

Should such a faith offend? Bishop Barnes and the British eugenics movement, c. 1924-1953

Patrick T Merricks (2014)

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**SHOULD SUCH A FAITH OFFEND?
BISHOP BARNES AND THE BRITISH
EUGENICS MOVEMENT,
c.1924-1953**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the eugenic ideology of E.W. Barnes in its conceptual evolution and practical application from 1924 to 1953. As the Bishop of Birmingham and one of the prominent members of the Eugenics Society, Barnes used the pulpit as a platform to promote eugenic reform both before and after 1945. Above all, he believed it essential for Britain's biological and spiritual progress to address the alleged widespread mental deficiency in the population through eugenic measures, namely: birth control, sterilization and euthanasia. Barnes' unique blend of Modernist Christianity and biological determinism received national media attention. Responses to his creed were highly polarized, oscillating between praise and moral reprehension.

It is surprising that historians of religion and eugenics have largely overlooked Barnes and his considerable contribution. Towards rectifying this neglect, this dissertation represents a new insight in the growing literature on both the British eugenics movement in general and the attitudes of the Anglican Church towards eugenics in particular. By engaging with these two broad spheres of thought, Barnes' ideas offer a lens through which one can view the somewhat blurred lines between 'traditional' religion and 'secular' eugenics in the 20th century. Rather than constituting mutually antagonistic approaches, eugenic and Christian interpretations of social improvement were seen by a number of eugenicists at the time as complementary. If the path towards human biological improvement was charted by eugenicists, then according to Barnes, Christianity held their moral compass.

After the fall of Nazism, the British eugenics movement found itself discredited and marginalized. In the eyes of many, eugenics was complicit – or at least guilty by conceptual association – in the National Socialist humanitarian atrocities, which were becoming widely known. Remarkably, while many eugenicists chose to distance themselves from negative eugenics after the Second World War, Barnes endorsed sterilization and euthanasia all the more fervently. While many responded with vehement criticism, opposition to his suggestions was not universal, and many continued to agree that, among other things, it was a national responsibility to prevent the 'mentally deficient' from reproducing.

In analysing the development of Barnes' eugenic ideas between c. 1924 and 1953, this dissertation has also opened new avenues of research, in particular the examination of ideas relating to eugenics and religion in Britain and the extent to which eugenic concerns continue to permeate biomedical debates today.

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INTRODUCTION

*We all desire to improve the stocks of which our race consists. [...] We know that many children born had better not exist, and I have been converted to a belief in euthanasia and to acceptance of the principle of sterilisation of those carrying unwholesome genes.*¹

- E.W. Barnes, 20 February 1945

In the final months of the Second World War, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, received a private letter in which the author revealed a passionate sympathy for sterilization and euthanasia. The letter was written by one of the most remarkable figures in the British eugenics movement: Ernest William Barnes (1874-1953), the Bishop of Birmingham from 1924 to 1953. Barnes became one of the most prominent and outspoken eugenic campaigners, arguing for the introduction of eugenic measures to solve the ills of society and regenerate modern Britain. Though a member of the British Eugenics Society from 1924 until his death in 1953, and at times gaining a significant amount of publicity, historians have largely ignored Barnes, in part, reflecting Frederick Hale's assertion that research "on the history of specifically Christian responses to eugenics in the United Kingdom [...] remains in its infancy."²

In Britain, the three decades that spanned Barnes' tenure as Bishop of Birmingham saw a number of dramatic social and political changes, including universal enfranchisement,

¹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Fisher RE: Artificial Insemination,' (20 February 1945), *The Papers of E.W. Barnes*, Special Collections Library, University of Birmingham, 9/21/10 (Hereafter: EWB X/YY/ZZ).

² Frederick Hale, 'Debating the New Religion of Eugenics: Catholic and Anglican Positions in Early Twentieth-Century Britain,' *The Heythrop Journal* 52 (2011), 456.

mass unemployment and social unrest, all-out war and austerity, then post-war reconstruction, the birth of the welfare state and National Health Service, and the beginnings of mass immigration. During this period, Barnes developed his worldview (along with several other Anglican Church leaders of the time) in line with the scientific revolutions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For Barnes, this allowed the replacement of seemingly out-dated and 'superstitious' religious ideals with the cult of human enhancement through eugenics. Barnes saw eugenics as a means to fulfil God's divine, evolutionary plan for humanity, drawing both on theories of modern science – particularly evolutionary biology – and Christianity to develop his own distinct ideology.

Barnes was unusual for a Churchman, openly supporting a number of 'modern' viewpoints not conventionally associated with the Anglican Church, including pacifism, evolutionism, racism, sterilization, birth control and divorce. He also cultivated relationships with prominent eugenicists, including the birth control enthusiast, Marie Stopes, in the 1920s, and the Secretary of the Eugenics Society and supporter of artificial insemination, C.P. Blacker, in the post-war period. As Bishop of Birmingham, he delivered lectures at prestigious events, such as the Modern Churchmen's Conference in 1924, attended the 1930 and 1948 Lambeth Conferences, and took part in several Convocations, one of which resulted in the Church of England relaxing its attitude on divorce in the 1930s. He also presented several papers to scientists and doctors – including members of the British Medical Association (BMA) and British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) – celebrating the advancements made by modern science while urging the need for reconciliation with religion; which, in his view, represented a moral compass for social progress. Meanwhile, in an attempt to bridge the gap between the Church and eugenics,

Barnes delivered the Eugenics Society's flagship 'Galton Lecture' on two occasions, in 1926 and again in 1949.

Although he identified with the eugenics movement for thirty years – even supporting a law on sterilization in the early 1930s – Barnes only began directly advocating the introduction of eugenic measures after the Second World War. For many, this was all too soon after the defeat of Nazi Germany, which had employed eugenic principles to a shocking degree, permanently discrediting the eugenics movement. Barnes openly preached eugenics, then, at a time when the horrific crimes of the Holocaust were gradually being brought to the attention of the general public, which made for a fascinating and polarized debate. During the late 1930s and particularly after 1945, Barnes used his religious and public prominence as a platform to promote the eugenic cause. It was topics such as over-population, racial integration, mental deficiency, the differential birth rate and, significantly, sterilization and euthanasia, from which Barnes gained most responses, both positive and negative.

The aim of this dissertation is to provide an unprecedented analysis of Barnes' ideology, contextualized within a number of discourses including secular *modernism* and Christian *Modernism*, gender equality, pacifism, racism and eugenics. In turn, with Barnes presenting his most controversial work after 1945, I draw attention to the persistence of eugenic thought in Britain after the Second World War. The core thesis presented here emphasises the ideological compatibility of supposedly 'secular' eugenics and Anglican variants of Christianity, in turn drawing attention to – and moving towards rectifying – a significant gap in scholarship on Christian interpretations of eugenics in 20th century Britain. The subsequent chapters have been conducted in accordance with the following aims:

- Firstly, to establish that E.W. Barnes was a significant eugenicist and thus an important figure in both the history of British eugenics and the history of the Church of England.
- Secondly, to map the evolution of Barnes' eugenic ideas from the 1920s to the 1950s. This also introduces debates within the Church that influenced him but – one may assume – not each other, including political, religious and eugenic developments over a thirty-year-period. How, for instance, were Barnes' convictions affected by key events, such as the Depression, population increase and immigration, the Second World War and the birth of the welfare state?
- Thirdly, to provide a detailed analysis of the relationship between eugenics and religion in Britain from the 1920s to 1950s. With Barnes representing an interesting case study for this relationship, I explore whether or not the two were compatible worldviews. I thus consider how important Barnes' position as Bishop of Birmingham was to the construction of his ideology. How did other Church leaders react to his scientific views? Furthermore, did other eugenicists share Barnes' belief that God had designed evolution?
- Fourthly, to establish that eugenics, far from being a 'reactionary' ideology whose success was confined to extreme right-wing, racist circles, was for a time a progressive, modernist ideological force that could combine with various political positions and ethical systems, both secular and sacred.
- Fifthly, to assess the importance of Barnes' eugenic ideas to post-war debates on poverty, religion, welfare, family allowances and population control.

