivers' propagated at twice the rate of the "respectable" working class (here Inge was attempting to distinguish the 'self-sufficient' poor from those who relied on government or charitable aid). He believed the high birthrate amongst 'dole receivers' was only possible as a result of the high taxes levied against the middle and upper classes, and warned that the expanding "parasitic class" would likely tax the "intellectual" class out of existence.[87] The dean also argued elsewhere that the choice by middle-and upper-class married couples to limit the size of their families was evidence not of selfishness or the advance of secularism, but prudence.[88] Such clear-sighted individuals recognized the 'obvious' fact that smaller families allowed for a respectable standard of living in the face of poor economic conditions and high taxation.

C. K. Millard, C. J. Bond, and Claud Mullins had all previously set forth similar arguments to Inge regarding the relationship between population size, birth control, and social problems, and so the AAC could draw upon a sizeable intellectual tradition of Christian support for neo-Malthusianism from the previous two decades (in addition to a robust tradition of clergy support for the teachings of Malthus from the nineteenth century). Like Inge, these men fell on the liberal end of the theological spectrum, and also supported various eugenic measures for addressing the 'quality' of the domestic population. From his platform as the Medical Officer of Health for Leicester, as well in his leadership role with the Malthusian League, Millard pressured the Church to condone contraception in the lead-up to the 1920 Lambeth Conference. He also championed the

[87] Inge, "The Future of the English Race," 225-226.
[88] W. R. Inge, *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), 268.

sterilization of mentally 'unfit' persons, but he achieved his greatest level of notoriety for his support of voluntary euthanasia in the 1930s—a cause to which the doctor devoted his retirement years.[89]

Considered later as evidence in favour of birth control by the bishops at the 1920 Lambeth Conference, Millard wrote a two-part article entitled "The Ethics of Birth Control" for the *Modern Churchman* in 1919. Drawing from the work of the eighteenth-century Anglican theologian and philosopher, William Paley, Millard contended that the question of the morality of birth control should be settled by examining "its ultimate effects upon human welfare." Millard then devoted considerable space to demonstrating that "birth control is calculated in its effects to be beneficial and not inimical to the human race."[90] Put another way, in his article Millard outlined a vision of flourishing, though modest in comparison to Inge's, that pictured a better life for the poor through the extension of the use of birth control. For example, he highlighted a report by the registrar-general that found the number of rooms in a house inversely related to the number of children dwelling in that house. According to Millard, this report demonstrated that, because large families were required to spend more money on food, they often found themselves living in substandard housing. Worse yet, tight quarters meant that brothers and sisters had to "share the same bed," which he believed to be a violation of basic decency. He also argued that the middle and upper classes supposed their children were entitled to a certain standard of living, but the same recognition was typically not afforded to poor children. Drawing together the various strands of his argument, Millard asked if a reasonable person could "really say that it is wrong and immoral for poor people who desire to not have more children, to take steps—provided always that such steps are not

[89] Ian Dowbiggin, "A Prey on Normal People: C. Killick Millard and the Euthanasia Movement in Great Britain, 1930-55," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 1 (January, 2001): 62, 65.
[90] Millard, "The Ethics of Birth Control (ii)," 106.

injurious—to prevent conception?" According to Millard, an expansion in the use of contraceptives could also serve to reduce unemployment, stamp out prostitution, protect the health of tired mothers, and combat the scourge of drunkenness.[91]

Following Millard's failed efforts to champion birth control at the 1920 Conference, Claud Mullins, who later took on the role of vice-president of the MCU, attempted to chart a path forward for Anglican proponents of birth control. Writing in the *Modern Churchman*, Mullins contended that for over a century Parliament had passed "ameliorative legislation" aimed at providing every individual with the opportunity for "self-development." For Mullins, this was a grave mistake, as he believed that "ameliorative legislation which interferes with economic laws invites disaster, unless it is accompanied by a voluntary reduction of the number of children brought into the world." Mullins held that Christians were right to support social welfare policies that prevented the death of the poor, but he wanted legislators and Anglican leaders to recognize that the "cruellest thing we can do to a poor man is to encourage him to produce a family larger than he can afford. The cruelty falls on the child no less than the parents." Moreover, the fecundity of the poor was also said to imperil the whole nation by placing it at risk of "war" and "plagues." Therefore, according to Mullins, it was imperative that Parliament not pass legislation which enabled the poor to produce more children than for whom they could afford to provide proper care. Concurrently, he called on the Church to encourage the use of birth control amongst the poor as a means of helping them to limit the size of their families.[92]

C. J. Bond, a committed Anglican layperson who, in addition to providing Woods with guidance on eugenics, also supported Millard's efforts in favour of euthanasia,

[91] Millard, "The Ethics of Birth Control (ii)," 108, 109-114.
[92] Mullins, "The Problem of Population," 213, 215-216.

sought to rally support for birth control in the lead-up to both the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences. Like Mullins, his published work was considered as evidence in favour of birth control at the 1920 Conference. As was the case with Mullins, it was his belief that the Church ought to change its stance on birth control in light of the 'fact' that a large percentage of lower-class parents could not afford to provide for their children—leading to unnecessary suffering. In Bond's imagined future, the distribution of birth control would increase the hereditary 'quality' of the race, and also serve to ensure each child received optimal "parental care and protection."[93] Following the vote in favour of contraception at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, he delivered an address on birth control and sterilization to the Annual Conference of the MCU. There the doctor claimed that men and women were clamouring for even more explicit "guidance to-day in this matter of birth control [including on the morality of sterilization] and the right living of the sex life," and Bond suggested that English married couples were particularly interested to learn more about how these matters affected the 'quality' and quantity of the population."[94]

After Lambeth

As Bond pressured the Church to expand its limited support for birth control following the 1930 Lambeth Conference, Woods, Lang, and Temple redirected their efforts towards enshrining Resolution 15 as the recognized position of the Church. The immediate problem faced by the trio was that, while the passing of Resolution 15 marked a historic occasion, no Conference resolution was binding on any province within the Communion.

[93] C. J. Bond, *Discussion on the Memorandum Issued by the Bishops on the Misuse of Marriage* (Leicester: Adams Bros. & Shardlow, Ltd., 1914): 4-6, 11, 14. Found at Lambeth Conference 1920, LC 135, Lambeth Conferences, Lambeth Palace Library.
[94] C. J. Bond, "The Medical Aspect of Birth Control," *Modern Churchman* 20, nos. 5, 6, & 7 (August, September, and October, 1930): 379.

Furthermore, not even the archbishop of Canterbury had the power to unilaterally enshrine the resolution as the official position of the Church. Under the structures of Church governance at the time, Lang, Temple, and Woods would have likely been expected to seek a joint resolution by the Convocations of Canterbury and York in favour of birth control. Facing opposition in Church newspapers and periodicals from rank-and-file clergy—as well as from various bishops, deans, and other influential figures—the three men instead chose to pursue the less direct path of suppressing opposition to the resolution. With their success, Resolution 15 became the *de facto* position of the Church, making it the first major Christian denomination in Europe or North America to formally condone the use of birth control.

Woods took an important step towards silencing opposition to birth control shortly after the close of the Conference. In the fall of 1930, he helped convince his colleagues at the Bishops' Meeting to agree that no further statements on birth control should be issued.[95] However, the pact formed at the Bishops' Meeting did not put the issue to rest, as in January 1931 the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury established its own committee to examine the moral and theological ramifications of the Lambeth Conference resolutions on marriage and sex.[96] When proposing the committee, critics of birth control in the Lower House contended that, in light of centuries of Church tradition, the bishops of the Communion had devoted too little time to the discussion of contraception. Critics further argued that the vague wording of the resolution resulted in confusion over what the exact position of the Church was on birth control.[97] The vote to form an investigative committee was passed by a small margin, and that committee later

[95] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, 23 October, 1930, BM 8, Bishops' Meetings, Lambeth Palace Library.
[96] The body was comprised of clergymen and various Church leaders beneath the rank of bishop. The responsibilities of the Convocations of Canterbury and York included the drafting of canons and collaborating with the Church Assembly on measures relevant to Church policy and governance.
[97] *The Chronicle of Convocation: Being a Record of the Proceedings of the Convocation of Canterbury in the Sessions of January 21 and 22, 1931* (London: SPCK, 1931), 64-71.

delivered a majority report against Resolution 15. By January 1933 Woods had passed away, but at that time the Dean of Winchester, E. G. Selwyn, was able to persuade his peers in the Lower House to forgo discussion of Resolution 15 until the Upper House requested their guidance on the topic of birth control.[98] The request never arrived, and the issue lay largely dormant in the Lower House through the Second World War.

The attempted silencing of opposition to Resolution 15 reached beyond official Church structures—with the most notable example being the targeting of the MU. Such efforts bear out the fact that the pro-birth control position championed by high-ranking Church leaders stood in opposition to the convictions of many of the most loyal adherents to the Church. The MU privately denounced Resolution 15 to Lang, Temple, and Woods shortly after the Conference, but Nina Woods shielded the men from public criticism.[99] However, the MU indirectly condemned Resolution 15 by announcing that the organization's long-held position against birth control remained unchanged. Soon thereafter, Temple personally pressured the MU to soften its stance on contraception. Lang's and Temple's support for Resolution 15 placed the organization in the uncomfortable position of being at odds with its recognized spiritual leaders. Seeking a compromise, the MU decided that the official position of the organization on birth control would indeed remain unaltered, but it announced that differing opinions on the matter would not bar any woman from membership. To avoid conflict in local branches, the MU also forbade all branches from sponsoring lectures on contraception.[100] However, in addition to lifting this ban on birth control speakers in 1934, the leadership of the MU also expressed its opposition to birth control by regularly attending meetings held by the

[98] *The Chronicle of Convocation: Being a Record of the Proceedings of the Convocation of Canterbury in the Sessions of January 18, 19, and 20, 1933* (London: SPCK, 1933), 78-81.
[99] Cordelia Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism, and Globalisation, 1876-2008* (London: The Boydell Press, 2009), 128.
[100] Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union*, 128-129.

League of National Life (LNL), an organization that staunchly opposed contraception. Additionally, five years after the passing of Resolution 15, the MU took the bold step of indicting birth control at the 1935 Church Congress. This denunciation came from a surprising source: Nina Woods—now president of the MU.

After the death of Bishop Woods, Nina Woods took several public stands against the birth control resolution so closely associated with her spouse. One of these protests took the form of signing on as a member of the LNL, and another was her indictment of Resolution 15 delivered to the Church Congress. In many ways, the speech given by Nina Woods mirrored those delivered by her husband at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, though she arrived at differing conclusions. Speaking on the topic of the family, Woods informed her audience that "the primary purpose for which marriage exists is the continuation of the race," and she cautioned that "for healthy parents to refuse the gift and privilege of children is to refute God's law, and to deny both the Church and nation lives which could be of untold value." Nina Woods believed, in line with the LNL and her deceased husband, that the decline in the birthrate was rooted in the futile pursuit of self-fulfillment (and influenced by the teachings of the new morality). "Those who for pleasure and self-indulgence refuse parenthood are forgetting their vocation and are themselves losers," she declared. She went on to describe the unrestrained use of birth control as a "hydra-headed monster," and called on the Church to root out these practices from the national life.[101]

In the mind of Nina Woods, the problems wrought by birth control within the married state began with the widespread use of contraceptives amongst unmarried couples. Once entrenched as a habit, she believed that men and women carried over such practices into their new lives as married couples. Woods added that the misuse of birth

[101] Nina Woods, "The Christian Ideal," in *Christianity in the Modern State: A Report of the Proceedings of the 65th Church Congress, Held at Bournemouth, 8th to 11th October, 1935*, ed. Maxwell Leigh (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), 306, 307.

control evidenced that a great number of women and men were lost in a "maze" of moral obscurity. With their purposeful rejection of Christian morals, these persons were said to have no reliable guide to lead them out of the moral darkness. But as her husband had promised at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, Nina Woods assured her audience that many of these men and women were eager to find an authoritative voice that could offer definite direction. As part of her platform for directing young people away from the selfish use of birth control, Nina Woods argued that the Church ought to urge all Christian married couples to forgo the use of contraceptives, as the approval of birth control in 1930 had produced the opposite effect to the one hoped for by her husband. While she believed that many older Christian married couples were using birth control responsibly, younger women and men allegedly interpreted the practice of their elders as an implicit endorsement of their own 'selfish' use of contraceptives—which included the refusal to raise large families in service to the Church and state. Following the model of the selfless life of Jesus, Nina Woods believed that if older Christians sacrificially gave up birth control, young people would in turn be less tempted to exploit contraceptives for their own egocentric ends.[102]

As alluded to by Nina Woods, along with numerous other members of the LNL, the passing of Resolution 15 did little to augment the moral authority of the Church or to increase birthrates. However, it did serve to help normalize the use of birth control. This process of normalization was aided by the unrelated decision of the Ministry of Health to permit the distribution of birth control information in public clinics (which was publicized shortly after the Lambeth Conference), and by a resolution from the annual meeting of the representatives of the British Medical Association declaring that doctors in public clinics ought to have the right to "advise either for or against the use of contraceptive

[102] Woods, "The Christian Ideal," 306-310.

methods."[103] By 1939, 52 percent of respondents to a British Institute poll would indicate they were "in favor of birth control." For those under the age of 30, that number rose to 64 percent.[104] Furthermore, the acceptance of Resolution 15 by the Church placed pressure on other Christian denominations across the Anglican Communion (and beyond) to stake out a definitive stance on contraception. In the years after the Conference, multiple denominations, including the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Methodist Conference of Great Britain, sanctioned the use of birth control.[105] Opposition to birth control within the Church continued to decline amongst senior Church leadership following the Second World War, thanks in part to the beliefs that contraceptives protected the health of women and shielded families from economic hardship. By the time of the 1958 Lambeth Conference, most delegates heartily endorsed Resolution 115, which betrayed significant concerns relating to high birthrates in 'developing' nations.[106]

Conclusion

The story of Woods' successful campaign in favour of contraception told in Chapters Two and Three reveals that he, along with many of his peers, believed the struggle over birthrates to be part of a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose in English society. Woods pitted Christian teachings against those of the "new morality," and he believed the latter had come to hold sway over young women and men—resulting in a refusal amongst them to serve the state through the rearing of large families. Additionally, the latter half of the story of Woods' campaign told in this chapter uncovers

[103] Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England*, 311. BMA quotation found in Audrey Leathard, *The Fight for Family Planning: The Development of Family Planning Services in Britain, 1921–74* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1980), 46-47.
[104] Poll data cited in Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 1995), 270-271.
[105] Notare, "A Revolution in Christian Morals," 539; and Michael Koon Hung Cheuk, "Contraception Within Marriage: Modernity and the Development of American Protestant Thought, 1930-1969" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2014), 84, 101.
[106] *Lambeth Conference 1958*, 22.

the near-utopian futures that the bishop, in addition to figures like Inge and Cecil, sought to actualize by (in accordance with their respective eugenic and neo-Malthusian beliefs) either expanding or limiting the use of birth control amongst the various socio-economic classes. Drawing upon such national and international promises of flourishing, these Anglican leaders were in turn able to justify class-based fertility-manipulation schemes as disinterested acts of benevolence towards the 'suffering' and 'disadvantaged' at home and across the empire. In the mind of Woods, the supposed moral superiority of the English race made it imperative that Britain remain atop the global pecking-order, and so he argued that England must raise the birthrate amongst the middle and upper classes. An increase in the birthrate would in turn promote worldwide peace through the strengthening of British rule across the globe.

Richard Soloway notes that, while "eugenic presuppositions were not obvious in the deliberations of the Lambeth Conference, several prelates and prominent clergymen such as E. W. Barnes, the bishop of Birmingham, Percy Dearmer, canon of Westminster, J. E. C. Welldon, the dean of Durham, and, of course, Dean Inge, welcomed the bishops' ruling as racially enlightened." The next chapter will begin to look beyond birth control debates and the Lambeth Conference towards the permanent restriction of fertility amongst the 'unfit,' as Soloway notes that many Anglican leaders "were also sympathetic to eugenic sterilization as a much more reliable way to arrest the alarming increase in people in the Social Problem Group unable or unwilling to exercise the foresight and self-restraint birth control required."[107] Put another way, Soloway points out that a relatively high birthrate (equated with the lack of foresight needed to use birth control appliances) came to be viewed as definitive evidence of the 'poor' hereditary endowment of the 'bottom' ten percent of the English population. Expanding on the work of Soloway, the

[107] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 194.

next chapter reveals that Anglican proponents of sterilization held that the supposedly high birthrate amongst the ‘dregs’ of English society contravened the will of God, and that it was in fact God’s will that these women and men be eradicated.

Chapter Four:

A Divine Narrative of Exclusion:
The 'Will of God' and the Eradication of the 'Mentally Unfit,' 1929-1935

Bishop Theodore Woods and Archbishop Cosmo Gordon Lang had sought to carefully orchestrate the deliberations on birth control at the 1930 Lambeth Conference. However, late in the Conference proceedings an unexpected episode unfolded before the two men. As the gathered delegates prepared to vote on a resolution concerning the "duty" of parenthood, Bishop Ernest Barnes rose to the podium to redirect the conversation towards the *restriction* of parenthood.[1] Barnes pleaded with his 307 colleagues not to issue an indiscriminate call for children, but to exclude prospective parents from the "lowest one-tenth" of the population. He claimed that members of this segment of the English population, referred to throughout the 1930s as the "social problem group," invariably possessed below-average mental faculties and were concentrated in the 'slums' of major cities.[2]

Drawing from the 1929 *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Mental Deficiency,* a government report produced by the Board of Education and Board of Control for Lunacy and Mental Deficiency, Barnes further argued that the social problem group, comprised of approximately 4 million persons, was responsible for "almost all our social and moral difficulties," including unemployment, pauperism, prostitution, and alcoholism. Additionally, the bishop claimed that the government report, referred to popularly as the "Wood Report," estimated that hundreds of thousands of members of the social problem group could be legally categorized as "mentally deficient."[3]

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[1] Barnes was preceded by Bishop Lord William Cecil, who urged Conference delegates to disavow any resolution that might discourage married couples belonging to 'good stock' from rearing large families.
[2] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 148, Lambeth Conferences, Lambeth Palace Library.
[3] Bishop Theodore Woods was not affiliated with the Wood Report.

Demonstrating the supposed importance of heredity, Barnes asserted that all of these 'mentally deficient' persons came from parents belonging to the social problem group—and he warned his colleagues that the 'mentally deficient' were increasing in numbers. In the light of such troubling 'statistics,' he proposed that the Conference pass a resolution urging governments to research how exactly "mental and moral weaknesses" were inherited. Armed with this information, Barnes hoped legislatures across the English-speaking world would subsequently implement measures "to do something to diminish the number of … low-grade families in the community, and to take measures for their ultimate extinction."[4]

While expressing sympathy with Barnes' aims, Woods sought to deflect attention from the eugenic nature of his own fertility-manipulation scheme by encouraging the gathered bishops to vote against Barnes' resolution.[5] The majority of delegates obliged, and discussion returned to the resolutions submitted by the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex. However, Barnes was not without his supporters, as, shortly before the publication of the Wood Report, Bishop Hensley Henson, Bishop Lord William Cecil, and the suffragan bishop of Kingston had all signed an open letter urging the Ministry of Health to launch an enquiry "into the best method of dealing with mental deficiency and incurably diseased persons, including a special enquiry into the possibility and advisability of legalizing sterilisation, under proper safeguards, and in certain cases."[6] Thanks in part to concerns raised by the Wood Report over the procreative patterns of the social problem group, along with the seeming futility of efforts to raise birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes (including the apparent failure of Woods' fertility-manipulation scheme), numerous Anglican leaders would come to join the likes of

[4] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 148.
[5] Proceedings, Lambeth Conference 1930, LC 148. The vote on Barnes' proposal was delayed by several procedural matters.
[6] "Sterilisation & Mental Deficiency," *Manchester Guardian*, February 21, 1929.