This introductory chapter is comprised of the following sections: a) 'Historiography'; b) 'Eugenics and Religion'; c) 'Methodology and Chapter Structure'; and d) 'E.W. Barnes and the Eugenics Movement to 1920.' In 'Historiography,' I discuss the main secondary sources that have influenced this thesis, ranging from broader texts on the eugenics movement in 20th century Britain to the existing scholarship on Barnes himself. 'Eugenics and Religion' moves on to a more specific discussion of the main conceptual elements of the thesis, in particular how terms such as 'eugenics,' 'religion' and 'modernism' are defined and deployed in the subsequent chapters. In 'Methodology and Chapter Structure,' I begin by explaining the techniques used in writing the thesis and detail the main primary sources and archives that have been utilized. I then give individual outlines of the chapters to follow. In 'E.W. Barnes and the Eugenics Movement to 1920,' I outline Barnes' life and career – and the predominant trends within the British eugenics movement – before he became Bishop of Birmingham and a member of the Eugenics Society in the 1920s.

Historiography

Existing historiography on British eugenics has provided useful overviews for some key areas approached in this dissertation, namely the relationship between eugenics and a number of discourses, from political representation, religion and pacifism, to birth control, population and racism.

During the late 1960s and into the 1970s, together with Germany and the United States, Britain was among the first countries to have its history of eugenics researched. When G.R. Searle wrote the comprehensive 1976 text, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900-*

1914, the Eugenics Society, though marginalized, was still active. It did not change its name to the Galton Institute until 1989. Searle's work suggested that eugenic thought, rather than a product of Nazi ideology, had also permeated a number of important political debates in Britain at the beginning of the 20th century, particularly on national health, venereal disease, immigration and mental deficiency. In the following decade, Daniel Kevles produced what is arguably the standard text on the American eugenics movement, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (1985). Written from an Anglo-American perspective, the book also detailed some of the parallel developments in the British movement, notably identifying a move away from elitist biological determinism by figures such as C.P. Blacker and Julian Huxley as "reform eugenics."³ With Barnes continuing to advocate views based on biological determinism long after the supposed reform, the subsequent chapters explore – as Kevles alluded – to what extent this basic ethos remained a thinly veiled core characteristic of the Eugenics Society.

From the 1990s, scholars began to focus on the lesser-known movements world-wide and the relationship between eugenics and the modernization of health care and hygiene in the first half of the 20th century. New histories were thus written on nations from regions such as Scandinavia, Southeastern and Central Europe, as well as South America and Asia, ranging from Bulgaria to Brazil. In the meantime, significant texts were written, expanding the historiography of eugenics in Britain. Richard Soloway's seminal text, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (1990), covered the immediate origins of the eugenics movement in the late 19th

³ Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 192.

century through to its perceived decline after the Second World War.⁴ This work is perhaps most notable, though, for its detailed explanation of the movement's prolonged obsession with the quantity and quality of the population and to what extent this perception was altered with the advent of 'reform eugenics.' Likewise, Pauline Mazumdar's *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings: The Eugenics Society, its Sources and its Critics in Britain* (1992) drew attention to the importance of class to the movement, before and after World War II, and its relation to science and political ideology. In practice, many eugenicists – notably Barnes – appeared disproportionately concerned with the poorer sectors of society. However, this dissertation questions the notion that eugenics was a class-driven ideology. Barnes, for example, repeatedly emphasized that the real enemy was 'mental deficiency' not *necessarily* the poor.

As the 1990s progressed, there was an increased interest among scholars on the ideological dynamics of fascism and modernism. Following Roger Griffin's significant, *The Nature of Fascism* (1991) and greater awareness of Emilio Gentile's theories on 'political religion' in Anglophone academic circles, a new 'consensus' emerged in fascist studies that had a significant impact on our understanding of eugenics too. It is particularly relevant when one considers the underlying need shared by many contemporary ideologues to remove 'outdated' religious – and ineffective political – convictions and instil a new national 'eugenic consciousness.' Take, for example, Matthew Thompson's, 1998 *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics and Social Policy in Britain, c. 1870-1959*. Thompson documented the various ways in which eugenics influenced British social reforms with the

⁴ Soloway also authored: *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

expansion of democracy a significant political backdrop to the on-going struggle to overcome the apparent prevalence of inheritable mental deficiency.⁵

In the last decade, there has been new emphasis placed on the importance of 'race' to eugenic thought in Britain. Two essential contributions are Dan Stone's 2002 *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian Britain* and Gavin Schaffer's 2008 *Racial Science and British Society, 1930-1962*. On the one hand, Stone has attempted to dispel the notion that racial hygiene and extreme measures – such as gas chambers and compulsory sterilization – were conceived solely by Nazi scientists. Stone instead recognized that such ideas had been advocated in Britain during the early 1900s, albeit from marginalized positions, decades before the rise of National Socialism in Germany. On the other hand, Schaffer has examined the perseverance of 'scientific racism' – despite the efforts of Julian Huxley, Claude Levi-Strauss and their colleagues at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1945-) – in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁶ This dissertation considers the importance of scientific racism to Barnes' conception of eugenics and in turn how important the mindset of racism was to British society more generally at this time.

More recently, scholars have begun to take a more transnational perspective, in which eugenics has been portrayed as a product of modernism and as one of the characteristic features of 20th century civilization. In terms of the latter, along with Ruth Clifford Engs' *The Eugenics Movement: An Encyclopaedia* (2005), and Bashford and Levine's

⁵ See also: Diane Paul, *Politics of Heredity: Essays on Eugenics, Biomedicine, and the Nature of Heredity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998). Paul's work is significant for the fresh approach taken to the subject, reconnoitring the influence that political affiliation had – particularly with figures such as socialist geneticist, H.J. Muller during the inter-war period – on one's understanding of the nature of heredity.

⁶ See also: Michelle Brattain, 'Race, Racism and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public,' *The American Historical Review* 112, 5 (December 2007), 1386-1413.

The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics (2010), perhaps the most significant work of recent years is Marius Turda's 2010 *Modernism and Eugenics*. Rather than explaining the existence of different nation's eugenics movements through their own geo-political contexts, Turda – who began his career writing on the history of eugenics in inter-war East-central Europe – emphasises the transnational, chameleon-like nature of the eugenic cause. For Turda, though coloured by the various prejudices of different national cultures, eugenics is a fundamental part of general European history and modernity.

Returning to the British context, Clare Hanson, for instance, has focussed on more specific aspects of the movement. Examining the extent to which eugenics became part of the national culture and remained so after the Second World War, Hanson's 2012 *Eugenics Literature, and Culture in Post-War Britain*, provides a striking insight into how, in the form of films and novels, the idea of eugenics as a way of life lingered in the minds of many during the post-war period. In exploring the eugenic theories of E.W. Barnes, as well as more general discourses occurring from the 1920s to 1950s, I have considered both the importance placed by scholars such as Griffin and Turda on the close relationship between modernism and eugenics, Stone and Schaffer's emphasis on the importance of 'race,' as well as Hanson's argument that eugenics was a definitive, if subversive, feature of British national culture, before, during and after the Second World War.

Although he was a notable figure in the history of the Church of England, the eugenics movement, and also a correspondent of the modernist (both Christian and secular) movements, E.W. Barnes has been largely overlooked in the abovementioned texts. Elsewhere, he attracts little more than a sentence in texts such as, N.D.A. Kemp's, *Merciful Release: A History of the British Euthanasia Movement C. 1870-1970* (2002), a subject

matter of much importance to Barnes' rhetoric from the late 1930s onward; Richard Milton's *Best of Enemies: Britain and Germany: 100 Years of the Truth and Lies* (2007), in which Barnes is briefly recognized alongside a number of other Churchmen – such as Dean Inge and Frederick D'Arcy, the Bishop of Down – who, mostly during the early 20th century, were prominent in the Eugenics Society and Christian Modernist movement; and *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (2004), in which Rosen, briefly, characterized Barnes as a mediator between eugenicist and churchman. By far the most extensive publication on Barnes is the 1979 biography, *Ahead of His Age: Bishop Barnes of Birmingham* written by his son, John Barnes. Though the book is a detailed work in itself, little significance is placed on Barnes' eugenic ideas, taking up only five pages out of 443. Though one is presented with an overview of the importance of themes such as race, pacifism and overcrowding to the Bishop's arguments for biological improvement, it lacks in-depth ideological and contextual analysis. In turn, perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on Barnes as a progressive figure. For instance, though considered 'ahead of his age,' he maintained somewhat anachronistic beliefs, with regards to scientific racism and biological determinism.

Other works on Barnes are a handful of articles, in which his eugenic ideas – though not overlooked – are not studied in any great detail. Most recently, in "Blessed are the Pacifists: E.W. Barnes of Birmingham and Pacifism, 1914-1945" (2009), Stephen Parker makes reference to the influence of eugenics upon Barnes' conceptualization of pacifism. Although Parker correctly asserts that "Barnes believed that eugenics was a positive tool by which one might assist God in the evolutionary process and in bringing about the Kingdom

of God on earth,” this is not elaborated on.⁷ To rectify this, the subsequent chapters offer a detailed analysis of this aspect of his ideology, which was prevalent throughout his professional career. Instead, Parker’s main contention was that pacifism had the predominant influence on Barnes’ ideas. I contend here that pacifism was in fact a by-product of his eugenic – and to an extent, religious – beliefs. In short, for Barnes, war was dysgenic, hampering eugenic and spiritual progress and as a consequence, he was a pacifist. Alternatively, Peter J. Bowler has focussed on Barnes’ desire to bring the teachings of the Church in line with modern science, notably in the 1998 article ‘Evolution and the Eucharist: Bishop E.W. Barnes on science and religion in the 1920s and 1930s’ (1998) and the 2001 *Reconciling Science and Religion: The Debate in Early-Twentieth Century Britain*. Though focussing predominantly on the history of evolutionism, Bowler’s work has also drawn attention to the relationship between evolutionary science, eugenics and religion, detailing how many figures who like Barnes sympathized with the ideals of Christian Modernism, adopted both evolutionism and eugenic ideology. Bowler also draws a distinction between Barnes’ views and those of Dean Inge, perhaps the best-known Christian eugenicist in Britain: “Inge too urged the need for a eugenics programme to stave off national degeneration and insisted that progress was by no means inevitable. But Inge's main sources of scientific inspiration were the developments in physics and cosmology suggesting that the universe must ultimately run down. Barnes' engagement with current developments in biology was thus quite unusual for a theologian of his time.”⁸ In a similar vein, Steve Bishop’s 2001 article, ‘Bishop Barnes, Science and Religion,’ discussed Barnes’

⁷ Stephen Parker, “‘Blessed are the Pacifists’: E.W. Barnes of Birmingham and Pacifism, 1914-45,’ *Midland History* 34, 2 (Autumn 2009), 209.

⁸ Peter J. Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist: Bishop E.W. Barnes on Science and Religion in the 1920s and 1930s,’ *The British Journal for the History of Science* 31, 4 (December 1998), 466.

ideological perspective as a ‘science shapes religion’ approach, though failing to make a direct connection between this and his eugenic ideology. I propose that if eugenics was understood by its proponents as a *way of life*, the ‘science shapes religion’ approach is also essential to an understanding of his eugenic beliefs. In exploring his ideological development over three decades, I both greatly expand on the existing scholarship on Barnes – particularly the approach made by the latter two authors – and provide a unique contextualisation of his philosophy, using specific trends within the British eugenics movement during different time periods and wider developments in British society more generally.

Described by a contemporary as “insane and un-Christian,”⁹ Barnes was a controversial author and his public eugenic pronouncements posed a host of philosophical, ethical and legal questions pertaining to the role of science and religion in Britain, which are still highly relevant today. In short, this dissertation offers the most extensive contextualisation and analysis of his eugenic, scientific and racial beliefs to date, with specific reference to the intellectual and public climates in which Barnes presented his work.

Eugenics and Religion

The term ‘eugenics’ refers to a social philosophy that was popular in a number of countries predominantly – though by no means exclusively – during the inter-war period. Eugenic ideology was underpinned by the notion that man’s hereditary qualities could be artificially improved; in other words, science could control the future of human evolution.

⁹ John Barnes, *Ahead of His Age: Bishop Barnes of Birmingham* (London: Collins, 1979), 388.

In 1859, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* had affirmed that, in the evolutionary sense, the human form was by no means fixed but, rather, a malleable entity that could be subject to biological progress or, conversely, to degeneration. Subsequent to Darwin's intervention, humankind was increasingly described in scientific rather than religious terms and as a result, 'science' and 'religion' were often portrayed as mutually exclusive viewpoints. This led to several hostile public debates. Perhaps the most famous of which was between T.H. Huxley and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce in 1860, with the former rigorously defending the theory of evolution.¹⁰ The importance of science to theories of human improvement cannot be understated.

The eugenics movement was a broad church, which sheltered many different viewpoints. However, some common threads ran through eugenic thinking. In the words of one leading American eugenicist, Frederick Osborn, eugenics – at least in its American, German, Scandinavian and British manifestations – aimed for “the improvement of human genetic traits through the promotion of higher reproduction of people with desired traits (positive eugenics), and reduced reproduction of people with less desired or undesired traits (negative eugenics).”¹¹ The British Eugenics Society (Eugenics Society) – originally known as the Eugenics Education Society between 1908 and 1926 – adopted the 1883 definition given by the movement's founder, Francis Galton (1822-1911): “Eugenics is the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally.”¹² This definition was displayed on the cover of every issue of the Society's flagship journal, *The Eugenics Review* from 1911-1944.