Barnes, Cecil, and Henson (along with W. R. Inge and Claud Mullins) over the next half decade in supporting a variety of schemes aimed at increasing the overall 'quality' of the English population through the restriction of parenthood. Whereas Barnes failed to accomplish his aims at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, by 1935 Lang had convinced the members of the Bishops' Meeting to vote to affirm the morality of restricting parenthood amongst men and women deemed likely to pass on mental and physical 'taints' to their progeny.

In addition to encouraging the use of birth control, proposed measures to combat the social problem group, and various subsets of persons deemed "mentally unfit," ranged from requiring certificates of 'good health' prior to marriage, expanding institutional segregation, restricting the provision of government services to a set number of children per family, and legalizing sterilization. The focus of this chapter is on the moral justification offered by Anglican leaders in defence of the widespread, but ultimately unsuccessful, campaign between 1929 and 1935 to legalize voluntary sterilization for 'mentally unfit' persons. I have chosen to focus on Anglican support for the legalization of sterilization because, along with an expansion in the use of birth control appliances amongst the lower classes, it ranked as one of the most widely supported negative eugenic schemes by Anglican leaders during this time. And as mentioned at the close of the last chapter, sterilization and birth control appliances were seen as complementary tools to tackle the proliferation of the 'unfit,' with the former said to be necessary for 'unfit' persons incapable of the foresight needed to use contraceptives. Additionally, support for sterilization reached to the highest levels of Church leadership. The campaign in favour of sterilization, spearheaded by the Eugenics Society (EES; renamed from the Eugenics Education Society), therefore provides an expansive window into the ways in

which Anglican leaders justified meddling with the procreative behaviours of men and women with alleged mental disabilities.

In the Wood Report, the term "mental defective" was regularly used to refer to persons who were thought to meet the legal criteria to be deemed "mentally deficient," or lacking the "mentality" to independently perform their duties "in some social situation in a reasonably satisfactory and efficient manner," and therefore necessitating "some form of special surroundings or some degree of external assistance, control, or supervision."[7] Terms like "mental defective" and "mentally deficient" were carelessly and pejoratively employed by many Anglican leaders—and I in no way mean to imply that these, or related terms, accurately reflect how the term "mental disability" is understood today by medical experts and disability advocates. As an additional note regarding the terminology employed in this chapter, I have chosen to use some variation of the term "mentally unfit persons" when referring to the broad group of men and women who were targeted by Anglican leaders for sterilization based upon their mental capacities. The term "mentally unfit" was a non-technical term that was often applied to the entirety of the social problem group, along with 'mental defectives' from all social classes, and it was used throughout the 1930s in reference to persons thought to be lacking the necessary mental capacities to 'properly' govern their own affairs. However, I will use more technical terms like "member of the social problem group" or "mental defective" when it is necessary to clarify the meaning intended by a particular Anglican leader.[8]

In accordance with the practice of Barnes, Anglican proponents of negative eugenic measures, including the social worker and sterilization advocate, Josephine Calcutt, along with her writing partner and future husband, Rev. J. P. Hinton, often

[7] *Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee: Being A Joint Committee of the Board of Education and Board of Control: Parts I-IV* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), 7, 8.
[8] However, the term "mental defective" was not always used in a technical sense, as it was sometimes employed as a synonym with the term "mentally unfit person."

subscribed to some form of hereditarian determinism. Within such frameworks, the inheritance of 'undesirable' mental traits (along with moral, physical, and spiritual ones) was not thought to be random, but predictable based on parentage. Furthermore, the inheritance of these traits was said to confine scores of women and men to lives of poverty, degradation, and dependence on social welfare programs. In the face of such stigmatizing rhetoric, religious and non-religious critics of eugenic practices often responded with the claim that procreation constituted a fundamental "right" or "liberty." As far back as 1922, the well-known Roman Catholic author and journalist, G. K. Chesterton, asserted that eugenists shared a common "contempt for human rights." Chesterton further reasoned that supporters of eugenics were guilty of a grave sin in transgressing the rights of their fellow citizens, as he believed that in "the matter of fundamental human rights nothing can be above Man, except God."[9]

Writing in 1935, the professor of political science at Cambridge, Ernest Barker, offered a succinct and representative response to claims that negative eugenic policies unjustly transgressed the rights of British citizens. Barker, a committed Anglican layperson and Christian socialist, heartily endorsed the notion that all human beings were entitled to "make simple and fundamental claims" on their own behalf. Amongst these included the right to be treated as "free" and "equal." However, he did not consider such claims to be inviolable. According to the professor, claims on freedom and equality could be justly "taken away" in service of "some greater cause, which has to be very great indeed." The state, therefore, had the prerogative to restrict parenthood amongst women and men "suffering from certain defects," but it had to first demonstrate that a "moral

[9] G. K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* (London: Cassell and Company, 1922), 51, 60.

claim and some answering moral responsibility is so strong, and so much deserving of support, that it may safely be made a matter of legal right and duty."[10]

A comprehensive exploration of the moral claims offered by Anglican leaders in defence of the legalization of sterilization is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, it will examine the matter through the lenses of two books written to persuade Christians to support the legalization of sterilization. The first of these is *Eugenics,* a 1933 work by Prof. Leonard Hodgson, and the second is *Sterilization: A Christian Approach*, which Calcutt and Hinton published in 1935. These works represented predominant lines of moral thought amongst Anglican eugenists, and their authors were united by liberal theological inclinations and a belief that God explicitly desired the eradication of the 'mentally unfit' population. God was said to have made His will known through various mediums, including the history of the development of the natural world. In *Sterilization,* Calcutt and Hinton argued that God directed Christians to suppress the 'mentally unfit' population because these persons were doomed from birth to an 'undesirable' existence, meaning that 'mentally unfit' persons, and in particular 'mentally defective' persons, were incapable of the moral and spiritual development that was equated by the authors with the *individual* purpose of a human life. For his part, Hodgson equated the eradication of the 'mentally unfit' with *communal* purpose, arguing that God directed Christians to eradicate the 'mentally unfit' because such persons hindered His plan (working in cooperation with obedient men and women) to perfect all of humankind in body, mind, and morals. Such goals reflect a shared disposition amongst many religious and non-religious proponents of eugenics. Philipa Levine and Allison Bashford point out that there "was a power in eugenic promise—perfectibility, improvement, the benefits that would accrue from rational planning. Despite the persistence of a degenerationist discourse,

[10] Ernest Barker, "Foundation of Politics," *Hibbert Journal* 34, no. 1 (October, 1935): 16, 17.

eugenics was thus marked by considerable optimism: it was an active creed, an *applied* science."[11]

In opposition to Chesterton, all three authors agreed that the chief danger for Christians in relation to sterilization lay not in trampling the rights of their fellow citizens. It was that Christians would sin by refusing to support divinely ordained efforts to eradicate the 'mentally unfit' population. The claims made by these and many other Anglican leaders constructed a narrative of exclusion, or a narrative relating to what 'kinds' of persons were deemed valuable to both God and society. Within this narrative of exclusion, persons thought to be lacking in certain mental capacities were regularly categorized as a lower order of being, and their very existence was said to be displeasing to God. In effect, the standard by which figures like Hodgson judged whether their fellow human beings possessed the requisite capacities to be deserving of the right to procreate was their own self-identity. Anglican leaders such as Hodgson, Barnes, Calcutt, and Hinton, along with the chaplain and senior science master at Winchester College, Rev. S. A. McDowall, presumed that their own mental and moral capacities represented the pinnacle of millions of years of human evolution. As a result, these sterilization advocates functionally placed themselves at the centre of the cosmos and human history—as they believed themselves to be not only the pinnacle of human evolution, but also the stewards chosen by God to guide the future of human evolution.

When constructing their narratives of exclusion, Hodgson, Calcutt, and Hinton, along with most religious and non-religious proponents of sterilization, took care to emphasize that they supported only 'voluntary' legislation, and so any sterilization procedure would have to be 'requested' by an individual or a duly appointed

[11] Philipa Levine and Allison Bashford, "Introduction: Eugenics and the Modern World," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Philipa Levine and Allison Bashford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

representative. This chapter reveals that support for such legislation reached to the highest levels of Church leadership—including Archbishop Lang, the Archbishop of York, William Temple, and the majority of the bishops. Such support can be credited in part to the passing of Resolution 15, which provided a theological precedent for separating sex from procreation within the marriage state.

Despite the emphasis placed on the 'voluntary' nature of sterilization proposals, concerns over coercion, as well as the close connection drawn by eugenists between social class and persons deemed to be in possession of 'inferior' mental capacities, proved politically toxic. A lack of credible scientific evidence and increasing awareness of the Nazi eugenic program further stigmatized the cause of sterilization.[12] Barnes, a relative latecomer to the pro-sterilization camp, nevertheless persisted in the face of these many difficulties. Speaking as late as 1949, the bishop insisted that the legalization of sterilization could save England from the "slovenly, vicious idle wasters" who threatened to bankrupt the country.[13]

The EES and voluntary sterilization

Matthew Thomson notes that, despite the legalization of sterilization by 12 states in America prior to 1917, the cause garnered minimal support from English eugenists during the first two decades of the century. This was due to fears that, with the specter of pregnancy gone, sterilization would encourage widespread sexual misconduct. Additionally, scant evidence supported the efficacy of sterilization programs for reducing

[12] For discussion on British eugenists who expressed sympathy for Nazi eugenic schemes, see Bradley Hart, "Watching the 'Eugenic Experiment' Unfold: The Mixed Views of British Eugenicists Toward Nazi Germany in the Early 1930s," *Journal of the History of Biology* 45, no. 1 (2012): 36.
[13] "Sterilisation of the Unfit: Dr. Barnes's Suggestion," *Manchester Guardian,* November 29, 1949.

instances of 'mental deficiency.'[14] Mindful of moral and scientific concerns, many eugenists in the 1910s supported an expansion of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, which allowed for the institutionalization of certain 'mentally deficient' persons (including alcoholics and poor, unwedded mothers), as a preferred means for limiting the propagation of the 'mentally unfit.'

In 1924, the aforementioned Interdepartmental Committee on Mental Deficiency began its investigation into the numbers of 'mentally deficient' children and how to best educate them. Shortly thereafter, the committee, which included eugenists Cyril Burt and Evelyn Fox, expanded its inquiry to the prevalence and treatment of 'mental deficiency' amongst adults. Thomson points out that during this time the United States Supreme Court bolstered the credibility of sterilization schemes on both sides of the Atlantic by affirming the legality of compulsory sterilization in 1927.[15] With the publication of the Wood Report in 1929, the Interdepartmental Committee on Mental Deficiency further strengthened the case for sterilization with its claim that, while the fertility of the social problem group remained constant, the families of the "better social groups" were "steadily diminishing in size."[16] Additionally, the report estimated that instances of "mental deficiency" occurred in England at a rate of 8.56 per thousand population, a substantial increase from the previous government estimate of 4.6.[17]

The Wood Report distinguished between "lower grade" defectives, who included persons classified as "idiots" and imbeciles," and the "higher grade" of "feeble-minded" persons (who comprised roughly three-quarters of all 'mentally defective' individuals).

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[14] Matthew Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain, c.1870-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 181-183. My overview of the campaign for sterilization in Britain between 1900 and 1930 is based largely on Thomson's work.
[15] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 182.
[16] *Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee* (*Part III)*, 82.
[17] *Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee* (*Part I)*, 76. Many eugenists used this data to claim that instances of 'mental deficiency' were rapidly increasing, though the report indicated that the uptick was partially the result of more uniform investigatory methods.

The former were said to be distributed evenly throughout the English population, while the latter were said to typically be born from members of the social problem group (including from parents belonging to the group who did not meet the legal definition of 'mental defective'). Writing elsewhere, the president of the EES, Bernard Mallet, described the members of the social problem group as persons "burdensome to the community," which included the "bulk of unemployables, incorrigible slum makers, prostitutes, inebriates, habitual criminals, chronic paupers, and high-grade defectives." Following a similar line of thought to Barnes, Mallet causally linked the burdens imposed by the members of the social problem group, who were thought to be concentrated at the very 'bottom' of the lower class, with their 'below-average' mental capacities.[18] In accordance with Mallet's logic, the entirety of the social problem group could be deemed 'mentally unfit,' while a narrower segment of this group could be said to meet the legal definition of 'mentally defective.'

According to Thomson, eugenists like Mallet broadly interpreted the Wood Report to mean that: (1) the total number of 'mentally defective' persons was larger than previously estimated and increasing year-over-year; (2) the primary cause for this increase was the relatively high birthrate of the social problem group; and (3) the current system of institutional segregation was not sufficiently resourced to care for the increasing number of 'mental defectives,' or to restrict parenthood amongst the entire social problem group.[19] In response to the Wood Report, the EES launched the Committee for Legalizing Eugenic Sterilization (CLES). The Society hoped that by limiting the fertility of the entire social problem group (through sterilization and the expansion of institutional segregation), the state could not only reduce instances of mental

[18] Bernard Mallet, "The Social Problem Group: The President's Account of the Society's Next Task," *Eugenics Review* 3, no. 23 (October, 1931): 204.
[19] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 183.

deficiency, but also resolve social ills like poverty, crime, and prostitution associated with the 'mentally unfit.' The EES took care to emphasize the supposed safety and simplicity of vasectomy and salpingectomy procedures, and claimed that sterilization would enhance the quality of life for some 'mentally defective' persons by allowing for their release from institutions into the general population.[20]

Throughout the interwar period, notions of 'fitness' and 'unfitness' were framed in relation to an individual's ability to independently provide for him- or herself and also dutifully abide by the laws of the nation. Speaking at the Church Congress in 1930, Alfred Tredgold, a physician and leading expert on the care of 'mentally deficient' persons, informed his audience that the 'science' of eugenics taught "that there are certain individuals in the community so constituted that they can only produce inferior or unfit offspring; and that their propagation should be prevented." Tredgold, who was not a professing Anglican, but nevertheless was well-respected by senior church leaders, added that there also existed "individuals so constituted to produce socially fit or superior offspring, and that, in the interests of the race, their propagation should be encouraged." He then explored the nature of "fitness" and "unfitness." The doctor made clear that both terms were relative, and that each referred to the "sum of many qualities." Nevertheless, he did venture to offer a definition for each. A "fit" individual was said to be a person whose mental and physical endowment enabled "him to earn a living without being a burden on the community, to conform to the current standards of law and order, and to discharge his duties as a member of society in a reasonably responsible and efficient manner without the necessity for external supervision, care, or control." On the other hand, an "unfit" person was an individual "who, by reason of defective development or persistent ill-health of body or mind, is unable to do these things. Instead of being

[20] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 191-192.

responsible, self-supporting, and independent, he is constantly in need of some kind of care and assistance."[21]

The EES first tested the parliamentary waters in July 1931. Confident that its public advocacy work had garnered sufficient support for sterilization, A. G. Church, a Labour MP and member of the CLES, requested the approval of Parliament to introduce a sterilization bill. Church quickly learned the limits of the EES' influence, as critics seized the opportunity to paint the sterilization movement as anti-working class—and the motion was defeated 167 to 89. John Macnicol notes that after this setback the EES turned its attention towards lobbying the Ministry of Health and Board of Control.[22] Joining the EES in these efforts were several local government organizations, including the County Councils Association and the Municipal Corporations Association.[23] Together these groups persuaded the Chairman of the Board of Control, Lawrence Brock, to establish a departmental committee on sterilization in 1932.

Brock remained in close contact with the new general secretary of the EES, C. P. Blacker, during the course of his committee's investigations.[24] The EES further exerted its influence through the appointment of CLES member R. A. Fisher to the Brock Committee. Fisher was a highly regarded statistician and geneticist, and his voice lent considerable credibility to the campaign for voluntary sterilization. As a member of the Brock Committee, he carried out extensive analysis relating to the inheritance and prevalence of 'mental deficiency.'[25] Writing previously in the pages of the *Eugenics Review*, Fisher had estimated that "the proportion of the parents of the feebleminded who

[21] A. F. Tredgold, "Our Debt to Posterity: Eugenics," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress, Newport, Mon., Oct. 7-10th, 1930,* ed. Spencer Morgan (Cardiff. Western Mail & Echo, Ltd., 1930), 73-75.
[22] John Macnicol, "The Voluntary Sterilization Campaign in Britain, 1918-39," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 3 (January, 1982): 430.
[23] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 194.
[24] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 186.
[25] Walter Bodmer, et al., "The Outstanding Scientist, R. A. Fisher: His Views on Eugenics and Race," *Heredity* 4, no. 126 (April, 2021): 570.

are themselves feebleminded is about 25-50%." He added that, in part because "feebleminded" persons tended to find mates similar to themselves, instances of "feeblemindedness" could be dramatically reduced through the expansion of institutional segregation and the legalization of sterilization.[26] Fisher elsewhere argued for the inheritance of not only physical and mental traits, but moral ones as well. The geneticist also taught that membership of a particular social class provided a good indicator of intelligence and one's moral constitution, as he believed that the classes were "stratified" due to differences in heredity. According to Fisher, the middle and upper classes were blessed with a higher degree of innate intelligence, and also favourable "moral qualities" like "fortitude" and "persistence."[27]

Human perfection and the will of God

As the Brock Committee conducted its enquiry, Leonard Hodgson was busy writing *Eugenics*. Hodgson's work was provoked by the Wood Report, but he drew on earlier influences when forming his moral arguments on behalf of sterilization. One such influence was Lilly Dougall, a novelist turned philosopher and modernist theologian. Writing in 1919, Dougall set out to explore whether a "steady tendency towards anything that may be called good can be discovered in the process of biological development as a whole," and, if so, what that might reveal about God's "further purpose … with regard to man." Dougall's essay, entitled "The Survival of the Fittest," was one of her two contributions to *God and the Struggle for Existence,* an anthology edited by a fellow member of the informal organization of Anglican theologians known as the Cumnor

[26] R. A. Fisher, "The Elimination of Mental Defect," *Eugenics Review* 2, no. 16 (July, 1924), 116.
[27] For example, see R. A. Fisher, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 186, 262-263. For further discussion, see Bodmer, et al., "The Outstanding Scientist," 569. The Anglican layperson and professor of botany at King's College, London, R. Ruggles Gates, also strongly advocated in favour of sterilization.