¹⁰ See: Chapter I.

¹¹ See: Frederick Osborn, 'Development of a Eugenic Philosophy,' *American Sociological Review* 2, 3 (June 1937), 389-397.

¹² Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 30.

In 1908, Galton also described the aim of eugenics – something essential to understanding its moral implications – thus: “Man is gifted with pity and other kindly feelings; he has also the power of preventing many kinds of suffering. I conceive it to fall well within his province to replace Natural Selection by other processes that are more merciful and not less effective.”¹³ In Britain, eugenicists were greatly influenced by other late 19th century trends, namely neo-Malthusian warnings against over-population, the concept of degeneration and in particular the Social Darwinian theories of authors such as Herbert Spencer. It was arguably with these basic principles in mind that many leaders of the movement – including Leonard Darwin, a strict biological determinist, in the 1910s and 1920s; R.A. Fisher, one of the main proponents of ‘Mendelian eugenics,’ in the 1930s; and, C.P. Blacker, who attempted to accommodate ‘mainstream’ social reform into the Society’s programme in the post-war period – defined their eugenic work.

This dissertation approaches eugenics as a branch of modernist thought. When considering Bishop Barnes and the eugenics movement it is useful to note Roger Griffin’s distinction between epiphanic (cultural) and programmatic (political) modernism. The former is usually associated with the introverted and personal works of art and fiction by such luminaries as Pablo Picasso and Virginia Woolf. The latter can be applied to figures such as Barnes and the eugenics movement, particularly their imagined utopias that would mark a dramatic departure from the ills of modern society. Such examples of programmatic modernism were part of a general trend during the early 20th century in which a number of social and political movements attempted to blend Enlightenment rationalism or science

¹³ Galton quoted in: Karl Pearson, *The Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton, Volume 3, Part 1* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, first published: 1914), 355.

with utopian schemes to 'save' humanity or society from certain ills (or all ills).¹⁴ Rather than a continuance of the progressive, Enlightenment interpretation of social improvement, a characteristic feature of the eugenics movement was its obsession with degeneration and subsequently the regeneration of society. However, this could only be achieved through far-reaching programmes of 'racial' improvement, usually based on techniques of selective breeding to improve the inherent physical and mental traits of the national stock.

Griffin has also noted that "[t]he paradoxical transformation of positivist science – the main vector of 'disenchantment' – into a source of transcendence was the precondition for the rise of 'eugenics'."¹⁵ For many followers of the movement, then, it was hoped that eugenics would supersede 'traditional' interpretations of religion to become the new moral compass of the nation, with a shared hereditary duty for future generations dictating the popular conscience. That considered, Soloway has written, for the predominantly agnostic eugenicists, "evolution was the final blow to [their] waning faith," and in eugenics, their search was complete for "a new orthodoxy mired not in the fall of man but in his biological redemption."¹⁶

If one were to take a cursory glance at some of Galton's remarks concerning the role he wished his new philosophy to play in society, it may seem that from the outset eugenics was in conflict with organized religion. Indeed, in 1904 Galton declared that eugenics must be "introduced into the national conscience like a new religion." He also believed the movement had "strong claims to become an orthodox religious tenet of the future" and

¹⁴ See: Roger Griffin, 'Tunnel Visions and Mysterious Trees: Modernist Projects of National and Racial Regeneration, 1880-1939' in Marius Turda and Paul Weindling eds., *"Blood and Homeland:" Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 417-56.

¹⁵ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 148.

¹⁶ Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-century Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 82.

thus saw “no impossibility in eugenics becoming a religious dogma among mankind.”¹⁷ For Galton and many others, eugenics empowered the individual and society alike with the promise of biological improvement, offering an alternate means of spirituality not necessarily reliant on an almighty deity. From this perspective, eugenics can in fact be considered a ‘secular religion.’¹⁸ However, as we shall see, Barnes’ ideology represented one example of many exceptions to this rule, arguing on numerous occasions that eugenics and Anglicanism in particular were complementary viewpoints.

Approaching the subject from a transnational perspective, Marius Turda has provided the following summary of the apparent threat posed to the churches by the rise of eugenics:

As the increasing ideological emphasis on eugenics was given material form through legislative and policy initiatives, these secular theories of human improvement came into open conflict with the religious dogmas advocated by the main Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christian Churches in Europe. Eugenic claims of national rejuvenation impacted directly on the carefully orchestrated staging of national identities associated with the church in various European countries. Moreover, eugenics challenged the Church’s supremacy over sexual reproduction and marriage.¹⁹

¹⁷ Francis Galton, ‘Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims,’ *The American Journal of Sociology* 10, 1 (July 1904), 82.

¹⁸ For more on the concept of ‘secular religion’ see: E. Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 84.

According to Richard Soloway, in the early 1900s many eugenicists in Britain in fact viewed members of the clergy as “important potential allies in the promotion of eugenic marriages,” yet eugenics itself was, “in the minds of many clergy,” still associated with “a hard-hearted, scientific materialism derived from social Darwinist beliefs in the survival of the fittest.”²⁰ Generally speaking though, as Turda continues, eugenicists “did not discourage religious beliefs, and many of them were also practicing Christians, postulating that the state’s biological aims should reflect the transcendental aims of the church.”²¹

The inherent differences between Christian denominations were often vital to the way in which different religious figures in a variety of national contexts approached eugenics. For example, as Diane Paul noted, the acceptance of a new social consciousness; the overarching need for hereditary responsibility with regards to parenthood; and, the calls for “state action to enforce that responsibility” – all primary concerns of the eugenics movement – ran counter to Catholic doctrine.²² Catholicism can also be viewed as distinct for its tendency to emphasize that every life is sacred, beginning at the moment of insemination with the embryo already having a soul. In Britain especially, many Catholics held a natural repugnance for eugenics, agreeing with the renowned Catholic philosopher G.K. Chesterton that it represented a disquieting example of the “modern craze for scientific officialism and strict social organization.”²³

Catholic opposition to the British eugenics movement was best epitomized, perhaps, by the successful opposition to the sterilization of those considered hereditarily defective,

²⁰ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 82.

²¹ Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics*, 85.

²² Paul, *Politics of Heredity*, 14-15.

²³ Gilbert K. Chesterton quoted in *Ibid*, 15.

as proposed in the 1934 Brock Report.²⁴ This was in many respects a demonstration of strict obedience to Papal direction, namely the Vatican's 1930 *Casti Connubii*.²⁵ Here, in what has been referred to as "the first organized opposition to eugenic intervention in reproductive bodies," the Pope declared that – contrary to eugenic principles – the family was more sacred than the state.²⁶ As John Macnicol has summarized, while "the state could not legitimately punish (by sterilization) potential parents whose propensity to commit a crime in the future (the production of defective children) was not proven, [...] human beings were 'begotten not for the earth and for time, but for Heaven and eternity'."²⁷ In contrast to Nazi Germany, – where "the Catholic Church eventually sided with the authoritarian state"²⁸ – in Britain, though a minority of Catholics may have been sympathetic to the ideals of eugenics, almost all were unwilling to disobey the Pope.

Arguably, the reformist nature of Protestantism, based on personal revelation, allowed for more scope with regard to modern conceptions of marriage, reproduction and the acceptance of scientific explanations. By the onset of the inter-war period, a number of Anglican churchmen had already come to acknowledge the recent advances of modern science, such as Einstein's theories on the mechanics of the universe. Led primarily by the Christian Modernist movement, some even integrated such theories into their own sermons as teleological evidence for the existence of God. Key figures in the Modernist movement,

²⁴ See: Chapters II and III.

²⁵ Though also heavily criticizing eugenics, this was largely a response to the 1930 Lambeth Conference in which the Anglican Church officially accepted the use of birth control by married couples. See: Chapter III.

²⁶ Susanne Klausen and Alison Bashford, 'Fertility Control: Eugenics, Neo-Malthusianism, and Feminism,' in Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 105.

²⁷ John Macnicol, 'Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization in Britain between the Wars,' *Social History of Medicine* 2, 2 (1989), 161-2.

²⁸ Véronique Mottier, 'Eugenics and the State: Policy-Making in Comparative Perspective,' in Bashford and Levine, *The Oxford Handbook*, 143.

such as Hastings Rashdall and Hensley Henson, aroused a certain amount of hostility from other churchmen during the early 1920s. Although their viewpoint was sometimes “tolerated by other Anglicans, so long as it was confined to miracles of healing and other incidentals,” when applied to “the virgin birth of Christ, and more especially to his bodily resurrection, it generated massive controversy.”²⁹

As would also be the case with the birth control movement, Barnes, in many respects a private man, never professed himself a member of the Christian Modernists. However, as will be discussed in Chapter I, he declared admiration for their work and certainly shared a mutual distrust in the, so-called, miraculous (which he saw as central to more traditional systems of Christian belief) and, subsequently, a wish for Church reform. Peter Bowler has suggested that Barnes “did not regard himself as a Modernist [...] and always preferred to think of himself as a liberal evangelical. He accepted that he was regarded by many as the *de facto* leader of the movement, but felt rather uncomfortable with the position.”³⁰ Instead, according to Bowler, Barnes’ interest in Darwinism “stemmed in part from his enthusiasm for eugenics, which forced him to confront the existence of harmful mutations and the need for their elimination.”³¹

In terms of ideology, the Christian Modernist position was different from the largely ‘secular’ examples of programmatic modernism, like fascism and communism that gained a wide following in many Western nations during the inter-war period. Thus, rather than characterized by an often revolutionary concern for the apparent decline of society, a rejection of the status quo – whether cultural or biological – and the need for a national

²⁹ Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist,’ 456.

³⁰ Ibid, 457.

³¹ Ibid, 466.

rebirth/regeneration, the primary focus of the Christian Modernists was to bring their faith in line with the latest scientific theories. In the hope of achieving this goal, luminaries of the movement did not usually call for revolutionary changes to society but simply “a faith purged of the old reliance on miracles.”³² However, as was the case with Barnes, it was possible to both adopt the Christian *Modernist* position and sympathise with *modernist* eugenics. This was due primarily to the *Modernist* acceptance of the theory of evolution, albeit in this case as a premeditated process, designed by God.³³ From the 1920s to 1950s, Barnes’ rhetoric, then, while agreeing with the Christian Modernist agenda of reconciling science with religion, was certainly *modernist* in intent. Thus, in public lectures throughout his career, he described a civilization degenerating around him, with drastic and far-reaching changes – often informed both by his belief in eugenics and the need for Church reform – urgently required if humanity was to evolve as a species.

By the early 20th century, a minority of religious figures had already begun to accept one of the central characteristics of eugenic ideology: that human agency could play a positive or negative role in evolution. If humanity was merely one point on the evolutionary scale, significantly, for this new generation of Christian thinkers, it was still the first species to attain spiritual understanding. That considered, if eugenics could produce finer types of human beings, it could also propel man toward even higher phases of religiosity, in turn bringing him closer to God. As well as biological decline, Christian eugenicists also wished to reverse spiritual decline, something equally damaging to civilization. That this was already taking place could certainly be evidenced by a number of factors, including the marked

³² Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist,’ 456.

³³ Some of which, such as Dean Inge, Bishop Boyd Carpenter and Edward Lyttelton, the Headmaster of Eton, were also notable eugenicists.

decline in Anglican Church membership during the early 20th century, the sustained popularity of 'superstitious' Catholicism, the decline in the middle-class birth rate and the apparent rise of mental deficiency in society. Barnes and other Christian eugenicists, like the Reverend F.B. Meyer, were along with most eugenicists "distressed by the differential birthrate and the absence of men of ability to lead the country."³⁴ From this perspective, 'eugenics' was not interpreted in a hostile manner but as a "high and holy conception" that went "beyond science to merge religious and racial instincts necessary for true race regeneration." With the "[r]eproduction of the race" perceived as a profound concern to both eugenics and religion, rather than in existential conflict for the national conscience, so Meyer reasoned, the two were "inextricably linked, like it or not."³⁵ Indeed, the leading eugenicist, Dean Inge (1860-1954) had appealed, in his 1921 article 'Eugenics and Religion,' "for the preservation of those stocks to which the country has owed the greater part of its glory. It is just here that eugenics may find in religion a potent ally."³⁶ With such elements helping to shape the character of his ideology, in public lectures, publications and private correspondence from the 1920s onwards, Barnes' attempted to reconcile Anglicanism with both scientific theory and eugenics, with the biological and spiritual future of humanity his primary concern.

Such debates on the interlinking roles played by eugenics and religion in society were not unique to Britain, with Germany and America both notable examples.³⁷ Certainly, during the inter-war period, religious leaders in a number of countries played significant

³⁴ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 81.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ William R. Inge, 'Eugenics and Religion,' *The Eugenics Review* 12, 4 (January 1921), 265.

³⁷ See: Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Paul Weindling, *Nazi Medicine and the Nuremberg Trials: From Medical War Crimes to Informed Consent* (London: Palgrave, 2004).

roles in national eugenics movements. Scholars have tended to agree that since eugenics dealt with life and death, “the stakes were high and organized religions were involved at both doctrinal and institutional levels, shaping one of the major geographical axes of difference in the history of eugenics.”³⁸ It is evident, then, that religious persuasion did not necessarily dictate whether or not one could become a eugenicist. When discussing the transnational relationship between eugenics and the state, Véronique Mottier contended that religion was “significant but not decisive as a factor determining variations in eugenic practices both within and between states.”³⁹ Furthermore she underlined some general differences thus: “The main dividing line seems to have been religion: while Protestant cantons tended to engage in sterilization practices, Catholic cantons, on the whole, did not, reflecting more general differences in attitudes towards poverty, illness, and disability within Protestant and Catholic doctrine.” Indeed, for Catholics, “any form of life, no matter how ‘defective’ or ‘flawed,’ [was] worthy of preservation, while Protestants have traditionally been more comfortable with ideas of human perfectibility.”⁴⁰

When one examines scholarship from a variety of geographical contexts, a number of examples further illuminate the potential differences between interpretations of eugenics from different religious denominations. For instance, Turda has described how in Romania, members of the Orthodox Church were enlisted to help diffuse arguments for the eugenic transformation of Romanian society.⁴¹ In general, as Rory Yeomans has highlighted with regards to the Croatian discourse, Catholic doctrine tended to influence a more pro-

³⁸ Bashford and Levine, ‘Introduction,’ *The Oxford Handbook*, 17.