Group. Dougall answered the first of her questions in the affirmative, arguing that "perfect correspondence with environment is the aim of Nature for every organism." The process of biological development could therefore be said to be directed towards 'good' in so far as the history of the evolution of humankind, presumed to have been superintended by God, could be read as the story of human beings coming to more fully flourish on earth. Carrying this logic over to her second question, Dougall suggested that this tendency towards 'good' revealed something of the divine will of God. She argued that the history of evolution revealed that it was God's will for human beings to work with Him in bringing about the "perfect" correspondence between humankind and nature. Looking towards the future, Dougall imagined that divinely sanctioned eugenic policies would separate the world into two classes of people, the biologically "superior" and "inferior." She added that the long-term goal of the 'superior' ought to be the eradication of the 'inferior.'[28]

One of the youngest members of the Cumnor Group was Leonard Hodgson, who in 1919 became dean of divinity and tutor in theology at Magdalen College, Oxford.[29] By the time he wrote *Eugenics* in 1933, Hodgson was a canon of Winchester Cathedral. Similarly to Dougall, Hodgson set out in *Eugenics* to discover the will of God through the study of the history of "evolution." In his work, he reflected at length on how knowledge of God's will might be discerned apart from the Bible. According to the canon, God worked out His purposes in history in two related ways. First, God created souls, and the circumstances of life could be conceived of as a test to determine whether each soul was deserving of "eternal bliss." The only way to pass this life-long entrance exam for heaven, Hodgson claimed, was to align one's life with the will of God. The second way God was

[28] Lily Dougall, "The Survival of the Fittest," in *God and the Struggle for Existence*, ed. B. H. Streeter (New York: Association Press, 1919), 65, 67, 69-70, 75.
[29] For more information on the Cumnor Group, see Joanna Dean, *Religious Experience and the New Woman: The Life of Lily Dougall* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 144-150.

said to work out His purposes in history was through the processes of evolution. "We may think of God as initiating and maintaining a process of development in which creation as a whole is being brought to perfection, and that the fulfillment of this aim, is, so to speak, a matter of interest to God," Hodgson explained to his readers. In his mind, the term "evolution" could be applied to the interrelated development of both the universe and organic beings. With regards to humans, Hodgson held that God had ordained the process of natural selection to guide their development towards perfection in body, mind, and morals, which in turn was thought to directly contribute to the gradual perfecting of society. He added that the possession of "conscious, intelligent freedom" separated human beings from all other creatures.[30]

Drawing together the two ways God worked out His purposes in history, Hodgson argued that God bestowed conscious and intelligent freedom upon human beings so that they might partner with Him to advance His purposes on earth.[31] Such a partnership was conceived of by Hodgson as part of God's entrance examination for heaven, as God was thought to monitor the extent to which each person took on the responsibility of working with Him to perfect humanity. Elsewhere he clarified this responsibility, stating that "no power on earth" could prevent eugenists from offering humanity the power to control the "inborn qualities of the race." The choice put before the "Christian Church" was to decide whether to refuse this gift as a "Satanic offering," or to partner with God and eugenists in bringing about "man's true perfecting."[32]

Hodgson conceded that he could not appeal to specific passages in the Bible to support his claims relating to human perfection and the divine will of God. However, he believed this was not a cause for concern, as God did not "reveal Himself in some myth

[30] Leonard Hodgson, *Eugenics* (London: The Centenary Press, 1933), 14, 37, 41.
[31] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 41.
[32] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 52

or legend to which the nature of the universe and history of mankind are irrelevant; He is revealed in nature which is His handiwork; and in His actual historical operations."[33] The role of the Bible, according to Hodgson, was to help elucidate the "mind" of Christ, or the foundational precepts (e.g., love of neighbour) undergirding the answers offered by Jesus to the specific problems of His day.[34] Once saturated with these foundational precepts, Christians, drawing inspiration also from the rest of the Bible and church history, could then discern how best to carry out the directives of God as revealed in nature (i.e., how best to eradicate the 'mentally unfit'). Of course, not all Anglican eugenists during the interwar period made reference to any kind of search for the "mind of Christ" when employing the Bible on behalf of various negative eugenic schemes. However, these women and men typically followed the example of Hodgson in that they rarely offered detailed exegesis of passages from the Bible in defence of their efforts to solve the 'problem' of the 'unfit.' They appealed instead to foundational precepts and general values from Christian scripture.

Christianity and the suspension of natural selection

As Hodgson sought to uncover the will of God in nature, he ran up against the question of why there existed any need for human beings to partner with Him in the process of 'perfecting' humanity. As conceived of by Hodgson, and later by Calcutt and Hinton, the process of natural selection had been ordained by God to bring about His specific designs for human improvement—indicating that for untold years God had worked towards these

[33] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 18, 15.
[34] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 18-19. The term "mind of Christ" drew from the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:16. Other Anglican leaders sought to discover the "mind of Christ" in regards to unique, modern-day problems via avenues such as organized discussions amongst Christians on a specific topic—where it was thought that Jesus would supernaturally guide the discussants towards truth. For related discussion, see Gilbert Cunningham Joyce, "Presidential Address," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress, Newport, Mon., Oct. 7-10th, 1930*, 7-13.

ends without the conscious aid of any woman or man. What changed, according to the three authors, was that the process of natural selection was no longer in operation. 'Evidence' for this claim came from the Wood Report, which was thought to indicate that God's purposes were being thwarted by an increase in the total number of 'mentally unfit' persons. Investigations into the causes for the suspension of natural selection had been undertaken by both religious and non-religious persons since the time of Francis Galton. One common conclusion was that blame fell to private charity, social welfare schemes, and public health initiatives. Writing in 1931, Rev. McDowall warned that English society had

> countered the natural selection of past years by our increased medical knowledge and our growing humanitarianism; but we have not faced the responsibility imposed upon us by this development, nor adopted a sensible artificial selection. We have said, 'Yes of course you must save the weak and ill and do the best you can for them'; but we have lifted up hands of holy horror at the idea that we ought to see that the weak and ill do not breed more rapidly than is desirable.[35]

Similarly, Hinton and Calcutt argued that the suspension of natural selection resulted from widespread government efforts to care for the health and wellbeing of "millions of unfit" persons across Britain. They argued that the "difficulty of these services is not so much that they prolong such lives, which is humane, but they can do nothing at present to prevent their being reproduced, time and time again." The authors further warned that many public health initiatives served to increase misery in accordance with the growing number of children born to 'mentally unfit' parents, and these children were described as "unwilling victims."[36]

For his part, Barnes was careful to point out that charitable and government services did not spring into existence *ex nihilo*. Rather, he identified misguided Christian

[35] S. A. McDowall, *Biology & Mankind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 171.
[36] J. P. Hinton and Josephine Calcutt, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1935), 29, 31.

sentiments as the driving force behind them. Reflecting on the findings of the Wood Report, Barnes argued that the 'mentally unfit' were increasing in number because "our humane instincts, fortified by Christian teachings, have caused us to modify the harsh social conditions under which, even a couple of generations ago, many of the mentally defective would have been eliminated as soon as a new mental defect mutation appeared."[37] In the mind of Barnes, indiscriminate care for the 'mentally unfit,' however well meaning, stood in direct contrast to the will of God as revealed in the processes of biological evolution. The development of humanity pointed to "the unity of creation and a progressive order," which in turn demonstrated "an age-long purpose," Barnes informed the readers of the *Modern Churchman*. This purpose of God, according to Barnes, was to enhance the capacities of spiritual understanding and moral loyalties in humankind.[38] In other writings, Barnes warned about the regression of "spiritual understanding" in humankind. The bishop surmised that the 'feeble-minded,' who were said to be growing in number due to the historic influence of Christianity on the state, had "no capacity of response to religious teaching: and in the poorer quarters of our great cities the clergy are constantly met by border-line cases, children and adults, in whom it is impossible to arouse any spiritual aspiration." This was a cause of concern for Barnes because he believed the 'science' of eugenics had conclusively demonstrated that "mental defectives not only lack some of the most valuable qualities of our human heritage, but also that they often transmit such lack to their off-spring."[39]

In *Eugenics*, Hodgson argued that mentally and physically 'unfit' persons were previously killed off by way of war, famine, and pestilence. However, under the influence

[37] Here Barnes was likely using the term "mental defective" in a broader sense to refer to all 'mentally unfit' women and men.
[38] E. W. Barnes, "Heredity and Predestination," *Modern Churchman* 20, no. 9 (December, 1930): 494, 500.
[39] E. W. Barnes, "Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion," *Eugenics Review* 1, no. 18 (April, 1926): 11, 12.

of Christianity, he warned that "man's growing power of control over the conditions of life has brought it about that these factors no longer operate as they used to do."[40] He further cautioned that "by following the guidance of our Christian hearts [in relation to public policy] without enlisting the forethought of our Christian heads we have tended to propagate the less desirable strains of the human race at the expense of the more desirable." Hodgson explained that this was the result of the 'fit' being forced to reduce the size of their families in order to subsidize government programs for the 'unfit.'[41] In support of his claims relating to the multiplication of the 'unfit,' Hodgson appealed to the Wood Report—which he believed offered conclusive evidence that, while the fertility of the middle and upper classes was on the decline, the total size of the social problem group was rapidly increasing. These trends were especially concerning for the professor in the light of his belief that as many as 80 percent of all instances of 'mental deficiency' were the result of heredity (and he supposed that many members of the social problem group who did not meet the legal definition of 'mentally deficient' nevertheless gave birth to 'mentally deficient' children). Armed with this 'evidence,' Hodgson concluded that, for Christians willing to take up God's call to perfect humanity, halting the proliferation of 'mental defects' was the most obvious place to start.[42]

Like Hodgson, Inge believed God called upon Christians to work with Him towards the perfection of humanity. Speaking at the 1930 Church Congress, Inge asserted that attending to "the racial qualities of future generations" was rightly conceived of as a moral obligation, and he was quick to disavow the "cramped picture of the universe" previously ascribed to by Christians. That picture was one in which God was said to have created the universe "out of nothing" only 6,000 years in the past. Inge instead

[40] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 41-42.
[41] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 60, 62.
[42] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 63, 65-66.

championed the "doctrine of evolution," which taught Christians to "look back millions of years during which humanity has risen to its present stature," as well as to look forward to another million years of human development. Inge concluded that the doctrine of evolution had gifted "humanity something to live for, long hopes and wonderful possibilities which in earlier times would have seemed extravagant and even impious." Along these lines, he declared that eugenic schemes, under the guidance of faithful Christians, could achieve a "Christophany in redeemed humanity itself." Inge's audience would have interpreted these words to mean that the 'science' of eugenics could deliver humanity from the entrapments of hereditary imperfections, and ultimately advance human evolution to the point where all men and women possessed mental, moral, and physical characteristics similar to those of Jesus Christ.[43] While Inge was grandiose in his claims, Peter J. Bowler points out that, like Inge, many modernists supposed that God initiated the processes of biological evolution, and that it was incumbent upon Christians to direct these processes towards remaking humanity into what the Bible might refer to as the "image of Christ."[44]

The will of God and the right to procreate

Hodgson's quest to stem the tide of the 'mentally unfit' took place under the theological shadow of *Casti connubii*, the 1930 encyclical from Pope Pius XI. Sharon Leon notes that the encyclical, provoked by the approval of birth control at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, reiterated the position of the Roman Catholic Church that "its teaching and articulation of natural law was the proper source of governance on issues associated with marriage." Drawing from this tradition, the encyclical condemned intentionally childless

[43] W. R. Inge, "Our Debt to Posterity: Eugenics," in *The Official Report of the Church Congress, Newport, Mon., Oct. 7-10th, 1930*, 68, 70-7.
[44] Peter J. Bowler, *Reconciling Science and Religion: The Debate in Early-Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 233-235.

marriages, contraception, civil divorce, abortion, sterilization, and other measures intended to prevent persons from marrying and rearing children. Leon points out that *Casti connubii* specifically denounced the practice of sterilization as "a violation of natural law since it unnecessarily deprived an individual of his or her reproductive capacity and most often represented an intrusion of the authority of the state on the natural rights of the individual."[45]

Hodgson swept aside the objections of Pius XI to sterilization by arguing that the "begetting of defective children, either within or without marriage, cannot be regarded as an activity in accordance with God's will." To help realize the supposed will of God, he suggested that marriage need not necessarily entail the begetting of children, and added that advances in genetics could help reveal which married couples ought to avoid parenthood.[46] Hodgson based his claims relating to intentionally childless marriages partly on an appeal to natural theology, as he believed some of God's designs for marriage were progressively revealed in nature in accordance with advances in scientific knowledge. Taking into account God's supposed desire to perfect humanity, as well as recent insights by scientists into the transmissibility of 'undesirable' mental and physical traits, Hodgson explained to his readers that Christians were presented with only two choices in relation to persons who possessed the 'requisite' mental capacities to marry, but not to 'properly' rear children. Followers of Christ could either support barring these persons from marriage, or sanction childless marriages (by way of contraceptives and sterilization).[47]

Hodgson next turned his sights towards the Pope's claim that sterilization made a mockery of natural rights. In a bold rhetorical move, he asserted that if the begetting of

[45] Sharon Leon, *An Image of God: The Catholic Struggle with Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 93-94.
[46] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 70-71.
[47] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 70-71.

children was rightly understood as contravening the will of God, then "it must take its place besides such things as the institution of slavery." Hodgson (and later Calcutt and Hinton) argued that the begetting of 'defective' children was a moral abomination, like slavery, that Christians had come to slowly denounce over time, and he expressed hope that the "would-be-begetter of defectives" would one day be regarded as the "would-be slave holder." Drawing upon the rhetoric of Bishop Woods, he further asserted that one of the only philosophical bases for supporting parenthood amongst the 'unfit' was "atheistic hedonism," as one had to claim that the right to satisfy his or her desires (i.e., the desire amongst the 'unfit' to have children) superseded the needs of unborn children.[48]

Many of Hodgson's arguments in favour of sterilization strongly suggested that he supported compulsory measures. In accordance with his belief that all people were commanded by God to contribute to community life, he held that God had conferred upon the state certain powers: "if the contribution required of some people is that they should raise the largest families of which they are capable, and from others that they should refrain from raising any at all, the state has as much right to require the fulfilment of their duty from one class as from another." He added that it was "absurd" to allow 'mentally unfit' persons to raise large families as long as these men and women "demanded" financial support from the more-well-to-do. However, as a means of minimizing controversy, Hodgson ultimately drew back from any claims relating to compulsory sterilization. And he argued that sterilization procedures ought to be promoted primarily amongst 'mentally defective' persons who were either married or desired to be married (as well as amongst persons who had good reason to believe that they were 'carriers' of a 'mental defect,' which seemingly opened the door to sterilizing the entirety of the social

[48] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 72-73.

problem group).[49] With these safeguards in place, Hodgson urged his readers not to follow their "Christian heart," but pleaded with them to support sterilization as a means of bringing about the will of God on earth.

The Brock Report

In the months following the publication of *Sterilization*, English eugenists anxiously awaited the findings of Brock and his committee. Germany passed sterilization legislation around this same time, and Norway (1934), Sweden (1935), Finland (1935), and Iceland (1938) soon followed.[50] With the release of the Brock Report in 1934, many English eugenists concluded that it was a matter of when, not if, Britain would follow suit. The report heartened many eugenists with its recommendation that voluntary sterilization, under multiple safeguards, be extended to 'mental defectives' and individuals with 'transmissible' physical disabilities.[51] The justification for voluntary sterilization offered in the Brock Report centred in part on capacities, meaning that the committee believed 'mental defectives' did not make competent parents, and therefore ought not to procreate. Many eugenists also heartily welcomed the committee's recommendation that sterilization be made available to all persons "whose family history gives reasonable ground for belief that they may transmit mental disorder or defect," as it was thought to lay the groundwork for targeting the entirety of the social problem group in future legislation.[52] However, the report indicated that sterilization could not serve as a replacement for institutional care, as, even without the responsibility of children, only a small number of 'mental defectives' were thought to possess the requisite capacities for

[49] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 108-109, 111, 132.
[50] Macnicol, "The Voluntary Sterilization Campaign in Britain," 428.
[51] For further discussion, see Macnicol, "The Voluntary Sterilization Campaign in Britain," 430-431.
[52] *Report of the Departmental Committee on Sterilisation* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), 41.

living amongst the general population. Additionally, the report intentionally tempered expectations regarding the efficacy of sterilization programs for reducing instances of mental deficiency, which was in line with uncertainties expressed by the committee as to the role played by heredity in relation to the inheritance of 'mental defects.'[53] Nevertheless, many eugenists ignored these latter findings of the report, and instead focused on the claim that sterilization ought to be made available to 'mental defectives' and persons who had good reason to suspect that they might pass on a physical or mental 'taint' to their progeny.

The EES missed out on an influential ally when the British Medical Association declined to endorse the findings of the Brock Committee, but the Central Association for Mental Welfare did join the cause.[54] Seeking to capitalize on what it now believed to be a broad coalition in favour of the legalization of sterilization, the EES quickly founded a new body, the Joint Committee on Voluntary Sterilization. Thomson notes that the Society continued to present sterilization "as a highly effective form of birth control that could complement existing measures to care for mentally defective persons," as well as an effective means to "redress what was deemed to be a dysgenic differential fertility problem." With regards to its legislative strategy, the Society made concerted efforts to introduce its own sterilization bill, while also concurrently placing pressure on the Ministry of Health and Board of Control to introduce legislation. In response to controversy over compulsory sterilization legislation enacted in Germany (and the United States), the Society also took great care to emphasize the 'voluntary' nature of its proposals.[55]

[53] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 186.
[54] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 186. The CAMW was a private organization focused on the provision of mental health services
[55] Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 186-187, 191, 199.

Sterilization: A Christian Approach

Calcutt and Hinton published their 1935 work, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach,* for the purpose of garnering Christian support for the system of voluntary sterilization proposed by Brock and his committee. In addition to the Brock Report, the authors cited declarations on marriage and sexuality from the 1930 Lambeth Conference as inspiration for their work. Calcutt and Hinton suggested that, prior to the 1930 Conference, many Anglicans viewed sex as a distasteful subject associated with humankind's "lower nature." They argued that the bishops transformed these outdated views on sexuality by affirming that the sexual "instinct" was a gift from God. In the light of this teaching, the authors believed that topics like sterilization could finally be openly and fairly discussed amongst Christians. Additionally, they suggested that the Subcommittee on Marriage and Sex had bolstered the case for sterilization by declaring in its report that, if a married couple believed it to be immoral for them to bring a child into the world, and if that couple had a good reason to avoid abstinence, then the bishops would not condemn them for employing scientific methods (a category that Calcutt and Hinton believed to include sterilization) to prevent conception.[56] Likewise, Hodgson had suggested in *Eugenics* that the findings of the 1930 Lambeth Conference supported his belief that it was ethical, under specific circumstances, to separate marriage from procreation. From this he extrapolated that it was also ethical to permit couples to marry who had no intention of ever having children—which represented a significant break with Church tradition.[57]

For Christians struggling with the question of the morality of sterilization, Calcutt and Hinton offered the following framework: "the primary concern of Christian ethics is not to identify itself with this or that policy or point of view, but to try to consider each of

[56] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 25-26, 152.
[57] Hodgson, *Eugenics*, 127-130.

them, bringing to bear on them the Spirit of Christ which can redeem and mould them that they be worthy instruments of God's purpose." As understood by the authors, God's purpose in the world was to create "individuals who have in them all the possibilities of reaching that end which God has placed before us, of becoming personalities worthy to be called sons of God."[58] Put another way, God desired for all human beings to be born with the latent mental, moral, and spiritual capacities necessary for developing over the course of their lifetimes into persons deserving of the title "son of God." The authors used this term synonymously with "image of God," a term first used in the Bible in reference to the creation of human beings: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' … So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."[59]

Calcutt and Hinton likely understood the term "image of God" to be an honorific title that denoted the special place assigned to human beings by God over the rest of the created order.[60] The authors did not write in a systematic manner, and they made little effort to explain how a person could know whether she or he had reached the vague standard of being 'worthy' of the title "son of God." However, they were more forthcoming in relation to which persons ought to be judged definitively *undeserving* of the title. They held that, because 'mentally defective' persons were incapable of 'progressing' mentally or spiritually past that of an eighteen-year-old, these women and men could never develop into "personalities worthy to be called sons of God." Calcutt and Hinton therefore declared it to be "blasphemous to imagine that it is God's will and purpose that defective children should be born at all."[61] Thus, Calcutt and Hinton were supportive of the sterilization of 'mentally defective' men and women, along with all

[58] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 150, 151.
[59] Genesis 1:26-27.
[60] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 134, 167.
[61] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 25, 151, 155, 156.

'mentally unfit persons,' as this latter group was thought to be likely to give birth to 'mental defectives' and to similarly struggle to develop into men and women deserving of the title "son of God."

The authors noted elsewhere that Jesus had declared that He "came that ye may have life."[62] They interpreted this phrase to mean that the desire of Jesus for each person was that she or he experience "not just life on a common level, but … the richest life possible, physically, mentally, and spiritually." Such a life was thought to entail striving to develop into a person deserving of the title "son of God," along with enjoying various domestic comforts, raising a family, and contributing to the life of one's community.[63] However, the authors believed that 'mentally defective' persons were fated to experience only "lifelong misfortune," as the same diminished capacities which supposedly prevented these women and men from developing into persons 'worthy' of being called "sons of God" also confined them to lives of hardship. As the "workings of biologists" had allegedly demonstrated that sterilization provided an effective means for sparing scores of persons from such an existence, the authors concluded that the "Christian conscience cannot for ever tolerate the unlimited creation of lives wrecked from the first day." Rather, Calcutt and Hinton insisted that it was the "duty" of Christians to use "every faculty given to us and strain every nerve, in order that mankind may once again be created in the image of God," adding also that "the continual begetting of defective people is a direct negation of this purpose of God."[64]

Writing later for the *Modern Churchman* in 1945, Hinton placed his efforts to secure 'abundant life' for all human beings in the context of a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose. Hinton declared his age to be one of

[62] Quotation taken from John 10:10.
[63] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 186.
[64] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 154, 186, 187.