³⁹ Véronique Mottier, ‘Eugenics and the State’ in Bashford and Levine, ‘Introduction,’ *The Oxford Handbook*, 143.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 142.

⁴¹ See: Marius Turda, ‘Controlling the National Body: Ideas of Racial Purification in Interwar Romania, 1918–1944,’ in: Christof Promitzer, Sevasti Trubeta and Marius Turda, *Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe to 1945* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 325-350.

natalist approach to eugenics, which for example, could even result in extreme punishment for those undergoing and performing abortions.⁴² Though Catholics tended to oppose the negative side of eugenics, particularly birth control and sterilization, this was not necessarily the case with pro-natalist programmes of positive eugenics, which were often based on theories of Lamarckian *puériculture*. Monika Löscher has written that “eugenic movements also existed in Catholic countries, and were developed on the basis of social concerns for the ‘hereditarily healthy’ [...] and the reversal of social degeneration.”⁴³ This was also the case, as Klausen and Bashford have noted, with regards to the eugenics movement in some Latin and Middle Eastern countries, and particularly in Catholic France, where “any method of restricting births was increasingly politically difficult. Anxiety about fertility decline produced a strident and official pro-natalism [was] backed up by the criminalization of contraception from 1920 [onwards].”⁴⁴

Emphasizing the multi-faith appeal of eugenics, Christine Rosen has documented the way in which Catholic, Evangelical and Jewish leaders in America reacted to the American eugenics movement before the Second World War. Although the majority of religious figures tended to oppose eugenics, each group also had its sympathizers. Catholic priests, such as John A. Ryan and John Cooper, supported the movement for its “scientific credibility” and emphasized the Church’s obligation to “race betterment.” Alternatively, Rabbi Max Reichler, offered what Rosen has called, “the first attempt by a rabbi to reconcile eugenics with the Jewish faith,” drawing similarities between Talmudic teachings on family

⁴² See: Rory Yeomans, ‘Fighting the White Plague: Demography and Abortion in the Independent State of Croatia,’ in Promitzer, Trubeta and Turda, *Health, Hygiene and Eugenics*, 385-426.

⁴³ Roland M. Löscher, ‘Eugenics and Catholicism in Interwar Austria,’ in Turda and Weindling, *Blood and Homeland*, 299.

⁴⁴ Klausen and Bashford, ‘Fertility Control: Eugenics, Neo-Malthusianism, and Feminism,’ in *The Oxford Handbook*, 102.

life and the broader implications of eugenic ideology.⁴⁵ Significantly, as Wendy Kline has written, “Those religious leaders who contributed to the movement did more than just preach to the converted; they also forced eugenicists to consider the spiritual nature of race betterment.”⁴⁶ This was also the case in Britain. Barnes, for example, took part in a ‘Conference on Eugenics,’ organized by the Bishop of Winchester in 1931. Attendees also included the eminent ‘secular’ eugenicists, R.A. Fisher, Julian Huxley and Reginald Gates.⁴⁷ In fact, on several occasions, British eugenicists, from both secular and religious backgrounds, looked to build bridges, whether theoretical or practical, between the two spheres of influence, something I explore further in Chapters III and IV.

From the mid-1930s, in the British context biological determinism – which had somewhat defined the philosophy of the Eugenics Society to this point – came under increasing scrutiny from scientific, political and religious communities. It was apparent to many that genetic material did not play as big a role in human development as was once thought and environmental improvement must also be given consideration in order to raise the overall quality of the population. In turn, many eugenicists, Barnes included, were frustrated with several of the new ‘universalist’ schemes for social improvement approved by the government, such as the 1935 Housing Act and the 1943 Beveridge Plan, the latter of which suggesting, among other things, the need for universal family allowances. Notably, this trend seemed to be more in line with another facet of ‘traditional’ Christian thought: the need to care for the poor and downtrodden.

⁴⁵ Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 108-9.

⁴⁶ Wendy Kline, ‘Eugenics in the United States’ in Bashford and Levine eds., *The Oxford Handbook*, 514.

⁴⁷ See: Chapter III.

As the Second World War ended and the true horrors of Nazi *Rassenhygiene* were revealed, the eugenics movement in Britain was greatly discredited and marginalized. Eugenists were forced to consider how their own ideology could fit in with other forms of social reform, such as family allowance schemes. In 1944, *The Eugenics Review* changed its official definition of eugenics to Galton's 1904 variant, emphasizing a more positive and disciplined approach to the subject: "Eugenics is the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage."⁴⁸ The importance of religious leaders in spreading this new more 'positive' approach was evident. In particular, as detailed in Chapter VI, the Archbishop of Canterbury formed a committee to discuss the Church's position on the practice of artificial insemination and its use for eugenic purposes.

Though differing on a number of issues, figures in the British eugenics movement, such as Blacker and Julian Huxley, attempted to move the Eugenics Society away from the class-based, determinist propaganda that had largely defined eugenics in the early 20th century, towards a more positive approach that, it was hoped, was justified by the advances of modern science. Nonetheless, much of the Eugenics Society's work in the post-war period, such as Blacker's Problem Families Committee and Family Planning Association, is evidence of the eugenicists' ongoing struggle with the nature/nurture debate, as well as the perseverance of biological determinism and social elitism in eugenic thought after the Second World War. Barnes was one example of this perseverance during this period in which negative eugenics played a central role in his sermons.

⁴⁸ Galton, 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims,' 82.

Engaging with these issues, this dissertation examines the development of Barnes' ideology under the assumption that eugenics and religion could be considered complementary approaches to social progress, united as a new modernist creed. This was a central theme in Barnes' 1926 Galton Lecture, entitled 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' in which he declared to the Eugenics Society that if eugenics was understood as "a tool for pursuing the larger goal of creating the Kingdom, accepted as merely part of God's plan for society, religious men and women would not resist its entreaties."⁴⁹

Methodology and Chapter Structure

In terms of methodology, this dissertation takes an intellectual-biographical approach, using a chronological format. I attempt to demonstrate that while Barnes' personal biography may at first appear relatively insignificant, his ideological development from the 1920s-1950s demonstrates that a wide range of his views (for example, on divorce, birth control, enfranchisement, and race) shared common characteristics and were united under the modernist complex of national degeneration and rebirth. In order to analyse his professional life and ideological development, the subsequent chapters explore how Barnes' views on eugenics changed from the 1920s to 1950s and how this related to various discourses pertaining to the eugenics movement in Britain, such as the differential birth rate and the perceived increase of mental deficiency in society, and wider social issues, like immigration and inter- and post-war reconstruction. I also explore to what extent the public's opinions

⁴⁹ Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 127.

on eugenics and the views of the eugenicists themselves altered during this time, most notably before and after the Second World War.

The chapters that comprise the dissertation are structured using a chronological approach. Certainly in the British context, the evolving ideology and various projects of the eugenics movement had different characteristics and varied in tone at different times in its history, whether it was the heavy influence of biological determinism on theories of negative eugenics during the 1920s; sustained debates on 'eugenics and religion' during the early 1930s; increased interest in population trends during the late-1930s; the welfare state during World War Two; or a move towards more 'positive' approaches in the post-War years. Supporting the chronological structure, then, much of eugenic rhetoric from the 1920s-1950s was often influenced by – and written in response to – major events and societal trends alike. These include the First and Second World Wars; the stock market crash of 1929; the rise of National Socialism in Germany (and the subsequent state use of compulsory negative eugenics); the increased dissemination of birth control information in the late 1920s/early 1930s; the Vatican's official rejection of eugenics in 1930; and the move for divorce reform in the late 1930s, to name a few.

The main primary sources used in this dissertation are *The Papers of E.W. Barnes* held at the Special Research Library in the University of Birmingham.⁵⁰ Here one can find a number of unpublished lectures and sermons delivered by Barnes, as well as many private letters in which he discussed myriad subjects related to eugenics. Also substantial are his published works: *Should Such a Faith Offend* (1927), *Scientific Theory and Religion* (1933)

⁵⁰ Records show that *The Papers of E.W. Barnes* were donated to the University of Birmingham by the Barnes family in 1979 soon after the publication of *Ahead of His Age*. The archive has been largely neglected by scholars.

and *The Rise of Christianity* (1947). It is in these books that Barnes put forward his ideas regarding the dangers of biological and spiritual decline and hope for subsequent revival, as well as his controversial historical reassessment of Christianity, in which he described early Christians as superstitious, while painting a controversial, reductionist portrait of Jesus Christ.

These sources are complemented by national newspaper archives, especially *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*. These newspapers published reports of Barnes' sermons as well as the 'Letters to the Editor' sections, which are crucial to an understanding of the means by which his ideology was presented to, and received by, the public. Indeed, even into the post-war period, some still defended his eugenic views, as engaging debates on the right to parenthood dominated the national press.

In addition, I have made extensive use of the archives of the Eugenics Society. These have been instrumental in exploring the ideology of the Population Investigation Committee, during the mid-1930s, as well as the post-war Problem and Promising Families Committees. Moreover, *The Eugenics Review* provided essential information on the general trends within the eugenics movement in Britain. This quarterly publication, to which Barnes was a regular subscriber, included: journal articles written by scientists, physicians, lawyers and social reformers; the 'Notes of the Quarter,' which attempted to contextualize the contents of the issue within wider political and social debates, while detailing specific activities of the Society; and the 'Letters to the Editor' section, in which subscribers to the journal debated on a number of issues, including religion, mental deficiency, sterilization and family allowances. The journal has been useful for identifying more general trends within the British eugenics movement, from the popularity of arguments for sterilization in

the 1920s and early 1930s to later attempts to conclude more 'mainstream' methods of social reform during the Second World War and beyond, as well as specific discourses including discussions on eugenics and religion during the early 1930s.

The thesis is divided into six primary chapters and one concluding chapter. In 'Chapter I: From Science and Religion to Religion and Eugenics, c.1920-1925' I examine several of Barnes' prominent lectures and sermons from this period. With the First World War an all too recent and painful memory, Barnes argued that if mankind was to avoid the total collapse of civilization, and spiritual and political decline were to be reversed, science and religion – despite the conflict of the past – must be harmonized. Meanwhile, he became increasingly obsessed with the idea that over-population had led to war, and with the war the destruction of many of the nation's 'best stocks.' In 1924, he was both ordained as Bishop of Birmingham and became a member of the Eugenics Society. In the subsequent years he developed a unique, Christian interpretation of eugenics.

'Chapter II: Towards Negative Eugenics, c.1926-1929' focuses primarily on Barnes' first public pronouncements on eugenics and the social context in which they were conceived. Most notable was his 1926 Galton Lecture, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion.' Here he discussed the importance of a number of discourses from race, birth control and sterilization to Christianity and spiritual decline. Though biological determinism was perhaps the most influential theory on the majority of arguments in favour of the practice, some eugenicists were also sympathetic to neo-Lamarckism, which held that one's characteristics acquired during their lifetime could be inherited by the next generation. At this time Barnes had not long been studying theories of biology and eugenics and thus lay somewhere in between the two theories, providing a useful case study for the conflicting

theories on the nature of heredity existing at the time. His prominence as one of the few eugenic bishops, earned him attention from advocates of sterilization and birth control, though at this stage in his ecclesiastical career Barnes did not wish to give public support to either practice.

In Chapters III and IV, 'God and the Gene, Part I, c.1930-1932' and 'Part II, c.1933-1935,' I explore the relationship between eugenics and religion during the early 1930s. Notably, at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, in which the Anglican Communion tentatively accepted birth control, Barnes, among others in attendance, applauded the resolution as "racially enlightened."⁵¹ In response, representing the Catholic Church, on New Year's Eve, 1930, the Pope delivered a fervent dismissal of eugenics in his *Casti Connubii*. This resulted in some eugenicists considering the compatibility of eugenics and religion. Notable examples include the 1931 'Conference on Eugenics,' organized by the Bishop of Winchester and attended by Barnes, Huxley and Fisher, as well as the prolonged debate in the pages of *The Eugenics Review* on 'Eugenics and Religion' from 1931-1933. During the period, Barnes, influenced by the theories of Gregor Mendel and the biological determinism of figures such as Reginald Gates, published his extensive book *Scientific Theory and Religion* (1933), which included a detailed explanation of his evolving opinions on eugenics. Having been a member of the Eugenics Society for almost a decade, Barnes even supported A.G. Church and Laurence Brock, in their attempts to achieve parliamentary approval for eugenic sterilization. Both failed to overcome comparisons with the compulsory sterilization law in Germany, labour opposition, and religious opposition from both Catholic and Protestant quarters.

⁵¹ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 194.

'Chapter V: Pacifism and Population, c.1936-1945' explores how the eugenics movement was affected by the rise of fascism and Europe's descent into war. On the one hand, a number of leading eugenicists looked to adopt a more progressive approach to social reform, placing more emphasis on environmental improvement than had been traditionally associated with eugenic ideology in Britain. Some even began to turn their backs on negative eugenics, which was coming under increasing attack both for its lack of scientific credibility and also its association with Nazi racial hygiene. This was perhaps most notable when in 1942, William Beveridge lectured to the Eugenics Society on the eugenic aspects of his flat-rate family allowance scheme. In the meantime, during the late 1930s, Barnes, a lifelong pacifist, expressed abhorrence for the aggressive strategies adopted by the dictators in Germany, Italy and Japan, yet at the same time, supported the lenient policies of Neville Chamberlain toward Hitler in the hope that Western civilization would be spared further destruction. For Barnes, it seems the Second World War acted somewhat as an ideological catalyst. Having lost faith in the liberal ideas of social progress, he became convinced that eugenic legislation must play a central role in post-war reconstruction and the new welfare state.

In 'Chapter VI: E.W. Barnes vs. the "Scrub" Population, c. 1945-1953,' though eugenics was now heavily discredited, we see Barnes enter his most radical phase as a public speaker. On several occasions, the ageing Bishop advocated the sterilization and euthanasia of the mentally deficient, 'problem families' and the so-called 'scrub' population. If the government was to recognise eugenics as part of the new welfare state, so Barnes contended, this would prevent the inevitable degeneration caused by such groups – with a far higher fertility than the more 'intelligent' classes – passing on hereditary deformities.