"planning," as a myriad of public-spirited figures were busying themselves with the promotion of various schemes for the rebuilding of social and economic life after the war. Along these lines, Hinton asserted that most married couples carefully planned the size of their respective families. He happily informed his readers that the "Church can welcome planning in every sphere … but she must examine the end to which planning is directed and the motives which inspire it." Echoing the words of Bishop Woods, Hinton went on to suggest that the motives driving many members of the middle and upper classes to plan for smaller families were 'hedonistic' in nature. Relatedly, Hinton also believed that the intentional decrease in family size amongst the more well-to-do was best understood as a symptom of a widespread rejection of Christianity:

> when people no longer determine the meaning of life by reference to God, they attempt to find what they believe to be the true fulfilment of themselves in the pursuit of pleasure and power. Instead of losing their lives in the Source and End of their being, they attempt to save their lives by enthroning the self, which becomes dominant.[65]

Hinton further warned that while "what might be good stock" remained "unborn," the "people less fitted for parenthood on eugenic lines" continued to multiply. This pattern alarmed him, as he did not want the Church to "be forced into the untenable position of having to defend the falsity that it is God's will that some people should be born deficient." He instead wanted to hold up the 'truth' that "life, in its most abundant form, is God's will for all." To this end, Hinton bemoaned not only the refusal of the middle and upper classes to bestow such life onto multiple offspring, but also that "the prejudice of a minority and the ignorance of the majority of people on the subject have left the enlightened proposals of the Brock Committee unexamined by most people."[66]

[65] J. P. Hinton, "Eugenics and Christianity," *Modern Churchman* 35, no. 4 (July-September, 1945): 220.
[66] Hinton, "Eugenics and Christianity," 219, 220, 227.

Individual liberty and the "law of love"

After spending the majority of their book extolling the findings and recommendations of the Brock Committee, Calcutt and Hinton noted in *Sterilization* that "we have still not answered the question whether it is right for the community to interrupt the natural process of men and women by surgical operation." The authors were careful to explain that they did not condone any form of compulsory sterilization, but recognized that concerned readers might still be struggling with an obvious question: "is not a man's body his own?" They began their response by claiming that all kinds of legislation curtailed freedoms, and pointed to speed limits for motorists as one obvious example. The principle underlying such legislation, according to the authors, was that while each individual possessed personal rights, they also had responsibilities to the broader community.[67] Followers of Jesus had all the more reason to embrace these responsibilities, the authors suggested, because the Christian faith taught that the sincerest expression of love was to sacrifice one's wellbeing for the good of others.[68]

Through the act of "offering" themselves up for sterilization, 'mentally unfit' persons were pictured by Calcutt and Hinton as acting on behalf of the 'good' of the community in several ways. For example, sterilization could supposedly alleviate the financial burdens associated with the education and long-term care of future generations of 'mentally unfit' persons. Additionally, by preventing the birth of 'mentally unfit' children (including 'mental defectives' and other potential members of the social problem group), sterilization could directly contribute to a reduction in crime and vice. Drawing together individual and communal notions of human purpose, Calcutt and Hinton argued that sterilization also supposedly served the 'good' of the community by sparing the

[67] Hinton, "Eugenics and Christianity," 161.
[68] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 162-163.

potential offspring of 'mentally unfit' couples from an 'undesirable' existence.[69] In agreement with this last point, the *British Medical Journal* reported in 1932 that the professor of social science at the University of Liverpool, Alexander Carr-Saunders, had argued that "sterilization could be morally approved in the cases of persons who were likely to have children lacking in those qualities that formed the indispensable basis of a full life."[70] For his part, McDowall claimed that the 'mentally unfit' suffered from unemployment because "they really are unemployable." He added that such persons "constitute an undesirable section of the population, because, through no fault of their own, their hereditary make-up is less good than that of the rest." Due to their "less good" hereditary makeup, McDowall also concluded that "mentally deficient offspring have to be kept under control," and he then asked his readers why anyone should be "free to inflict the misery of a stunted existence on those who need never have been born."[71]

Within the narrative of exclusion constructed by Anglican proponents of eugenics, the 'mentally deficient,' along with all of the 'mentally unfit,' were said not to be deserving of social welfare programs or state-sponsored care because a lack of certain mental capacities marked them out as qualitatively distinct, or even a lower order of being, as compared to the 'average' English woman or man. And the likelihood that these persons would pass on their 'diminished' status, and corresponding 'undesirable' existence, served as a common basis for denying all of the 'mentally unfit' the same rights (e.g., the opportunity to raise children) afforded to others. This logic also created an openness amongst Anglican leaders to other kinds of negative eugenic policies. For example, Barnes, when offering his defence of euthanizing infants, insisted that it was not right to keep alive "pitiably defective" children.[72] In addition, Claud Mullins argued that

[69] For further discussion on several of these matters, see Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 179-183.
[70] "Voluntary Sterilization," *British Medical Journal* 1, (June, 1932): 1046.
[71] McDowall, *Biology & Mankind*, 161-162, 173-4.
[72] E. W. Barnes, "People and Their Homes," *Modern Churchman* 25, nos. 1, 2, & 3 (June, 1945): 17.

it was wrong to bring "tainted" children into the world, and he therefore concluded that the Church must reconsider its opposition to abortion.[73] However, other Anglican eugenists drew clear boundaries in regards to which practices ought to be deemed ethically impermissible. Many, for example, opposed abortion, and in the 1945 article in which Hinton commended sterilization, he took care to condemn the practice of artificial insemination as contrary to God's designs for marriage and sex.[74]

Returning to the work of Calcutt and Hinton, that pair posed a blunt question in *Sterilization* to critics who claimed that the practice of sterilization unjustly transgressed the rights of their fellow citizens: "is it a more sinful 'mutilation' to operate on a person to save the lives of children yet unborn than it is to remove an appendix to save one life?" They further argued that the recommendations of the Brock Committee had not yet been enacted because of "ignorance" and "apathy" amongst the general public. The situation would be different, they declared, if all people were forced to experience for a short time the daily hardships endured by the mentally and physically 'unfit.'[75]

The Bishops' Meeting and sterilization

While Lang, Temple, and the majority of the bishops did not go as far as Calcutt and Hinton in claiming that God expressly desired the eradication of the 'mentally unfit,' they did agree that a system of voluntary sterilization could spare future generations from an 'undesirable' existence. Prior to the publication of *Sterilization*, the Bishops' Meeting had taken up the findings of the Brock Report in October 1934. There the new Bishop of Winchester, Cyril Garbett, gave a brief overview of the position on sterilization staked out by the Archbishop's Advisory Committee on Spiritual Healing (AAC). The AAC,

[73] Claud Mullins, "The Most Unchristian Act," *Modern Churchman* 21, no. 1 (January, 1932): 551.
[74] Hinton, "Eugenics and Christianity," 226. Abortion and artificial insemination were of course supported on other grounds besides eugenics.
[75] Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization*, 163, 178.

which was led by Garbett, had assigned "six clergy and six doctors" to respond to the Brock Report.[76]

The AAC began its report by arguing that, in regards to the question of the morality of sterilization, Roman Catholic tradition needed to be taken into account, but so also did the "undoubted changes in ethical ideas and practices which have been brought about by modern knowledge and the modern approach to social hygiene." In a manner similar to Calcutt and Hinton, the committee went on to present its case in favour of sterilization chiefly in terms of a perceived obligation to "promote the mental and spiritual health of posterity." This perceived duty served as the grounds for the committee's recommendation that, under the safeguards outlined by the Brock Report, voluntary sterilization should be made legal for persons who met the legal criteria to be deemed 'mentally defective,' as they were thought to be incapable of sufficient sexual "self-control." For persons capable of 'normal' self-control, but who had good reason to believe that they might pass on a physical or mental 'taint' to their offspring, the AAC asserted the Church ought not to condemn their choice to undergo a sterilization procedure, provided they either intended to get married or were already married.[77] With these words, the AAC followed Hodgson in breaking with Church tradition and affirming the morality of intentionally childless marriages.

In support of the majority report of the AAC, Canon Laurence Grensted submitted an accompanying memorandum to explain the theological underpinnings of the committee's findings. Grensted suggested that "the fundamental principle of a true ethical theory is the law of love. Christians may not live to themselves, but are members one of

[76] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Wednesday, October 24th and Thursday, October 25th, 1934, BM 10, Bishops' Meetings, Lambeth Palace Library.
[77] *Comments on the Report of the Departmental Committee on Sterilization, 1934* (Guildford: Printed for private circulation by Billing & Sons, Ltd., 1934), 2-3. Found in Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Monday, January 21st and Tuesday, January 22nd, 1935, BM 10.

another." He added that every Christian was called upon to "deny himself," and that if "need be he must lay down his life for his friends." Grensted explained that the AAC believed "the particular case of eugenic sterilization comes within this general principle." He then went on to frame the AAC's support for sterilization in terms of a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose. Grensted indicated that his committee firmly rejected a "eudaemonistic view of life," wherein the well-being and happiness of the individual was the main purpose of life. The committee implied that such an outlook undergirded Christian opposition to sterilization, as critics of sterilization supposedly did not want to deny individuals a chance at either the "happiness" or moral development associated with the raising of children and commitment to abstinence. Grensted contended that the purpose of a human life was better understood in the context of love for one's neighbour, a category which included the community in which one lived and future generations of unborn children.[78]

In addition to the AAC report, the Bishop of Blackburn, Percy Herbert, also drew the attention of the bishops to a report produced by a "panel of experts" known as the Carshalton Group, which functioned as a consultative committee to his Advisory Board on Moral Welfare.[79] The Carshalton Group bluntly stated in its report that "there can be no justification for bringing into the world children who are likely to inherit a strain of mental or physical disability which will make them or their descendants incapable of independent life or growth or of normal membership in the community." The Group added that the alleged moral obligation to prevent the birth of physically and mentally 'defective' persons marked "a new step in Christian ethics as compared with earlier ages, when the weight of moral obligations was thought to be exclusively on the side of

[78] *Comments on the Report of the Departmental Committee on Sterilization,* 6-8.
[79] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Wednesday, October 24th and Thursday, October 25th, 1934, BM 10.

maximum procreation." With the acquisition of "new knowledge" relating to the laws of heredity, humankind was now said to have inherited the corresponding responsibility to cooperate with God in carefully controlling the 'kinds' of persons who were brought into the world. The Carshalton Group further suggested to the bishops that the resources allocated for the education of 'mentally defective' children were better spent "on a child of normal or superior intelligence," and also that the act of bringing "congenitally defective children into the world is cruel and unfair to them." Strikingly, the group further claimed that even if 'defective' children were to "achieve all the happiness and usefulness of which they are capable, they cannot but be aware that they are not as other men and women, and feel an unhappy if half-conscious sense of inferiority." So then, the group concluded, it was kinder to prevent the conception of 'defective' children than to allow them to face an 'unhappy' existence.[80]

As the discussion on sterilization drew to a close at the Bishops' Meeting, Garbett informed the gathered bishops that the minister of health anxiously awaited news as to the position of the Church. And Lang, fearing that he would soon need to speak to the House of Lords on the matter, further urged the bishops to quickly stake out a position. To help guide their next discussion, the gathered men tasked the Bishop of Carlisle, Henry Williams, with drawing up an additional memorandum on the various moral issues surrounding sterilization.[81] This was delivered to the bishops prior to their next meeting, with Bishop Williams suggesting that no one "who reads of or is familiar with the evidence examined by [the Brock Committee] of the deplorable results produced by the birth of insane or defective children can reasonably avoid the conclusion that such births, especially if the mental defect is due to heredity, should be prevented." The

[80] *Comments on the Report of the Departmental Committee on Sterilization,* 9-11.
[81] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Wednesday, October 24th and Thursday, October 25th, 1934, BM 10.

memorandum, which referenced Hodgson's writings on sterilization, went on to state that scientific opinion differed as to the role played by heredity in relation to 'mental defects,' and it noted that the prominent geneticist, J. B. S. Haldane, was an outspoken critic of sterilization legislation.[82]

In June 1933, *National Life* reprinted an essay by Haldane in which he asserted that sterilization legislation would unfairly target the lower classes, and noted that "feeble-mindedness is a very difficult thing to define, and is not strongly inheritable." In addition, Haldane expressed concern that the legalization of sterilization would empower the state to target political opponents.[83] Despite Haldane's concerns, Williams' memorandum stated that if a certain "mental disorder" could be shown to be transmissible, and if a person who possessed such a 'disorder' were too "high" a grade of 'mental defective' to be institutionalized, but too 'low' a grade to be capable of "abstinence or self-control … it would be difficult to withhold moral approval" for sterilization. However, Williams was careful to condemn compulsory sterilization measures (such as those found in Germany). Additionally, he argued that Resolution 15 "limits the use of contraception to married partners who have good grounds for refusing to have children, and equally good grounds, physical or psychotherapeutic for continuing intercourse." He therefore concluded that unmarried persons should not be allowed to undergo a sterilization procedure, but instead should remain permanently abstinent.[84]

With various reports and memorandums in hand, the bishops gathered again in January 1935. They proved to be of mixed opinion during the course of general

[82] Henry Williams, "Some Notes on the Moral Issues involved in the Brock Committee's Resolutions and Report." Found in Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Monday, January 21st and Tuesday, January 22nd, 1935, BM 10.
[83] J. B. S. Haldane, "Biology and Statesmanship," *National Life* 2, no. 8 (June, 1933) 96-97. Haldane was open to sterilization for cases in which it could be 'proven' that a person was likely to pass on a 'defect.'
[84] Williams, "Some Notes on the Moral Issues involved in the Brock Committee's Resolutions and Report," BM 10.

discussion on sterilization. Herbert suggested that the Church should not oppose the legislation proposed in the Brock Report, but he believed it would do little to curtail the 'problem' of 'mental deficiency.' The Bishop of Gloucester, A. C. Headlam, declared sterilization to be "a horrible thing, entirely inconsistent with Christian ethics," while others offered various forms of qualified support. For his part, the Archbishop of York, William Temple, denounced compulsory sterilization, but indicated that no moral grounds existed for opposing voluntary sterilization in certain cases. Temple further explained that the question of efficacy was best left to scientists, and the question of ethics was largely dependent on specific circumstances. Lang was dismayed at the divided opinion and pushed the bishops to come to agreement on the "general principles involved" with sterilization. He added that it was his belief that the moral case for voluntary sterilization (presumably in relation to claims that sterilization could spare future generations from an 'undesirable' existence) was stronger than the one for "conception control" at the 1930 Lambeth Conference. In response to Lang's prodding, the bishops voted 29 to 8 in favour of a "strictly private and confidential" resolution (which was meant to guide bishops as they in turn guided their respective dioceses) that cautiously endorsed the "main principles underlying" the Brock Report.[85] The wording of the resolution passed by the bishops implied each individual bishop could decide for himself whether or not couples ought to be able to enter into intentionally childless marriages. And while this resolution was indeed kept confidential, in June 1935 the Advisory Board of Moral Welfare released to the public a guarded statement in support of the Brock Committee's findings.[86]

[85] Bishops' Meetings Minutes, Monday, January 21st and Tuesday, January 22nd, 1935, BM 10.
[86] C. P. Blacker, "Voluntary Sterilization: The Last Sixty Years," *Eugenics Review* 54, no. 1 (April, 1962): 19.

The collapse of the sterilization campaign

The vote by the bishops proved to be in no way indicative of the fate of sterilization legislation in Parliament. Following the release of the Brock Report, proponents of sterilization came to realize that they had vastly overestimated the support for the practice amongst politicians and the general public. Daniel Kevles points out that as prospects for securing sterilization legislation collapsed around the middle part of the decade, so too did the fortunes of the "mainline" eugenic movement.[87] The campaign for voluntary sterilization and the mainline eugenic movement shared a similar fate for several related reasons. These included perceived class prejudice, opposition from the Roman Catholic Church and Labour Party, increasing awareness of the Nazi eugenic program, and a lack of convincing scientific evidence.

In the place of mainline eugenics, Kevles notes that a "reform" movement came to the foreground. And while reform eugenists, amongst whom Kevles includes Julian Huxley, George Bernard Shaw, and C. P. Blacker, were convinced of the importance of heredity, they were also characterized by the belief that "advances in anthropology, psychology, and genetics had utterly destroyed" the underpinnings of mainline eugenic theory. Beginning a decade prior, reform eugenists had sought to distance themselves from the class rhetoric of their predecessors, and they made clear that both "nature" and "nurture" played pivotal roles in the development of human beings. Along these lines, some reform eugenists remained convinced of the poor hereditarian endowment of the social problem group, but it was assumed that differences in outcomes associated with most members of other social classes were influenced by external factors like access to education and proper nutrition. Therefore, before most claims relating to class and

[87] Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 169-170.

heredity could be established, many reform eugenists argued that it was first necessary to implement more progressive social welfare policies. And Kevles notes that under the guidance of Blacker, the EES transformed from an organization that promised "universal social redemption" into one that promoted "sober educational efforts concerning heredity and health."[88]

Conclusion

In line with the mainline eugenic movement, Hodgson, Calcutt, and Hinton sought to construct a divine narrative of exclusion that framed the 'mentally unfit' as unwelcomed and unvalued by God and society. In the mind of Hodgson, the propagation of persons with diminished mental capacities contravened God's supposed desire to perfect humanity in body, mind, and morals. Calcutt and Hinton taught that the propagation of such persons contravened God's desire for all persons to live 'full' and 'meaningful' lives. All three further agreed that most Christians had not embraced God's purpose for their lives, which was to partner with Him in pursuing the eradication of the 'mentally unfit.' These authors presumed that their own mental and moral capacities represented the culmination of untold years of evolutionary progress, and further believed that God had called them to guide human evolution towards His chosen ends.

Notably, as the 1930s progressed an increasing number of population pundits and activists came to question not only 'qualitative' claims relating to differential fertility, but quantitative ones as well.[89] Since the middle of the 1920s, William Beveridge and other influential figures had claimed that differences in birthrate patterns were quickly disappearing between most classes (save perhaps for the social problem group). But it

[88] Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 169-174.
[89] Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 259-260, 272-274.

was the work of the famed feminist and statistician, Enid Charles, along with her colleague Robert Kuczynski, that thrust the diminishing birthrate amongst the lower classes (and related dangers of depopulation) into the national consciousness.[90] Drawing upon the work of Charles, reform eugenists in the latter half of the 1930s not only helped to subvert the case for sterilizing a broad swathe of the English population, but they also contributed to the formation of a broad coalition of religious leaders, politicians, and social reformers who together sought to reverse the decline in birthrates amongst most social classes in the lead-up to the Second World War. As Chapter Five will demonstrate, numerous anglo-catholic men were numbered amongst this pronatalist coalition. Despite prior pessimism amongst Anglican leaders as to the possibility of raising birthrates, these men believed (born partly out of desperation in the face of war) that spiritual revival could accomplish what ecclesiastical pronouncements and machinations could not.

[90] For example, see Enid Charles, "Differential Fertility," *Sociological Review* 29, no. 3 (July, 1937): 253-254.

Chapter Five:

Parenthood as Penitence:
Depopulation Panic and a 'Broken' Social Order, 1936-1941

On the evening of 14 November 1938, a crowd of journalists and concerned citizens gathered at Caxton Hall in Westminster to witness the opening of an exhibition on the birthrate by Archbishop Cosmo Gordon Lang. As reported by the *Church Times*, there the Primate informed his audience that the related matters of overpriced housing and "excessive urbanization" contributed to the choice by many married couples to restrict the size of their families. Additionally, he claimed that widespread pessimism, resulting from an inability to find meaning in life and trepidation over geo-political strife, played a major role in dissuading potential parents. Lang sympathized with this pessimism, but he also believed that the German government provided a model for how it could be overcome. Germany, he claimed, was the one country in Europe where the birthrate was increasing, having gone from roughly 14 in 1933 to 19 in 1936. Lang attributed these results to the Nazi government having instilled in its citizenry a "new outlook and confidence in the future." He conceded to his audience that in "times like this, when we know the consciences of all Christian people in this country are properly shocked by this new, fierce, and brutal attack upon the Jews, it is hard to obey the injunction of mutual understanding." Nevertheless Lang implored his listeners to "attempt to do so this evening, and not blind our eyes to the other side—the remarkable social results of the present *régime*." The Primate did not suggest that the restoration in England of the "natural will and wish" to have children necessitated a cult of nationalism, but rather widespread spiritual renewal through the promotion of a "sane and hopeful and Christian view of life." Following Lang's speech, the audience was set free to explore a series of animations and graphs depicting the causes, as well as detrimental effects, of the

declining birthrate. Attendees then had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with a number of Christian organizations dedicated to supporting children and families.[1] The exhibition, entitled "The Family: To-day and To-morrow," was sponsored by the anglo-catholic organization the Church Union, which, before the interruption of war, planned to tour the exhibition across England.[2]

During the latter half of the 1930s and into the early years of the Second World War, Anglican pronatalists, such as the leader of the anglo-catholic Christendom Group, Maurice Reckitt, also sought to redress the declining birthrate through a variety of measures outside Caxton Hall. The focus of this chapter is on pronatalist efforts undertaken by anglo-catholic figures (amongst whom there was a noticeable absence of female voices) associated with the Church Union and the Christendom Group. Most of the persons examined in it agreed that, in line with the thinking of Lang, spiritual decay lay at the root of the decline in family size. Reckitt went as far as to describe England as a "sub-Christian" land in 1941, and according to his friend and collaborator, Rev. J. V. Langmead Casserley, the pervasive spiritual decay, or erosion of zealous commitment to God (as well as corresponding anglo-catholic teachings on family life) sprang from several interrelated sources.[3] These included the normalization of indulgent standards of living, the abandonment of traditional family roles, and, more fundamentally, the misordering of human affairs brought about by the Industrial Revolution. In accordance with the spread of spiritual rot, and related decline in the birthrate, many anglo-catholic pronatalists supposed the English race, the domestic social order, and the empire faced an increasingly uncertain future.

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[1] "Flat Life and Family Life: The Archbishop on the Birth-Rate Decline," *Church Times*, November 18, 1938; and "Summary," *Church Times*, November 18, 1938.
[2] As stated previously, the term "anglo-catholic" refers to a major theological camp within the Church of England, and does not refer to members of the Roman Catholic Church.
[3] For further discussion of the views of Reckitt, see Maurice Reckitt and J. V. Langmead Casserley, *The Vocation of England* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1941), 159.

Many new figures are introduced in this chapter. This is because, with the dissolution of the National Council of Public Morals (NCPM) around 1930, anglo-catholic leaders (backed financially by Reckitt) stepped into the public role previously held by the NCPM. Figures like Reckitt, Casserley, and the editor of the journal *Theology*, Alec Vidler, framed parenthood, as well as support for economic and social reforms aimed at engendering parenthood (referred to in this chapter as political support for parenthood), as moral obligations. The objects of these obligations were identified by various anglo-catholic leaders as all of Europe and the English-speaking world, one's fellow citizens, one's spouse, and oneself. Relatedly, the abandonment of the moral obligations of parenthood and political support for parenthood was ascribed by some anglo-catholic leaders to most Christians, by others to the majority of the English population (regardless of religious orientation), and still by some to most English women. Such abandonment was presented not only as a symptom of spiritual decay, but also as a grave moral error that transgressed the teachings of Christian scripture and the designs of nature. And in line with the NCPM, anglo-catholic leaders generally agreed that at the bottom of the refusal to bear children were misguided notions as to the purpose of a human life. In turn, the moral justification for the efforts undertaken by Vidler and other anglo-catholic pronatalists to raise the birthrate amongst nearly all segments of the English population rested on a supposed need for penitence, or the need for widespread, tangible repentance for a variety of 'wrongs' various parties were said to have inflicted by eschewing parenthood and political support for parenthood.

As a means of encouraging penitence, anglo-catholic leaders called for schemes of spiritual renewal directed at both Christians and non-Christians. These fertility-manipulation schemes were intended to excise malaise, pessimism, and selfishness, and in their place foster a "conscious desire" amongst women and men to obey God, and love

their neighbours, by turning from self-interests to embrace family life. While Chapters Three and Four examined the moral justification offered by Anglican leaders for fertility-manipulation schemes directed at specific segments of society, the anglo-catholic leaders examined in this chapter differed in that they sought to encourage parenthood amongst the great majority of English men and women. In line with the work of Enid Charles, many anglo-catholic pronatalists in the latter half of the 1930s cautioned that the pernicious rejection of parenthood, thought to be previously concentrated amongst the middle and upper classes, was rapidly spreading across the rest of society.

The preponderance of Anglican leaders in the lead-up to the Second World War held that the teachings of the Bible, along with the distinct, complementary physical and mental constitutions between women and men pointed towards certain prescriptive roles within family life. Relatedly, Casserley and other anglo-catholic figures examined in this chapter sometimes directed their fertility-manipulation schemes at either male or female audiences in order to encourage both sexes to fulfil their divinely assigned roles. Whereas men and women were both believed to be called to the "vocation" of parenthood, Casserley, a parish priest and contributor to *Christendom*, argued that women ought to focus principally on raising children and managing domestic affairs.[4] Men were likewise called to care for their children, but Casserley believed this care differed in that it ought to be expressed (in part) by securing full-time employment, and that men ought to attend to a wider sphere of interests outside the home.

Tangible efforts, as well as a slew of proposals, adopted by anglo-catholic leaders to engender penitence through spiritual renewal included the aforementioned family exhibition, publishing pamphlets on the joys and duties of parenthood, lobbying the

[4] For example, see J. V. Langmead Casserley, *Is Civilisation Committing Suicide? The Facts About the Population Problem* (London: The Church Literature Association, 1938), 18-19. Found at PA 200 CLA, Pusey House Library & Archive, Pusey House, Oxford.

bishops of the Anglican Communion to denounce childless marriages at future Lambeth Conferences, and calling for the large-scale migration away from English cities (followed by an orchestrated campaign to spread basic Christian truths amongst the populace). As evidenced by figures like Vidler and the secretary for the Church Union Association for Church Social Action (CSA), Patrick McLaughlin, the assumption amongst many anglo-catholic pronatalists was that little difference existed in the procreative habits of self-professing Christians and the rest of the populace. These leaders therefore often sought first to call their fellow Christians to repentance, with the expectation that they in turn would influence their non-Christian friends and neighbours to embrace parenthood and political support for parenthood. As previously mentioned, their belief in the possibility of reversing declining birthrate trends, despite the failure of prior efforts undertaken by the Church, was born partially out of desperation. Something simply *had* to be done in the face of an ascending Germany.

Anglo-catholic pronatalists, and Christian pronatalists more broadly, continued to frame discussions relating to declining birthrates in the latter half of the 1930s in an international context.[5] As early as 1935, *National Life* set the British government's complacency regarding the birthrate against the pronatalist efforts of Germany and Italy, and further warned that the Dominions might be lost to one of these nations (or Japan) due to want of children.[6] The journal also warned that, unless men and women drastically changed their procreative behaviours, the entire population of Britain would fall from 45 million in 1936 to 37 million over the next two decades.[7] With fewer babies being born, writers in *National Life* also cautioned that an increasingly elderly population would place

[5] Between 1930 and 1938, the domestic birthrate fell from 16.3 to 15.1.
[6] "The Writing on the Wall," *National Life* 2, no. 17 (September, 1935): 227.
[7] "Report of Meeting Held in the Central Hall, Westminster on Wednesday, October 23rd, 1935," *National Life Special Supplement* (December, 1935): 3.

excessive strain on tax payers and social services at home, and also limit economic growth by way of reducing the number of consumers.[8]

Additionally, figures like Lang, along with Casserley and Reckitt, framed their efforts to raise the birthrate in the context of discussions surrounding the creation and preservation of a stable and just social order. For Lang, the family served as the basis of a stable social order because he believed it to be the principal training ground for the moral formation of a nation's citizens. Similarly to the National Birth-Rate Commission (NBRC) two decades prior, he held that an increase in the birthrate was therefore desirable because a child's character was best formed in the setting of a large family.[9] Also evident in discussions relating to the birthrate and spiritual renewal was an optimism amongst anglo-catholic pronatalists regarding the place of the Church in English society. While Reckitt, Casserley, and McLaughlin certainly believed that Christian beliefs and commitments were on the decline, they nevertheless agreed that the time was ripe for the Church to recover its moral authority by demonstrating that Christianity alone could provide the solutions for the many crises plaguing England.

Depopulation panic

Throughout the 1930s, the Department of Social Biology at the London School of Economics played a significant role in shaping public perception of England's population needs. Founded in 1930 by the then director of the LSE, William Beveridge, the department hosted influential figures like Robert Kuczynski and Enid Charles over the next seven years (Alexander Carr-Saunders abolished the department upon his

[8] For example, see F. J. McCann, "The Growing Menace of Depopulation Through the Menace of Birth Prevention," *National Life* 2, no. 22 (December, 1936): 270.
[9] "Flat Life and Family Life," *Church Times*, November 18, 1938.

appointment as director of the LSE in 1937).[10] Kuczynski drew the eye of the department thanks to the publication of his influential 1928 work, the *Balance of Births and Deaths, Volume I.* In that book, he offered a method for predicting the future population size of a particular nation. Rather than focusing on birthrates, Kuczynski promoted the study of "net reproduction rates," a term Soloway defines as "the number of women by whom the average woman of reproductive age in a community would be replaced a generation hence."[11] Kuczynski pointed out that England and Wales laid claim to the lowest gross and net production rates in Northern and Western Europe. As of 1926, he estimated that the gross reproduction rate in England and Wales equated to 1.05 girls being born per woman between the ages of 15 and 50. Once mortality rates, as well as estimates relating to girls who would grow up to have no children, were taken into account, the net reproduction rate in 1926 registered at 0.88—well below the replacement level of 1.0. Kuczynski held that it was unlikely that medical advancements would significantly reduce mortality rates in the coming years. And so he concluded that the only hope for preventing depopulation in England and Wales, as well as across much of Europe, rested on an increase in fertility.[12]

Soloway points out that while Kuczynski remained agnostic as to why parents were having fewer children, Enid Charles, who drew heavily from Kuczynski, sought to uncover the causes and solutions for this phenomenon in her 1934 work, *The Twilight of Parenthood*.[13] Charles warned her readers that, as of 1933, the net reproduction rate in

[10] Jeremey Shearmer, "Beveridge and the Brief Life of 'Social Biology' at the LSE," *Agenda* 20, no. 1 (2013): 91-92. For further discussion on attempts to institutionalize 'reform' eugenic research, see Chris Renwick, "Eugenics, Population Research, and Social Mobility Studies in Early and Mid-Twentieth-Century-Britain," *Historical Journal* 59, no. 3 (2016): 852-858.
[11] Richard Soloway, *Demography and Denegation: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 234.
[12] Robert Kuczynski, *The Balance of Births and Deaths, Volume I: Western and Northern Europe* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1928), 40-44, 53, 62. My analysis of Kuczynski's work draws from Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 234-236.
[13] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 235-236, 238.

England had fallen to 0.75. Unless married couples began to make drastic changes to their procreative habits, she estimated that the population of England and Wales would drop to 6 million people within two centuries.[14] Elsewhere in her work, Charles asserted that differences in fertility between various socio-economic classes were already on the decline, and she assumed that these differences would become only less pronounced as nearly all segments of society continued to decrease the size of their families in the coming years. Her work suggested that the primary danger facing England was not population growth outstripping food production, nor mass unemployment as the result of overpopulation, and neither still that the race would suffer a catastrophic 'qualitative' decline due to differential fertility rates. Rather, England faced "racial extinction" by way of the conscious limitation of children.[15]

Charles posited in *The Twilight of Parenthood* that women and men (the latter of whom were said to be more hostile to large families) limited the size of their families across Western democracies as the result of the system of "*laisser faire"* economics that conferred "social prestige upon sterility by ensuring the social promotion of persons with low reproductive vitality." Amongst the lower classes, she suggested that many married couples now also chose to limit the size of their families out of fear of being labelled reckless and irresponsible. She argued that every woman needed to bear an average of three children to prevent population decline, but believed that this number was unlikely to be reached unless many women gave birth to five children.[16]

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[14] Enid Charles, *The Twilight of Parenthood: A Biological Study of the Decline of Population Growth* (London: Watts & Co., 1934), 75.
[15] Charles, *Twilight*, 143-146. Charles did enthusiastically support the formation of a "eugenic conscience" in English society, but she feared that eugenic propaganda dissuaded far too many parents from having children.
[16] Charles, *Twilight*, 205-206, 196, 222. Charles hoped to achieve these numbers by transitioning towards a system of collective planning similar to that of the U.S.S.R. My analysis of Charles' work draws upon Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 236-239.

Kuczynski's and Charles' writings spurred many subsequent inquiries into the future (or lack thereof) of Britain's population—including by the Population Investigation Committee (PIC). Founded with financial backing from the Eugenics Society (EES) in 1936, the PIC soon established itself as a leading source for demographic information and analysis. As noted by Soloway, the financial support offered by the EES was representative of that Society's shift away from a propaganda organization towards a "population research foundation." In addition to supporting demographic research, over the course of the next decade the Society also funded efforts related to the proliferation of private birth control clinics, the development of new birth control technologies, and investigations into the "eugenic possibilities" of artificial insemination.[17] With Carr-Saunders in the chair and C. P. Blacker as general secretary, the PIC, echoing the language of the NBRC, set out to uncover the "trends of population in Great Britain and the Colonies and to investigate the causes of these trends, with special reference to the fall of the birth-rate."[18]

According to Soloway, Blacker would later pinpoint 28 September 1936 as the exact day a full-fledged "depopulation panic" set in across England. Spurred by the publication of several books relating to population trends, on that day *The Times* warned its readers that, given the current rate of decline in birthrates, England's "numbers will certainly fall, perhaps catastrophically, during the next 50 years." Soloway notes that within weeks of the publishing of *The Times*' story, a slew of other publications across England ran articles with provocative titles like "Our Tumbling Birth-Rate" and "The Menace of the Empty Cradle." And by 1937, *The Times* declared to its readers that the population question had become "one of the topics of the hour." However, even as some

[17] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 217, 219.
[18] Faith Schenk and A. S. Parkes, "The Activities of the Eugenics Society," *Eugenics Review* 60, no. 3 (December, 1968): 151.

in the press foretold of devastating social and economic consequences, the Cabinet, worried about the financial costs associated with pronatalist efforts, largely eschewed proactive policies relating to depopulation in the lead-up to the Second World War.[19]

Similarly to the mainstream press, Christian newspapers and journals regularly published demographic statistics and commentary during the latter half of the 1930s—with many pinning the decline in the birthrate on a spreading spiritual malaise and related confusion pertaining to the purpose of a human life. The League of National Life welcomed the increased public attention directed towards population trends. But it also warned that England may have already passed the point of no return. In September 1936, *National Life* declared that the "beginning of the decline of the English population and of the English power" had set in. The journal claimed that in the first quarter of the year deaths had outstripped births in England and Wales by a total of 5,500—a trend predicted to worsen in the years to come. "The women of England refuse to bear children," *National Life* surmised in regards to why the birthrate was waning, adding that "the nation whose women refuse to bear children is doomed to decline."[20] For its part, the *Church Times* explained in May 1936 that "the fall in the birth-rate is due to moral as well as to economic causes." The paper clarified that, while certain economic incentives "may encourage parenthood," such "relief is not sufficient to overcome the disinclination for responsibility and the general hunger for self-indulgence that are characteristic of the age."[21] The *Guardian* reported that following April on the PIC's recent prediction that the population of England and Wales would reach an all-time high in 1940. After that time,

[19] Quotations from *The Times*, along with headlines from other newspapers, found in Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 241-242. For further discussion on the depopulation panic, see Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 241-246. Of note, Soloway points out that Parliament did pass the Population Statistics Act in 1938, which empowered the government to ask several new questions at the registration of births and deaths in order to better understand demographic trends.
[20] "The Peril of England," *National Life* 2, no. 21 (September, 1936): 257.
[21] "Summary," *Church Times*, May 1, 1936. Self-indulgence was said to imperil the economy, family life, and personal moral development.

the PIC believed the population would drop from 40.6 million to 26 million over the next 45 years. The paper went on to describe the decline in birthrates as a "grave" situation, as England and Wales were said to trail behind only Sweden and Austria for the ignominious title of the lowest birthrate in Europe. Drawing from recent remarks made by James Marchant, the *Guardian* asserted that the decline in the English birthrate was due to spiritual, social, economic, and nutritional causes. Tipping its hand as to what it believed was the principal cause for the decline, the *Guardian* claimed that the supposed failure of other European nations to increase the size of families through means like financial incentivization indicated that "materialistic remedies will not suffice."[22]

Outside of the press, the Bishop of Chelmsford, Dr. H. A. Wilson, chose the less traditional medium of his 1937 Christmas letter to warn of the population dangers brought about by declining Christian moral commitments. Painting a dreary picture of future Christmases in England, he estimated that within "50 years' time there will be few children to hang up their stockings … In a 100 years' time there will be fewer still, and Christmas will be celebrated by groups of old fogeys huddled round the fire in great cities where half the houses are empty."[23] As concerns over another major European war increased during the course of 1938, the *Church Times* reported in October of that year that the birthrate in England and Wales registered at 14.9 for 1937, which the paper noted was down from 36.6 in 1876. In contrast, the paper reported that the birthrate in Germany had increased from 14.7 in 1933 to 18.8 in 1937. It argued that the "family allowance system" in Germany could not solely account for the increase in birthrates, as it had only been instituted in 1936. Instead, the *Church Times* surmised that the increase was the result of a "new zest for life in Germany, a new faith." It further explained the difference

[22] "Correspondence," *Guardian*, April 9, 1937.
[23] Diocesan letter quoted in "Old Fogey's Christmas," *The Times*, December 21, 1937.

in birthrates between England and Germany with the claim that without "a vivid religion, and Nazi-ism is a religion—life is not worth living, and men and women will reasonably hesitate to carry on life," and the paper also quoted a French politician who asserted that the fall in the birthrate was the direct result of declining religious commitments in his own country. Hoping to foster discussion and possible solutions, the *Church Times* commended "to the attention of Christian sociologists" the "alarming fact" that birthrates were rising in totalitarian states and declining in European democracies.[24]

Motherhood as penitence

Numbered amongst the "Christian sociologists" who took up the call to address declining birthrates were Casserley and Reckitt. In the first half of the 1920s, Reckitt had brought together a group of anglo-catholic leaders, some of whom considered themselves to be "Christian sociologists," under the banner of the Christendom Group. Beginning in 1925, the Group hosted annual "Summer Schools in Christian Sociology," and in 1931 it began disseminating its ideas in *Christendom: A Journal of Christian Sociology*. Notable persons connected to the Group included Dorothy Sayers, T. S. Eliot, Arthur Penty, V. A. Demant, and R. H. Tawney. These women and men did not lay claim to the title of academic sociologists, but were rather theologians, authors, architects, and historians concerned with the structure and functioning of English society.[25] Under the guidance of Reckitt, an anti-statist socialist, the general position of the Christendom Group was that "Catholic tradition and philosophy" provided "the only basis for a social order which is in harmony with the Divine purpose for mankind."[26] That is, by looking back to the

[24] "Summary," *Church Times*, October 21, 1938.
[25] For further discussion on the Christendom Group, see David Lyon, "The Idea of a Christian Sociology: Some Historical Precedents and Current Concerns," *Sociological Analysis* 44, no. 3 (Autumn, 1983): 230-234.
[26] H. F. Leatherland, "Christian Sociology (1920-1940): A Review and Critical Estimate of the Main Trends of the Period" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1947), 68.

medieval period for inspiration, the Group sought to reorder English society in such a way that the nation could rightfully be deserving of the title "Christendom."

Prior to writing a book on the birthrate with Reckitt in 1941, Casserley first addressed the "population problem" in his 1938 pamphlet, *Is Civilisation Committing Suicide?* That pamphlet, which called upon women in England to repent of their supposed refusal to bear children, began with a boast. Casserley claimed that, until recent years, "Christian thinkers … alone perceived that a persistently falling birth-rate must in the long run produce, firstly, fewer, and secondly, older, people." He went on to outline several difficulties that, given the current rate of decline in birthrates, he believed would confront the white populations of the world in the coming decades. As the pool of available consumers shrank, the most pressing problem was thought to be that the economies of white, "industrial" civilisations would contract. Casserley also warned that governments, being largely ignorant of population trends, were likely to waste large sums on public projects designed to accommodate unrealized population growth. The impending decline of the world's white population, he concluded, would soon emerge as the most pressing problem facing politicians in Europe and across the English-speaking world."[27]

Casserley subsequently rattled off a number of birthrate-related statistics and projections. He noted that, after increasing four-fold during the Industrial Revolution, the population of Europe grew by another 25 percent (to a total of 506 million) between 1900 and 1930. The primary variable responsible for the recent increase was the decline in the deathrate. But he pointed out that towards the end of the twentieth century birthrates had begun to significantly decline across Europe, and predicted the deathrate would soon rise

[27] Casserley, *Civilisation*, 3-5.

in accordance with an increase in the average age of the population.[28] Drawing from the work of Enid Charles, he estimated that within a century the population of England would collapse to below 5 million people (and so make it vulnerable to foreign invaders). While Casserley believed the public was rightly worried that another major war might bring about a decline in the population, they were supposedly ignorant of the similar dangers posed by Europe's "family and sexual customs."[29]

Having established the 'facts,' Casserley then turned to exploring the underlying reasons for the decline in birthrates. He claimed that a "revolutionary," anti-family sentiment was sweeping across Europe, and that women were particularly eager to adopt this new way of thinking. "Traditional stories, such as those in the Old Testament, depicting maternal pride in a large family or the grief of a married woman on account of her barrenness … imply a feminine psychology very remote from that to which we have become accustomed," he informed his readers. Casserley assumed that most married couples employed contraceptives to limit the size of their respective families, but he asserted that the outstanding question still remained as to why so many married women (in contrast to the ideals espoused by their Old Testament counterparts) chose to use contraceptives. He deemed economic necessity to be an insufficient answer, as the lowest birthrates were often found amongst the more well-to-do, and because efforts across Europe to financially incentivize large families had supposedly borne only "meagre fruit."[30] Looking past financial rationalizations, Casserley theorized that the reason so many women, including an increasing number from the lower classes, rejected the

[28] Casserley, *Civilisation*, 6, 8, 10-11.
[29] Casserley, *Civilisation*, 12, 13. Those who would console themselves with the notion that the 'quality' of the population was improving were solely mistaken, Casserley claimed, as cases of mental 'defectiveness' were allegedly on the rise, and a large portion of the population could supposedly be categorized as 'neurotic.'
[30] Elsewhere Casserley noted that Italy had offered tax incentives to encourage parenthood, and also passed tax disincentives for the unmarried and childless, but that nation saw its birthrate fall from 27.7 in 1926 to 23.4 in 1934.

"vocation" of their sex (i.e., motherhood) was because of a change in conceptions of human purpose. Two related factors, according to Casserley, helped bring about this change. First, women, and especially those living in urban centres, were said to have recently gained unprecedented access to material goods and professional, political, and social opportunities. Second, the cinema had purportedly encouraged women to seize on these opportunities by having established the "plutocratic" life as the norm for the "good life."[31]

As evidence that spiritual rot had led to the collapse in birthrates, Casserley offered the case of Nazi Germany. Hitler's ascent to power, he argued, coincided with an increase in birthrates because he fiercely opposed "the prevalent modern heresy that the social function of the sexes either should be or can be identical." He added that "the modern 'feminism' of liberal democratic countries has confused the undoubted Christian truth that the sexes are equal with the absurd notion that they are fitted to play the same role in our social life."[32] According to Casserley, both biology and theology demonstrated that women were designed by God to rear children. And most contributors to *Christendom* agreed with him that, as a general rule, women were called by God to marry, rear children, and adopt domestic pursuits as a central focus of their lives (at least for the period of time until their children were grown). These beliefs were rooted in the Christendom Group's interpretation of Christian Scripture. In line with Leonard Hodgson and other supporters of sterilization, many contributors to *Christendom* also believed something of the will of God could be known through the study of the natural world. Studying the essential, shared nature of women supposedly indicated that women were

[31] Casserley, *Civilisation*, 13-17.
[32] Casserley, *Civilisation*, 17-18.

beings designed and directed by God to serve Him and society by nurturing young life within and outside the womb.

Many of Casserley's peers did not share in his fervent criticisms of the "emancipated woman." For example, Rosaline Wilton suggested in *Christendom* that the work of many recent feminist activists had been born out of necessity, as the Great War helped create a 'surplus' of 1 million women. It was only just, she argued, to permit these women to "feel useful members of society." Writing in 1941, Wilton thought England now suffered from an excess of men, and, believing it to be the inherent desire of most women, she argued that the great majority of them would choose to marry and raise children in the coming years. The problem these women would encounter was how best to balance domestic obligations with other legitimate interests outside the home.[33] In that same article, Casserley, drawing upon his understanding of the mental and physical constitution of women, noted that he did not consider women to be a lower order of being. However, he warned that one ought not to mistake "equality for functional identity," adding that "we are faced with the evil consequences of the resultant tension between what woman is equipped to do by nature, and what is expected of and enjoined upon her by custom and by code." Casserley further cautioned that a study of feminist activity across time and geography demonstrated that the conflation of 'functional identity' with equality resulted in a decline in birthrates and the subsequent self-destruction of numerous societies. Due to the work of feminist activists, he also believed

[33] W. G. Peck, Rosaline Wilson, and J. V. Langmead Casserley, "Emancipated Woman Comes of Age," *Christendom* 11, no. 42 (June, 1941): 106-107. Peck explained in the same article that, while he believed men and women were designed by God with unique, immutable natures, he did not believe in the "German doctrine" that women ought to limit their participation in society to the care of children, domestic affairs, and serving the Church.

that far too many wives pressured their husbands to abandon worthy pursuits like politics and philanthropy in order to assist with domestic obligations.[34]

Returning to his 1938 booklet, Casserley asserted that he was in favour of family allowances as a matter of "social justice," but no government policies would prove effective unless they were accompanied by widespread spiritual renewal. Without outlining a specific program to bring about spiritual renewal, he further argued that renewal would help make clear the true purposes of human life:

> it is only a return to the belief that the highest form of human life consists in performing our duties to God, and that the only kind of human happiness really worth having … is a byproduct of our fulfilment of those duties, which can heal our personal and social ills. The very fact that God has created us sexual beings means that God is calling us to parenthood, with all its implications of family life."[35]

Casserley hoped that a scheme of spiritual renewal would engender penitence by encouraging women to turn from 'frivolous' pursuits and the related rejection of parenthood, which supposedly imperiled the very existence of the English people, towards an alignment of their respective reproductive behaviours with the calling of God. More specifically, he anticipated that some unspecified scheme of spiritual renewal would lead to a campaign for the "emancipation" of women from "the monotonous and biologically evil routine of office and factory, from the pettifogging details of life in 'society' and from spiritual thralldom to cheap luxuries and pleasures." Having been truly 'emancipated,' he imagined a future in which most women would seek to right the 'wrongs' brought about through the 'refusal' of their sex to bear children by, in the footsteps of the Virgin Mary, taking up God's command to fulfill their "glorious destiny—the production and protection of the young."[36]

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[34] Peck, Wilson, and Casserley, "Emancipated Woman Comes of Age," 107-108. According to Casserley, the decline in birthrates was partially the result of a shift in marital dynamics, wherein women now determined how often they and their spouses would engage in sexual intercourse.
[35] Casserley, *Civilisation*, 19.
[36] Casserley, *Civilisation*, 19.

Fatherhood as penitence

Casserley's associate, and the sometime speaker at the Christian sociology summer school, Alec Vidler, offered an assessment of Casserley's call to repentance in a July 1939 *Theology* editorial. Vidler appreciated that Casserley had drawn attention to the imminent possibility of depopulation. He also agreed that the rejection of parenthood was a symptom of a fast-spreading spiritual disease, adding that "only a message which touches and changes the moral springs of human living can bring a remedy for such a disease." To achieve spiritual renewal, Vidler believed that Christian leaders needed to focus first on self-professing Christians, and make plain to them the "natural and supernatural relation between sex and parenthood." Here Vidler referred to the divinely ordained ends for which he believed God had created sex, including the continuation of the race and the creation of new personalities who might know and enjoy God. Vidler sermonized that a precondition for rearing large families was a willingness to embrace a simpler manner of living, and he too believed that many women had thus far been unwilling to do that. However, he noted that Casserley said very little in his work about the "reluctance of men to beget children and about the vocation to fatherhood." It was unfair, Vidler asserted, to suggest that women were more selfish than men when it came to parenthood. For men who were unsure about God's call on their lives to raise children, he commended the 1938 pamphlet, *Fathers of Four: By One of Them*.[37]

The anonymous Anglican (and likely anglo-catholic) author of *Fathers of Four* presented the embrace of parenthood as a moral obligation to one's country, one's spouse, and all English women. He began with a simple question: why did he, as the title of his work suggested, encourage fathers to raise four children? One reason was that the average family had to consist of "nearly four" children" to avoid a rapid decline in the British

[37] Alec Vidler, "Editorial," *Theology* 39, no. 229 (July, 1939): 1-4.

population. He further warned that unless married couples were to take on his recommendation, a substantial portion of the population would soon be made up of elderly people, and Britain in turn would be unable to provide immigrants to other parts of the empire. The author also cautioned that the English-speaking peoples were likely to be replaced in their 'home' countries by immigrants with higher birthrates, such as people from Africa. He was careful to add that his desire was not for a return to families of ten or more children. Nevertheless, he believed that some families may want to have more than four children, and thought that to be a noble way to serve God and country.[38]

The author predicted that many readers would find it strange for a man to issue a call for more babies. He readily agreed, labeling children as "woman's business," and claimed that the avoidance of racial extinction depended chiefly on women convincing other women to bear children. However, the author asserted that most wives would readily bear children if it were the wish of their husbands, and therefore he believed it was worth his time to encourage men to take up the mantle of fatherhood. He added that knowledge regarding contraceptives was widespread in Britain, and so most children were not born by accident, but because they were "wanted" by parents. This meant that the main task set before those who cared about the population problem was to "foster the desire for parenthood," and in turn the growth of the British population would "take care of itself."[39]

As a means of fostering a desire for parenthood, the author began by pointing out several failings of British men related to selecting marriage partners. Without referencing any kind of religious authority, he claimed that the "ordinary" man had two choices related to marriage: remain permanently celibate or find a spouse. The implication was

[38] *Fathers of Four: By One of Them* (London: SPCK, 1939), 3-4.
[39] *Fathers of Four*, 5-7.

that too many young men were choosing bachelorhood (though not necessarily celibacy) over marriage, which the author believed was a mistake because the "sexes were meant to supplement one another." Furthermore, he estimated that the number of young men roughly equaled that of young women, and he worried that many men were inclined to forsake their gentlemanly duties towards women, who by their feminine natures were said to long to be homemakers and mothers, and abandon them to the fate of that of an "old maid."[40] Similarly to how marrying was rightly conceived of as a duty for the 'ordinary' man, the author contended that so too was parenthood (as it was the only way a man could ensure the survival of his own race, country, and way of life). However, he suggested that many men abandoned this duty by choosing to marry women who did not desire children. He claimed that women who longed to be mothers were not always particularly attractive or outgoing, but encouraged his readers with the news that "girls with wholesome views on these matters [i.e., marriage and motherhood] can be found."[41]

Even upon marrying a woman who was open to having children, the author suggested men still fell prey to many moral mistakes related to parenthood. First of all, he claimed that many young men were hesitant to expose their wives to the perils of pregnancy and childbirth. While he expressed sympathy with this position, the author added that "it cannot be a good thing to thwart nature [or God's purposes for women as it related to the raising of children]." As he understood it, a childless wife tended to accomplish all of her domestic duties in only a few hours, leaving her with too little to do.[42] So then, it was the moral duty of men to encourage their wives to embrace motherhood, and he added that parenthood was also rightfully understood as a duty to one's country. According to the author, far too many men believed that children would

[40] *Fathers of Four*, 7.
[41] *Fathers of Four*, 5, 7-8.
[42] *Fathers of Four*, 9.

serve only as "cannon fodder" in a looming war. He cautioned against such an attitude, as it equated to saying that no hope remained for the world. Furthermore, such a line of thinking would supposedly lead to the abandonment of British soil to "braver peoples" willing to bring children into the world.[43]

Towards the end of his 15-page pamphlet, the author acknowledged that he had made few explicit references to Christian teachings. As he wrote his pamphlet chiefly for an audience of Christian men, he subsequently turned his attention towards religious arguments intended to excise selfishness and foster a conscious desire for parenthood. According to the author, men were designed by "Nature" to be parents, and Christians ought not flout such laws for the sake of private happiness, as this would place the very life of the nation at risk. Additionally, he sought to stir the souls of his readers with the claim that the greatest privilege available to men and women on earth was to "co-operate with Almighty God in the production of a new human personality with all its possibilities in this world and its eternal destiny in the next."[44]

In summarizing his work, the author explained that his intent was to encourage young men to embrace the difficult and rewarding path of parenthood. To support this end, he encouraged men with the prospect that very soon the government would offer family allowances and free secondary education. While these schemes would make it easier to pursue parenthood, he was careful to add that the vocation of parenthood would always be a difficult one, but commitment to Jesus and His teachings on marriage and family would provide the necessary encouragement. The author then ended with a final admonishment intended to engender spiritual renewal amongst Christian men hesitant

[43] *Fathers of Four*, 10-11. The author also addressed the claims that men had no room in their homes for more children, that they could not afford larger families, and that they ought to limit the size of their respective families to offer their children the very 'best' in life. At the root of these objections, he suggested, was selfishness.
[44] *Fathers of Four*, 12-13.

about marriage and parenthood. He claimed that it was Jesus himself who had made clear that only two vocations were available to men in relation to family life: celibacy or marriage and children. Bachelordom, the author explained, was therefore not a path offered by Jesus, and so to eschew family life was to disobey the Head of the Church.[45]

Exhibiting England's broken social order

While some anglo-catholic leaders focused on the written word, others promoted a more immersive means of fostering spiritual renewal. Formed in 1936, the CSA fell under the umbrella of the Church Union. As an organization, the Church Union had united the Anglo-Catholic Congress and the English Church Union, and sought to protect and promote anglo-catholic theology and practices within the Church of England.[46] Various streams of thought existed within anglo-catholic circles regarding the proper relationship between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, but anglo-catholics found common ground around a commitment to, and promotion of, ancient forms of worship, the apostolic ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, and a high view of the sacraments.

The CSA worked closely with the Christendom Group, and Patrick McLaughlin outlined the nature and aims of the CSA in a 1936 issue of *Christendom*. McLaughlin, acting as secretary, explained that the CSA was an organization of Christian laypersons whose mission was the "re-Christianisation of society." To this end, he believed the CSA needed to first educate Christians in accordance with an anglo-catholic "outlook" built upon "dogmatic foundations" so that they might come to a proper understanding of

[45] *Fathers of Four*, 14-15.
[46] "Church Union," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192802903.001.0001/acref-9780192802903-e-1461#.

human nature and the related underlying causes of social problems. After this period of education, his desire was to influence public affairs by applying anglo-catholic teachings to specific social problems. In September 1938, McLaughlin announced to the readers of *Christendom* that the CSA would be sponsoring an exhibition that year on the birthrate in accordance with the educational and activist goals of the organization.[47]

The exhibition, aimed at both women and men, was entitled "The Family of To-Day and To-morrow," and it was held in Westminster over three days in November 1938. Leading up to the event, McLaughlin printed advertising fliers that bluntly warned Christian women and men that the "family is in danger." The advertisement further declared that the decay of the family demonstrated that "secular civilisation" could not "serve the requirements of man [including the begetting of children] in his natural and spiritual character." In the light of the ongoing subversion of family life, the flier asserted that the Christian conscience needed to be alerted to the causes and ill-effects of birthrate patterns.[48] Setting out the principal aims of the exhibition, the flier further pleaded with "Church people" to "remember that the exhibition is undertaken primarily as an act of religious witness." McLaughlin wanted prospective attendees to understand that the purpose of the exhibition was not simply to impart knowledge. Instead, he hoped to "strengthen the conviction that only by a return to Catholic truth [i.e., anglo-catholic teachings] can modern man escape calamity."[49]

In the mind of McLaughlin, the ideal sequence of events for attendees of the exhibition was as follows: (1) Christian women and men would be exposed to the

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[47] Patrick McLaughlin, "The Church Union Association for Church Social Action," *Christendom* 6, no. 24 (December, 1936): 288-289; and Patrick McLaughlin, "The Church Social Action Association," *Christendom* 8, no. 29 (March, 1938): 239.
[48] *Exhibition: The Family of To-day and To-morrow, Organised by the Church Union Association for Church Social Action* (London: H. B. Skinner & Co., Ltd., 1938). Found in English Church Union Papers, Box 57, Pusey House Library & Archive, Pusey House, Oxford.
[49] *Exhibition: The Family of To-day and To-morrow*.

contents of the exhibition. Being spurred by concern for the wellbeing of their own country, they would thereafter repent of their participation in a broken social order; (2) they would commit themselves to the teachings of the CSA regarding the natural and supernatural needs of human beings; (3) these individuals would then encourage their non-Christian friends and family members to embrace the teachings of the CSA; and (4) together all these persons would practice the ideals of family life and promote the construction of a social order that would support family life and a related increase in the birthrate.

As outlined in the opening of the exhibition, Lang believed, in line with the views of his successor, William Temple, that the family functioned as the sturdy foundation of any stable social order.[50] "It had that place in the economy of the universe because," according to the *Church Times* account of Lang's speech, "it was the main means by which human personality was trained, and the training of human personality was the first care alike of the Church and of the State—not least of a State which boasted that it was a democracy." He went on to explain that the "health, wealth and worth of democracy depended on whether or not personality was being effectively trained." Lang further claimed that the primary end of marriage was the begetting and education of children, and, echoing the language of Mary. H Clay two decades prior, he supported an increase in the birthrate because he held that the moral and spiritual training of children was best accomplished within the context of large families. Similarly, the anglo-catholic theologian E. L. Mascall asserted that the family functioned as "the fundamental unit of human society," as it served to meet the inherent social needs of human beings and to develop their personalities. He added that the family "owes its existence to the very

[50] For example, see William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1956), 57, 85.

nature of man as a biological being … namely, the fact that the human race can only go on existing at all if it is constantly replenished by a repeatedly bodily union of male and female." However, Mascall was careful to note that the family also served to meet the spiritual ends for which God had created human beings, as the begetting and educating of children resulted in an increase in the number of persons who might enjoy God for all eternity in heaven.[51]

The birthrate exposition opened the evening of 14 November 1938, and upon entry attendees were handed a pamphlet to guide them across the hall. The pamphlet promptly informed visitors of the importance of the family, describing it as the "foundation of the whole nation." As attendees walked through the first section, they learned about the speed at which the domestic birthrate was declining, as well as how the population grew increasingly elderly with each passing year. They next saw gloomy predictions for the size of the population in the year 1975, and an animation depicting how the adult worker now had to provide not only for his children, but increasingly for the older generations as well. This "unnatural burden," the guide informed attendees, functioned to further reduce the birthrate because overtaxed parents now had less money to spend on children. Other causes for the decline in the birthrate were said to include political uncertainty and "spiritual bankruptcy—aimlessness of life, without dogmatic assurance of the meaning of life."[52]

Following a section demonstrating the many failures by the government to support the economic needs of families, section three of the exhibition sought to assign blame for the decline in birthrates and England's broken social order. A cartoon was displayed depicting the Church as out of touch with everyday needs and concerns. But the guide

[51] E. L. Mascall, "The Family," in *An Introduction to Christian Social Doctrine*, ed. J. V. Langmead Casserley and W. G. Peck (London: The Church Literature Association, 1941), 76-77, 80-81.
[52] *The Family: To-day and To-morrow: A Guide to the Exhibition*, 1. Found in miscellaneous collection of pamphlets on Church and State, Pusey House Library, Pusey House, Oxford.

declared that the Church did care for the "common life" of all people, and had in fact spoken authoritatively on the need for the remaking of society. The implication for attendees was that responsibility for England's broken social order rested at their feet, and specifically their collective failure to promote the teachings of the Church in the public sphere. The final portion of the exhibition featured representatives from 17 organizations who were seeking to strengthen family life across England.[53]

After describing the various Christian organizations, the guide informed visitors that the function of the Christian religion in society was to reshape its social structures, along with "the individual aims and achievements of mankind, in accordance with the Divine plan in which the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven." Such remolding was said to be needed because the misordering of English society, along with the application of modern technologies, had concocted a social, spiritual, and economic climate that was out of alignment with the shared religious and physical needs of human beings. This climate had produced the tragic present reality that "life itself … is refusing to reproduce itself." The message in regards to neglect of political support for family life by the collective English community was clear: either turn from sin and selfishness and embrace the teachings of the Church, or face utter social and economic ruin.[54]

The Vocation of England

Writing one month before Britain entered the war, an unnamed author in *Theology* submitted their reflections on the population outlook. Citing the work of Charles, the author claimed that for "every 100 women 75 are being born." The problem of declining birthrates was said to be peculiar to affluent democracies, which supposedly suffered

[53] *The Family: To-day and To-morrow: A Guide to the Exhibition*, 3-7.
[54] *The Family: To-day and To-morrow: A Guide to the Exhibition*, 7-8.

from consumerism and selfishness. The editorial added that there "is little prospect of any appreciable improvement in the English birth-rate unless a new scale of values is established, especially among Christians, who at present seem to share the views of those among whom they live." Relatedly, it was said that Christians had to take the lead in bringing about a drastic reordering of English society in order that social and economic life might better encourage the begetting and nurturing of children. As a means of encouraging spiritual, social, and economic transformation, the author called for the bishops at the 1940 Lambeth Conference to urge all who would listen to "co-operate with God in his work of creation." He added that "refusal to co-operate is apostasy and God's judgement will be clear enough in history," and closed with the same admonishment offered by the family exhibition: "'except ye repent, ye shall perish'"[55]

Writing in tandem with Casserley two years later, Reckitt set out a specific and lengthy platform for both economic and social transformation, as well as spiritual renewal, in *The Vocation of England*. In one sense, the work can be read as a follow-up to the family exhibition, as that event focused principally on the causes of the declining birthrate, whereas Reckitt and Casserley sought to outline specifics as to how English society might be reshaped to encourage parenthood and the political support for parenthood amongst women and men. The authors noted that, as of 1939, the birthrate in England and Wales stood at 15.0, down from 35.3 in 1880. They went on to enumerate many of the same population statistics and predictions cited by Casserley in 1938, with the added claim that, as the birthrate continued to decrease in the coming years, England would devolve into "groups of depopulated cities scattered like islands in vast seas of exhausted or neglected soil." The authors informed their readers that the purpose of their

[55] "Miscellanea," *Theology* 29, no. 230 (August, 1939): 127-128. The 1940 Lambeth Conference was cancelled as a result of the war.

book, which was written on the assumption that Britain would emerge victorious in the war and was offered as a blueprint for a post-war society, was to save England from such a disaster by outlining a comprehensive reimagining of "national life." In reference to the title of the book, Casserley and Reckitt believed the primary "vocation" God had bestowed upon England was not to rule over the world, but rather, as the most influential nation in the world, to set an example in its national life for the rest of the world to follow. More specifically, God called England to "prove to nations everywhere that a natural order is obtainable." An alignment of the national life with the natural order was said to be a precursor to spiritual renewal, with the implication being that such a renewal could function to raise the birthrate not only at home, but also across Europe, North America, and the Dominions.[56]

Amongst associates of the Christendom Group, the term "natural order" referred to the concept of a divinely ordained norm for the organization of the human community. "The conscious task of any generation," explained Christendom Group member V. A. Demant in reference to the natural order, was "to discover and work with it."[57] Central to the Christendom Group's conception of the natural order were the beliefs that the "essential nature" of human beings was discernible through natural law insights and divine revelation, and that "it was possible to deduce from the Christian teaching about man" what the organization of the social order ought to be.[58] According to Margaret Kaye Brown, a representative sample of the Christendom Group's conception of the natural law was offered by Dr. Hubert Box at its 1936 summer school.[59] There Box began from the supposition that God had created an "ordered world," or a "world under law." All created

[56] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England,* 57, 167.
[57] V. A. Demant, "The Idea of a Natural Order," in *Prospects for Christendom: Essays in Catholic Social Reconstruction*, ed. Maurice Reckitt (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1945), 37.
[58] Margaret Kaye Browne, "The Idea of a Christian Social Order: Aspects of Anglican Social Thought in England, 1918-1945" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1979), 166.
[59] Kaye, "The Idea of a Christian Social Order," 163-165.

things were said to be subject to this "eternal law," which Box defined as an expression of "divine reason." He added that the participation of "rational creatures" in the eternal law was called natural law," and he further defined natural law as "the impression and the reflection of the eternal plan of Divine Wisdom in the reason of man." As a rational creature, man was said to be able to participate in the divine law in part by way of the consideration of his own essential nature—which in turn helped to reveal the proper function, or end, of every human activity.[60] The Christendom Group, along with likeminded Roman Catholic thinkers, held that "man's nature reveals a graded hierarchy of needs and functions from the most basic and physical to the most exalted and spiritual. The rational and spiritual are higher than the animal functions because they are peculiar to man [based on his nature as a rational and spiritual being] in the world of creation."[61] As understood by most members of the Christendom Group, the supreme need, and thus highest purpose, of human beings was the achievement of the Beatific Vision in heaven.[62]

Drawing upon natural law theorizing, and Christian theology more broadly, Reckitt and Casserley set out in the *Vocation of England* to explore what had gone wrong with English society. The pair were especially concerned with what had led men and women to reject family life, as well as how society might be reshaped in accordance with the natural order to encourage its revival. As understood by the authors, many of England's underlying spiritual, economic, and social problems could be traced back to the Industrial Revolution. "Divorce of man from nature exalts him in his own eyes, and tends to banish from his consciousness his creaturely sense of dependence on God. Hence the fundamental superficiality of the mental life and spirituality of the townspeople,"

[60] Hubert Box, "Natural Law and the Creation," *Christendom* 6, no. 22 (June, 1936): 96-100. My summary of Box's views draws from Kaye, "The Idea of a Christian Social Order," 165.
[61] Dante Germino, "Two Types of Recent Christian Political Thought," *Journal of Politics* 21, no. 3 (August, 1959): 462.
[62] The beatific vision was understood by most writers of the Christendom Group to refer to the direct experience of God by persons in heaven.

explained Reckitt and Casserley. The ushering of untold millions into large cities during the Industrial Revolution was said to have played a central role in the widespread rejection of authentic Christianity, and in its place was left only an undogmatic, "diffused religion." Large cities were not only wanting as spiritual environments, but also biological ones. Casserley and Reckitt contended that women in particular were often tempted away from parenthood by frivolous pursuits associated with city living. But the most important factor in the loss of "the will to procreate" was said to be "estrangement from the animal vitality of the earth and the spiritual power of heaven." The authors asserted that, as spiritual and physical beings, humans were the "mediator" between "things" and God, and thus human beings drew "vitality from both in the very act of living in right relationship with them." Therefore, the mass migration away from the countryside and into cities, which had upset the relationship of human beings with both God and nature, could supposedly explain women's and men's failure "as organism to fulfill the primary function of all organisms, the propagation of the species."[63]

The authors explained that a "virile and fertile" population was necessary not only to provide stability to English society, but also to defend its very existence from higher-birthrate nations.[64] Put another way, the continuance of the race required the better alignment of English society with the natural order, but the continuance of this imagined society was also said to require a sustained increase in the birthrate. For Reckitt and Casserley, rejection of parenthood and political support for parenthood was equated with disobedience to God, denial of one's essential physical and spiritual nature, and disservice to one's country. The authors in turn implied that parenthood was a required form of

[63] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England*, 44, 60-61.
[64] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England*, 63, 65.

penitence for placing one's country in peril and abandoning the 'primary function' of the species.

Casserley and Reckitt went on to describe at great length how they might recreate English society in order to make the revival of family life economically and spiritually possible. At the end of their work, they offered a summary of their many proposals, claiming that the alignment of English life with the natural order would require

> a balanced economy, concentrating in the immediate future on the revival of rural life; a rational finance, which, working on quasi-automatic principles, would re-institute the just price and enable the community to realize its potential achievement; such an unconditional measure of security through some form of "consumer credit" as would release men, and still more specifically families, from the pressure alike of destitution and bureaucracy; an education system which restored religion as the solely sufficient interpretive power for life, and spread right through society the 'aristocratic' values which have been so far confined to our (anything but) public schools; regional decentralization—and still more important—functional devolution, especially in the direction of national guilds in industry.[65]

However, Reckitt and Casserley were careful to add that, while better aligning English society with the natural order could provide parents with the financial means to rear large families, and also help to create an atmosphere that predisposed non-Christians to the Christian faith, such alignment could not "set the soul of man on fire," or cause men and women to wholeheartedly embrace the Christian faith (including Christian teachings on the family). The outstanding question therefore remained as to how, through some methods of spiritual revival, family life might be made "consciously desirable" amongst the general populace.[66]

According to the authors, England could no longer be referred to as a "Christian country" in so far as the term was used to refer to a country in which the majority of people regularly attended church services. They added that the majority of English

[65] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England*, 163.
[66] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England*, 137, 64.

citizens did not share a "supernatural belief that may be identified with Christianity." On the other hand, most English women and men were said to be theistic in conviction and hold to many undogmatic ethical and social obligations which they associated with Christianity. Along these lines, the only sense in which England could be referred to as a Christian country, Reckitt and Casserley asserted, was in that Christianity had played a significant role in shaping its "traditional assumptions, values, and standards." The authors added elsewhere that the Church did not "dominate" the English social order, but rather faced strong competitors, and claimed that England could be rightly described as a "sub-Christian" land.[67] The writer, critic, and Christian communist, John Middleton Murry, similarly declared in the pages of the *Guardian* in May 1940 that the notion that "Britain is a Christian society is as hard to prove as it is to believe," adding that the "hold of the Christian Church on the younger generation is slight indeed."[68] The sentiments of Reckitt, Casserley, and Murry were expressed by a myriad of other Christian leaders throughout the war, but many Anglican leaders also believed that the upheaval of the war offered an opportunity for the Church to reestablish its moral authority within English society.

Casserley's and Reckitt's scheme for spiritual renewal entailed calling on Christians to tangibly address all manner of specific social problems in their own neighbourhoods. They believed these actions would incline the neighbours of Christians towards wanting to learn more about the Christian faith. Additionally, the authors encouraged churches to strategically present the basics of the Christian faith to all segments of society. Within this scheme, it was thought that men and women who did not profess to be Christians would feel most comfortable visiting a local church if Christian

[67] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England*, 140, 159.
[68] John Middleton Murry, "God and the Nation: Is Great Britain a Christian Society?" *Guardian*, May 10, 1940.

truths were presented in a dispassionate, nondevotional manner outside the context of a typical Sunday service.[69]

The authors concluded their work by noting that England owed "a heavy debt to the world" for the disastrous, global consequences wrought by its Industrial Revolution. In particular, they believed that a line could be drawn from the disorder brought about by the Industrial Revolution to the recent rise of despotic leaders in Central Europe. Reckitt and Casserley concluded that England was obliged to repay this debt by fulfilling its divinely ordained role of promoting the natural order amongst all nations. But who would lead the way in guiding England toward fulfilling this vocation? The Church, Casserley and Reckitt informed their readers, could not force the people of England to follow its example. Yet the Church could offer a blueprint for the remaking of English society, and provide encouragement for those who wished to work together towards this end. And so, as a "keeper of the nation's conscience and a lantern to her feet," the Church was said to be presented with an opportunity wherein it might reclaim its position as the preeminent moral authority in English society. In the light of rapidly declining birthrates across Europe, the authors made clear that nothing less than the fate of European civilization rested on the reclamation of this lost moral status.[70]

Conclusion

The call to penitence through parenthood put forward by anglo-catholic pronatalists rested on the beliefs that parenthood was rightly conceived of as a moral obligation, and that the majority of English women and men had abandoned this obligation in the pursuit of selfish notions of human purpose. More specifically, Casserley and his peers supposed

[69] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England*, 147-8.
[70] Reckitt and Casserley, *Vocation of England*, 164-169.

that both Christian scripture and nature revealed that God called the vast majority of English citizens to marry and rear children, and that parenthood and political support for parenthood could serve to benefit all the nations of the earth, all women, one's homeland, one's spouse, and oneself. Casserley and Reckitt taught that the misordering of English society brought about by the Industrial Revolution supposedly served to distort conceptions of human purpose amongst Christians and non-Christians and inclined many away from parenthood. Therefore, some combination of the reordering of economic and social life and concerted programs of spiritual renewal was needed in order to engender penitence through parenthood.

As will be discussed at greater length in the concluding chapter, the start of the Second World War briefly quieted birthrate-related sermonizing and enquiries amongst Anglican leaders. Reckitt and Casserley demonstrate, however, that this calm was short lived, as many Anglican leaders, including the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, soon sought to reimagine a post-war order in which family life would function as the beating heart of English society. Relatedly many Anglican leaders, and Christian leaders more broadly (such as James Marchant) called upon married couples across socio-economic classes to take up the divine call to rear large families. Similarly to Reckitt and Casserley, Anglican leaders in the years during and after the war often supposed that the status of the Church as a moral authority in English society suffered during the conflict. But with the war having unsettled so many lives, it was also supposed that the Church was provided with an opportunity to reassert itself as a moral guide for the nation. At the same time, the revelation of Nazi atrocities further discredited the 'science' of eugenics, though a small number of figures, such as Rev. J. P. Hinton and Bishop Ernest Barnes, persisted in their support for eradicating the 'mentally unfit.'

Conclusion

> There are many lands to-day where population is increasing so fast that the survival of young and old is threatened … In such countries population control has become a necessity. Abortion and infanticide are to be condemned, but methods of control, medically endorsed and morally acceptable, may help the people of these lands so to plan family life that children may be born without a likelihood of starvation.[1]

To these words, the bishops of the Anglican Communion signed their names at the 1958 Lambeth Conference. Hunger and starvation, surmised the bishops, were Malthusian problems, and required neo-Malthusian solutions. The recipients of the fertility-manipulation scheme endorsed by the bishops, though, had shifted from the white, middle- and upper-class peoples encouraged to procreate at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, to materially 'poor' populations living in 'developing' parts of the world. Christian charity was now thought to require the restriction of fertility on a global scale, with instruction coming from white, 'developed' nations.

The directions of Anglican population thought and practice following the Second World War will be discussed at greater length later in this conclusion. Its principal focus, hoverer, is on assessing the development, impact, and broader meaning of the moral justifications offered by Anglican leaders on behalf of their support for fertility-manipulation schemes during the interwar period. Providing structure for this conclusion, these three matters will be addressed in turn.

Development of moral logic

The moral logic promoted by Anglican leaders between the First and Second World Wars was built upon an understanding of the Church as steward of not only sexual morals and

[1] Quotation taken from the 1958 Lambeth Conference Encyclical Letter, published in *The Lambeth Conference 1958: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, Together with the Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1958), 1.23.

family life, but also, drawing upon its position as the established church, national interests. Demonstrating the central place assigned to family life and the empire in the social and political thought of the Church between the wars, figures like Mary H. Clay and Cosmo Gordon Lang held that a high birthrate was desirable because the future of English social and political order was predicated on the moral training of young children. This was best accomplished, both Lang and Clay supposed, within the context of large families—where both children and parents could learn to set aside their own interests in the service of others. Clay and her colleagues at the Mothers' Union (MU) further supposed that large families were of great service to the nation because the empire was in desperate need of a fresh supply of emigrants.

Conceptions of the Church as a shepherd of sexual morals, family life, and national interests predated the Armistice of 1918, and so too did concerns amongst Anglican leaders over procreative patterns—which were said to imperil all three spheres over which the Church considered itself caretaker. The bishops of the Anglican Communion gathered for the Lambeth Conference declared as early as 1908 that the declining birthrate posed a grave threat to both character development and "national welfare."[2] Under the leadership of the retired Bishop of Ripon, William Boyd Carpenter, the National Birth-Rate Commission (NBRC) set out five years later to provide more robust analysis of the causes and effects of the drop in birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes.

The Great War brought an accelerated decline in the birthrate. The second iteration of the Anglican-led NBRC claimed this decline had robbed England and Wales of roughly 550,000 new citizens between 1914 and 1918. The rapid decline in the

[2] Quotation taken from Resolution 41 of the 1908 Lambeth Conference, published in *Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion: Holden at Lambeth Palace, July 6 to August 5, 1908: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops, with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1908), 56.

birthrate was followed by an expansion of the empire at the close of the war—leading members of the NBRC to fret that so few people could not continue to lay claim to so much land. Taking also into account the staggering loss of life brought about by the war and the spread of the Spanish flu, the latter half of the 1910s witnessed the exacerbation and further popularization of pre-existing 'qualitative' and quantitative population concerns amongst Anglican leaders and other civic-minded public and private citizens.[3]

As judged by the Bishop of Winchester and President of the National Council of Public Morals (NCPM), Theodore Woods, along with many of his clerical colleagues, the Great War served to unsettle procreative patterns and, relatedly, the moral authority of the Church (especially in relation to marriage, sexuality, and procreation). Evidence for a decline in the authority of the Church came from the apparent, widespread refutation of the Church's directive against the use of birth control at the 1920 Lambeth Conference. Woods, representative of the predominant line of Anglican thought, held that his struggle to manipulate birthrates amongst the more well-to-do was part of a larger struggle in English society over competing conceptions of human purpose. The middle and upper classes, he believed, were abandoning the 'duty' of parenthood because they were increasingly seduced by misguided conceptions of the proper ends towards which human beings ought to direct their lives. Bishop Woods, in line with the views later expressed by his spouse, Nina Woods, assessed these ends to be 'hedonistic' in nature. And in contrast to the pre-war period, he now believed the Church, which was said to have damaged its own moral authority as a result of promoting 'outdated' teachings pertaining to marriage and sexuality, faced a competing and credible moral philosophy in the form of the "new morality." The bishop sought to secure the qualified approval of contraception by the

[3] For further discussion, see Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 138-140.

Church in order to combat the new morality, restore the moral authority of the Church, and convince the middle and upper classes to live out their communal purpose of serving the state through the rearing of large families. Stressing the 'sacramental' value of sex between married couples, Woods and his allies suggested that the sex act could be separated from procreation on the grounds that it served to strengthen the marriage bond. Far from seeking a complete overthrow of traditional sexual morals, Woods instead desired the cautious approval of birth control in order to protect and promote what he believed were higher-ordered moral teachings (and especially the 'duty' of parenthood) pertaining to marriage and sexuality. Furthermore, he hoped to promote the moral good of the 'beneficent' mission of the empire. Woods was convinced that the accomplishment of these goals required some concessions on behalf of the Church in order to convince the eugenically 'desirable' middle and upper classes to have more children.

Similarly to Woods, the Bishop of Exeter, Lord William Cecil, desired a decrease in the use of birth control amongst the middle and upper classes as a means to strengthen British rule across the globe. In the light of high unemployment, along with other domestic social problems like a dearth of affordable housing and the prevalence of prostitution and alcoholism, another set of Anglican leaders sought to restrict birthrates throughout the 1920s. Drawing upon neo-Malthusian theorizing, figures like W. R. Inge and Claud Mullins promoted the use of birth control specifically amongst the lower classes. What united these men with Woods and Cecil was their shared belief that their efforts to encourage or discourage the use of birth control were rightfully conceived of as a form of charity, as such efforts could supposedly serve to bring about imagined, near-utopian futures at home and abroad.

Woods would go on to secure his goal of the qualified approval of birth control at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, but it did not significantly alter the trajectory of birthrate

patterns or stall the perceived decline of the moral authority of the Church. The failure to alter birthrate patterns amongst the middle and upper classes, coupled with the publication of a government report that seemed to suggest the 'mentally unfit' were rapidly increasing across England, led a number of Anglican leaders in the first half of the 1930s to consider how the 'unfit' (who were believed to lack the 'foresight' required to use contraceptives) might be prevented from procreating. Rooting their actions in the supposed will of God, figures like Josephine Calcutt and Leonard Hodgson called on Christians to support voluntary sterilization amongst the 'mentally unfit' as a means of advancing both individual and communal conceptions of human purpose. Though the campaign for the legalization of voluntary sterilization collapsed in the middle part of the 1930s, the bishops, drawing upon the decision of the 1930 Lambeth Conference to permit the use of birth control, did vote to affirm the morality of the practice.

Discredited by association with anti-working-class rhetoric and Nazi eugenic schemes, the campaign for voluntary sterilization also fell by the wayside due to a depopulation panic that spread across England in the lead-up to the Second World War. The lower classes, warned demographers like Enid Charles, were now coming to match the birthrate patterns of the middle and upper classes. Relatedly, alarmist warnings soon spread across the religious and mainstream press that foretold of a radical collapse in population size over the coming decades. And at the same time, figures like Maurice Reckitt and J. V. Langmead Casserley believed that England could no longer be called a "Christian nation," as countless men and women were said to have turned towards selfish conceptions of human purpose and away from an authentic, supernatural Christianity (including Christian teachings relating to procreation and family life). As a means of bringing about an increase in the birthrate amongst nearly all segments of the English population, anglo-catholic pronatalists like Reckitt and Casserley promoted schemes of

spiritual renewal. These men rejected notions that the teachings of the Church needed to be 'modernized,' and instead sought to engender repentance amongst men and women for forsaking the teachings of the Bible and the designs of nature as it related to marriage and children.

The early years of the Second World War witnessed a decline in birthrate-related discussion and analysis within Church leadership bodies and various Anglican periodicals. However, as demonstrated by Reckitt and Casserley, by 1941 many Anglican leaders began to turn their attention towards reimagining post-war English society. Family life played a central role in many of these reimaginings. For example, at an ecumenical conference held in Wolverhampton in 1943, the bishop of Lichfield, along with Roman Catholic and Nonconformist leaders, spoke in defence of traditional family values. Reflecting on the conference, the *Church Times* noted that "bad homes are a breeding-ground for evils so seemingly dissociated as divorce, State tyranny, juvenile crime and a dwindling birth-rate. They extend a dissolvent influence over human society, for the only natural and stable unit of the social fabric is the Christian home." Looking towards the future, the paper warned that "the destruction of the home leaves individuals powerless before the omnipotent State, and will wreck all plans for international fellowship. If faith in the Christian home falters, hope of a Christian world irrevocably fails."[4]

James Marchant sought to outline a new vision for English society in 1945 with the publishing of *Re-Building Family Life in the Post-War World*. Outside religious circles, the Tory Reform Committee published a report on the birthrate in 1944, and the *Church Times* noted of that committee that "their greatest insight is shown in their admission that the ultimate solution [to reversing a decline in the birthrate] lies in the

[4] "Summary," *Church Times*, November 12, 1943.

realm of spiritual values which elude the politician."[5] In response to widespread birthrate-related concerns, which were engendered partly by a warning of depopulation made in the Beveridge Report, the minister of health announced the formation in 1943 of a Royal Commission on Population. Amongst many other organizations, the MU was invited to present evidence to the commission. MU representatives informed that commission that many parents used contraceptives to limit the size of their families for "selfish" reasons. Representatives further asserted that if the commission were to pronounce that public opinion now rested on the side of large families, many women would be persuaded to rear more children.[6]

The Royal Commission reported its findings and recommendations in 1949, but by that time, as Richard Soloway notes, government officials and other concerned parties were widely aware that birthrate trends had moved in an unexpected direction. According to Soloway, birthrates

> started to reverse during the war, even before the commission was appointed and, compared to the interwar years, constituted a veritable baby boom by the time the commission reported … With the birthrate in Great Britain averaging nearly 20 per 1000 since the end of the war and the population growing briskly, the Labour government saw no reason for allotting time to debate the findings of a commission set up to examine the causes and consequences of population decline. The problem the government faced was not one of stimulating the growth of a larger population, but of housing, educating, and caring for its present one, which showed every sign of continuing to increase.[7]

Coupled with Indian independence and a perceived decline in the economic and geo-political importance of empire, along with the enacting of many of Beveridge's social-welfare proposals (which were assessed by numerous Anglican leaders as supportive of family life), interest in birthrate-related matters declined amongst Anglican leaders into

[5] "Summary," *Church Times*, November 10, 1944.
[6] Report of Evidence Given in Committee, 13th October, 1944, Oral Evidence Given to the Royal Commission on Population, Royal Commission on Population, British Library.
[7] Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 355.

the first half of the 1950s. However, as the United Nations began to draw attention in the latter half of the decade to issues like standards of living, infant mortality rates, and population growth in various 'developing' parts of the globe, birthrate trends would remerge as a major point of concern leading up to the 1958 Lambeth Conference.

Impact of moral logic

Through an exploration of the process of moral thought found amongst Anglican proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes, this thesis has provided a window into how these women and men conceived of the place of the Church in interwar English society. As mentioned, during the interwar period figures like Mary H. Clay and Bishop Henry Russell Wakefield expressed concern over the apparent misalignment between birthrate patterns and the promotion of sexual morals, family life, and national interests. At the same time, many Anglican leaders also believed the moral authority of the Church to be on the decline. Prominent men and women like Bishop Woods, Maude Royden, and Reckitt pinned the waning of the moral authority of the Church on a number of factors, including social changes brought about by the Great War, 'outdated' Church teachings pertaining to marriage and sex, the propagation of 'hedonistic' philosophies, and the misordering of society in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. These and other factors supposedly led to the subversion of the authority of the Church, and the related widespread turning away from Christian teachings pertaining to the purpose of a human life—which in turn was thought to explain why married couples were choosing to have the 'incorrect' number of children.

There was indeed a gradual decline in Church attendance and Christian moral culture (as it related to beliefs and practices pertaining to marriage, procreation, and sexuality) between the wars, but many Anglican leaders incorrectly interpreted these

trends as abrupt, and in many cases, catastrophic phenomena. Resulting from the perceived, and in some ways actual, decline in their own moral authority, Anglican leaders increasingly looked to fertility-manipulation schemes as a means of asserting moral influence within English society during the interwar period. As it was commonly believed that the struggle over birthrates represented a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose in English society, many believed that the interference with procreative behaviours could be justified on the grounds of aligning such behaviours with varying conceptions of God's *universal* directives pertaining to human purpose.

Anglican efforts to address birthrate patterns did little to produce intended results in terms of the adoption of legislation by Parliament or the direct altering of procreative patterns amongst the Church faithful (or broader English, British, or imperial populations).[8] However, widespread concern amongst Anglican leaders over birthrate trends, and correlated fears over a decline in the moral authority of the Church, did serve to significantly impact the theological trajectories of the Church. With its approval of birth control in 1930, the Church officially sanctioned the separation of sex from reproduction within Anglican theological thought.[9] This shift, which came about in large measure due to Woods' tireless efforts to increase birthrates amongst the middle and upper classes, subsequently opened the door in the 1930s (and beyond) for the liberalization of Church positions on marriage, procreation, and sexuality.[10]

Immediately downstream from the vote by the bishops of the Anglican Communion to condone the limited use of birth control, and thus the possibility of the

[8] The neo-Malthusian policies promoted by Inge and likeminded Anglican peers might have served to engender the restriction of family size amongst the working classes in some small way, though of course such impact would be difficult to quantify.
[9] Timothy Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England, 1857-1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 132.
[10] Also of note, the claim made by Woods and other Anglican leaders that medical professionals were best suited to determine whether the use of contraceptives was advisable for a particular married couple also served, perhaps unwittingly, to undercut the moral authority of Anglican leaders in the following decades by helping to shift the use of contraceptives from a religious and/or moral question to a medical matter.

separation of sex from procreation, was the vote by the members of the Bishops' Meeting in 1935 to approve of the practice of voluntary sterilization. This decision, though not publicized, went further than the 1930 Lambeth Conference in that it allowed for the intentional setting aside of one of the purposes of marriage outlined in the Prayer Book, the raising of children (albeit under specific, rare circumstances).[11] Furthermore, the emphasis placed on the 'sacramental' value of sex by Woods and likeminded Anglican proponents of birth control supported a more general emphasis amongst the bishops of the Anglican Communion, along with all manner of Anglican leaders, on the positive aspects of human sexuality. This 'positive' teaching was said to stand in opposition to 'negative' attitudes held by the Church on such matters in the preceding decades.

The theological effects of the campaign by Woods to secure the qualified approval of birth control rippled past the Second World War. Take for example the public support offered by the Church's Board of Social Responsibility for artificial insemination by husband (AIH) in 1985. That board recognized that the practice separated procreation from intercourse, but concluded that, because the Church permitted such separation via the use of contraceptives, there was no reason to oppose AIH on those grounds. "Approval of AIH would seem to follow naturally from the Church of England's stance on contraception," explained the board. A smaller number of Anglican leaders on the board also expressed support for artificial insemination by donor (AID), a practice more commonly condemned by Roman Catholics and Protestants. As stated by the report,

> a proper development of Anglican thought on these matters is both possible and desirable (cf. the evolution of Anglican thinking on contraception) … it is possible for a couple to uphold in good conscience that the semen of a third party imports nothing alien into the marriage and does not adulterate it as a physical union would. It is a possible view of the exclusiveness of the marital relationship that it concerns physical congress

[11] However, subsequent pronouncements by the Church generally came down against the practice of sterilization.

> rather than the giving and reception of semen which is its normal accompaniment.[12]

Into the present day, the possibility that sexual intercourse might be separated from procreation within the marriage state helps undergird the moral thought of many Anglican leaders who support same-sex marriage (in a general sense, as well as in the specific sense of the Church electing to conduct same-sex marriage services).[13]

Broader meanings of moral logic

My examination of the moral logic of Anglican leaders has revealed commonalities amongst supporters of pronatalist, eugenic, and neo-Malthusian schemes. Specifically, I contend that widespread efforts to manipulate birthrates were regularly justified as a means of aligning procreative behaviours with varying ideological or religious conceptions of human purpose, and that efforts to control fertility were also regularly conceived of as part of a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose in a given place at a given time. A central claim of this thesis is that, more than helping to make sense of the actions of a small set of historical actors, this shared moral reasoning can help explain why birthrate-related concerns, and the promotion of fertility-manipulation schemes, pervaded amongst members of the middle and upper classes of nearly all religious and non-religious persuasions during the interwar period, both in England as well as across Western Europe and North America.

It would be unfair to say that all proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes conceived of the supposed discord between reproductive behaviours and personal and/or

[12] Excerpts from *Personal Origins: The Report of a Working Party on Human Fertilisation and Embryology by the Board of Social Responsibility*, found in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 433-434.
[13] For example, see Remy Bethmont, "Blessing Same-Sex Unions in the Church of England: The Liturgical Challenge of Same-Sex Couples' Demand for Equal Marriage Rites," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 17 (July, 2019), 160-161.

societal flourishing as fundamentally theological in nature. However, many framed their moral justifications related to 'qualitative' and quantitative population measures in broadly existential terms—or those relating to the meaning and purpose of human existence. As one example from outside English and Anglican circles, the French eugenist and pioneer in organ transplantation, Alexis Carrel, asserted that the proliferation of "feminism" and a related "selfishness" meant that "in the most highly civilized nations reproduction is decreasing and yields inferior products." He added that "there is no hope for an increase in the birth rate before a revolution takes place in the habits of thinking and living, and a new ideal rises above the horizon … The concept of sacrifice, of its absolute social necessity, must be introduced into the mind of modern man."[14]

Charles Davenport, the foremost proponent of eugenics in the United States, asked the following question in a 1916 speech: "for why, asks the eugenicist, is the human race here and what has it to look forward to?" The answer, according to Davenport, was that "it is for man as a social species to develop a social order to the highest, most effective type." Davenport soon after declared to his audience that if they agreed "that this is the highest aim of the species," then "for you, eugenics may be vital and a religion that may determine your behavior." He then went on to offer several declarative statements that together formed his "creed for the religion of eugenics." The first of these statements helps to elucidate Davenport's conception of human purpose in relation to his nationalist ideology, as it read "I believe in striving to raise the human race, and more particularly our nation and community to the highest plane of social organization, of cooperative work, and of effective endeavor."[15]

[14] Alexis Carrel, *Man, The Unknown* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1939), 300-301.
[15] Charles Davenport, "Eugenics as a Religion" (text of speech delivered to the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1916), https://diglib.amphilsoc.org/islandora/object/eugenics-religion#page/1/mode/1up.

While some proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes were explicit in framing their moral thinking in terms of human purpose, for others it remained implicit. Still other proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes would have plainly denied that they thought in such terms. And human purpose was not the only way of framing the moral justification for fertility-manipulation schemes. However, whenever a point was made in favour of fertility-manipulation schemes on the grounds that an individual had procreative obligations beyond their own preferences, questions of communal or individual human purpose were normally involved, either knowingly or unknowingly.[16] Often starting from visions of individual, national, and global flourishing (which were informed by political, social, and aesthetic preferences) and then working backwards, leading pronatalist, neo-Malthusian, and eugenic thinkers in North America and Europe could formulate conceptions of communal and individual purpose. They could then draw from the fields of demography and eugenics to determine how specific groups of people could best work towards these purposes (by either having or not having children). However, eugenic and demographic thought undoubtedly helped to form the basis of many visions of flourishing across Europe and North America during the interwar period.

The framing of birthrate patterns in existential terms can be said to help explain the pervasiveness of interest in birthrate patterns because of what such patterns were perceived to represent. Rather than abstract vital statistics, birthrate patterns could signify tangible 'proof' of the waxing or waning in devotion to a particular religion, ideology, or political philosophy, all of which entailed implicit or explicit claims pertaining to 'obligations' above oneself. The pervasiveness of support for fertility-manipulation schemes can likewise be made more intelligible in so far as such schemes were conceived

[16] Questions related to human purpose were of course also involved when claims were made that one had no procreative obligations to anyone besides oneself.

of as an expedient means of combating, or in some instances eradicating, opposing worldviews. Fertility-manipulation schemes offered a means, especially towards 'obstinate' groups, by which governments, or non-governmental bodies or organizations, could coerce or incentivize other persons into tangibly embodying certain ideological or religious teachings relating to the question of "what are people for?" When such schemes were directed at limiting the fertility of persons of differing ideological or religious persuasions, the hope was often that the 'subversive' beliefs associated with the targeted groups would correspondingly fade away. By manipulating procreative behaviours, one was in essence attempting to direct a specific group's procreative behaviours against the continuation of that group's 'dangerous' ideological or religious beliefs. Likewise, pronatalist calls could be conceived of as a means to combat 'dangerous' religions or ideologies on a global scale. For example, as this thesis demonstrated, warnings regarding increasing birthrates in East Asia, and corresponding calls to increase birthrates amongst white populations, were often framed in Europe and the United States in the context of a global struggle of Western (often conflated with Christian) values of compassion and humanitarianism against Eastern ideologies that supposedly promoted 'ruthlessness' and 'barbarism.'

Relatedly, the relationship drawn between birthrate patterns and human purpose can also help to explain the pervasiveness of fertility schemes in that these schemes could serve to identify a definite subversive element, associated with ends other than the 'flourishing' of the entire community or nation, that could be blamed for any number of societal problems. A simple solution, therefore, could be offered for complex problems—and proponents of fertility-manipulation schemes could present their leadership as necessary and urgent. For example, speaking on a BBC radio broadcast in 1933, the biologist John R. Baker stated that "every living man, woman and child has a right to

work or full maintenance in any civilized state, and in the same way it may be argued that people have a duty to the State not to produce children which the State has to support, if the State is already overpopulated." Building on this claim, Baker later sought to elicit support for the legalization of the sterilization of "feeble-minded" persons, arguing that "there is a good deal of evidence that the feeble-minded are increasing in numbers in this country. They are careless of the consequences of their actions, and they reproduce rapidly. They appear to be a real danger to the State." These persons, then, were presented as men and women who refused to align their procreative behaviours with their respective obligations to the state. If sterilization, along with other measures, were to be implemented, Baker contended that "we could make sure that the population of the country was adapted to its needs, and that mothers could always space births to the greatest advantage of their children and themselves. Any nation which decided on that course of action would rise supreme."[17]

While some fertility-manipulation schemes sought to change hearts and minds, other proposed schemes sought to bypass this hard work and instead aimed at merely altering behaviours. In a 1921 speech delivered in the United States, Leonard Darwin, president of the EES and son of Charles Darwin, derided the middle and upper classes for eschewing their respective communal purpose of strengthening the state through the rearing of large families. Darwin stated that, to combat dysgenic influences in society,

> what is necessary is to make it widely and deeply felt that it is both immoral and unpatriotic for couples sound in mind and body to unduly limit the size of their families … We should recognize that we shall best serve our country by bringing healthy and intelligent children into the world, provided that we can give them a sound education and a fair chance of winning a good livelihood; and all of us should be ready to make some sacrifice of social position in order to obey our country's call in this respect.

[17] Text of radio address reprinted in John R. Baker and J. B. S. Haldane, *Biology in Everyday Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1933), 77, 80, 82.

Despite the lofty ambitions of stirring up patriotic sentiments, Darwin soon after offered another means of accomplishing the ends of securing "all around racial victory." He asserted that

> there are no doubt many economic methods of increasing the rate of multiplication of the people; methods which would be beneficial if applied to good stocks and harmful in the case of inferior types. The main reason why persons of high character limit the size of their families is in order to insure that all the children they do bring into the world shall have a good start in life. Obviously the simplest way to remove this check on fertility is for the state to step in and ease the financial strain on parents due to the upbringing of their children.[18]

In closing, the belief found amongst Anglican leaders that the struggle over birthrate patterns represented a broader struggle over competing conceptions of human purpose, and the shared conviction by these women and men that efforts to manipulate birthrates could be justified as a means of aligning procreative behaviours with 'correct' conceptions of human purpose, are particularly telling as to why interest in birthrate patterns, and support for fertility-manipulation schemes, pervaded amongst religious and non-religious members of the upper and middle classes across Europe and North America. Inge, reflecting on the relationship between Christian thought, the efforts of non-religious persons to promote eugenics, and his own fervent support for fertility-manipulation schemes, noted in 1930 that "Sir Francis Galton used to say that eugenics ought to be a religion." According to Inge, attempts to establish eugenics as a religion were in fact redundant because, in his mind, Christianity provided the necessary existential values to provoke support for eugenic thought and practice against the ends of self-interest or indulgence. Eugenics "is a religion," Inge declared, "and its name is Christianity."[19]

[18] Leonard Darwin, "The Field of Eugenic Reform," *Scientific Monthly* 13 (July to December, 1921): 394.
[19] W. R. Inge, *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), 287.

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