Barnes earned much, though not universal, criticism, drawing attention to the eugenic cause, something – so soon after the fall of Nazism, with the Nuremburg trials still taking place – most wished to forget. Meanwhile, a number of eugenicists began to move more in line with ‘mainstream’ social reforms, such as Blacker’s involvement with the Family Planning Association (1930-) and increased interest in positive eugenics, in particular increased family allowances for the middle class as well as artificial insemination, the latter of which even Barnes would eventually sympathise with.

Finally, after reflecting on the development of Barnes’ ideology from the 1920s to the 1950s, I assess the relationship between modernism, eugenics and religion during this period. Such a composite analysis illuminates how debates surrounding Barnes and the eugenics movement can help us explain the way in which eugenics and reproductive ethics, as well as poverty, disability, welfare and population are viewed today.

E.W. Barnes and the Eugenics Movement to 1920

Before beginning with Chapter I, we must briefly consider Barnes’ life before the 1920s, as well as some of the more notable developments within the eugenics movement. Barnes was born on 1 April 1874 and raised in Birmingham at the height of the Victorian era. At the beginning of the 19th century, Birmingham had a population of around 74,000, yet by 1900 it had grown to 630,000. This transformation meant that after London, Birmingham had become the second largest population centre in Britain. It was a symbol for the industrial revolution, which coincided with a general move away from ‘traditional’ society to a more

secular society.⁵² This rapid urbanization – notably resulting in the creation of slum districts inhabited by the city’s poorest people – would come to have a direct influence on Barnes, particularly regarding the formulation of his eugenic ideas.

The future bishop was educated at King Edward's School, which had a strong Church of England tradition and, notably, was also attended by the aforementioned founder of the British eugenics movement, Francis Galton. Crucially too for Barnes, the school was also home to Rawdon Levett – author of several influential books within the field of mathematics, such as *The Elements of Plane Trigonometry* (1902)⁵³ – who Barnes later described as “the greatest mathematical teacher of his generation.”⁵⁴ During Barnes’ time at King Edward’s, then, mathematics and religion emerged as perhaps the most important subjects in his early development. In 1893 Barnes was granted a scholarship to study mathematics at Trinity College, Cambridge. “Cambridge, and Trinity in particular,” his biographer opined, “opened a new world for Barnes. For the first time, the boy from a narrowly restricted home and background found himself in a society which was drawn from many widely differing walks of life and which, although academic prowess was still ostensibly its *raison d’être*, was open to many other influences and interests.”⁵⁵ His innovative work in the field of mathematics,⁵⁶ which mainly concerned the functions of mathematical physics,⁵⁷ has been summarized thus: “the achievement is incontestable. In

⁵² Gordon E. Cherry, *Urban Change and Planning: A History of Urban Development in Britain since 1750* (London: G. T. Foulis, 1972).

⁵³ Rawdon Levett, *The Elements of Trigonometry* (London: Macmillan, 1902).

⁵⁴ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 20.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 29-31.

⁵⁶ For more on Barnes’ career in mathematics see: Ken G. Valente, “‘A Finite Universe?’ Riemannian Geometry and the Modernist Theology of Ernest William Barnes,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 38, 2 (June 2005): 197-217.

⁵⁷ See for example: Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Theory of the Double Gamma Function,’ *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series A. Containing Papers of a Mathematical or Physical Character*, 196

the mathematical schools, he carried virtually all before him.”⁵⁸ Accordingly, in 1898 Barnes became a senior fellow of the college and in 1909 was elected a fellow of the Royal Society.⁵⁹

At the beginning of the 20th century, as Barnes began his professional career, public health in Britain was widely perceived to be in a dire state. It has been well documented that up to 40% of British volunteers for the Boer War (1898-1901) were unfit for military service.⁶⁰ With such a large proportion of volunteers suffering from medical problems such as rickets and other conditions associated with poverty, concern for the state of the poor in Britain grew. Studies conducted on the urban poor at this time – most notably in the work of Charles Booth (1840-1916) and Benjamin Rowntree (1871-1954) – tended to emphasise the influence of sub-standard living conditions experienced by those on the edge of poverty and the conclusions reached often pointed at education, feeding and rehabilitation, as well as the improvement of housing and healthcare, as the ultimate solutions.⁶¹

The Eugenics Society was founded in 1907 with a radically different viewpoint: one that Barnes would adopt throughout his tenure as Bishop of Birmingham. Originally the Eugenics Education Society, it aimed to promote public awareness and encourage social responsibility with regard to ‘eugenic problems’ and further understanding of human biological improvement through techniques of selective breeding based on genealogical

(1901), 265-387; or: ‘A Memoir of Integral Functions,’ *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series A. Containing Papers of a Mathematical or Physical Character* 199 (1902), 411-500.

⁵⁸ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 29-31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

⁶⁰ See: Richard A. Soloway, ‘Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England,’ *The Journal of Contemporary History* 17, 1 (1982), 680-693; Gregory Fermont-Barnes, *The Boer War: 1899-1902* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003); and Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacas, 2004).

⁶¹ See: Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the Welfare State: Social Welfare In England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), 150-4.

research.⁶² Many early eugenicists were undoubtedly stimulated by the advent of Mendelism around 1900 and in turn adopted the idea that heredity played a more important role in the outcome of procreation than did the environment. From the 1930s, on numerous occasions, Barnes also acknowledged the importance of Mendelism to his understanding of the world.

Historians have tended to agree with Kevles that enthusiasm for eugenics and heredity – at least in its modern form – began in the 19th century: “Social Darwinism, with its evocation of natural selection to explain diverse social phenomena, had brought about a flow of proto-eugenic writings that foreshadowed the salient concerns of the post-1900 movement, particularly the notion that ‘artificial selection’ – state or philanthropic intervention in the battle for social survival – was replacing natural selection in human society.”⁶³ This assumption was based on statements such as that expressed by Havelock Ellis in 1911: “We generate the race; we alone can regenerate the race.”⁶⁴

Arguably, the greatest concern for British eugenicists during the early 20th century was “the inheritance of pauperism,” which, for many, was interchangeable with the idea of “mental deficiency.”⁶⁵ With this in mind, many eugenicists believed, along with Leonard Darwin (1850-1943) – son of Charles Darwin and President of the Eugenics Society – that unless action was taken, the high fecundity of such “degenerate classes” would soon lead to

⁶² Notable scholarship on British eugenics includes: Pauline Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings: The Eugenics Society, Its Sources and Its Critics in Britain* (Routledge, 1991); Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*; Michael Thompson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain, c.1870-1959* (OUP Oxford, 1998); and Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool University Press, 2002).

⁶³ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 70.

⁶⁴ Havelock Ellis, *The Problem of Race Regeneration* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1911), 47.

⁶⁵ See: Ernest J. Lidbetter, *Reconstruction and Public Health* (London: Eugenics Society, 1918) and *Heredity and the Social Problem Group* (London: Eugenics Society, 1933).

the “deterioration and disintegration” of the British nation.⁶⁶ In ‘The Cost of Degeneracy’ (1913), Darwin argued that to counter such trends and realize biological advancement, “a widespread sentiment of racial responsibility” was required among the public. Ultimately this meant “an increased fertility amongst the fit” and the prohibition of the “feeble in mind and many other unquestionably degenerate classes [...] from becoming parents.”⁶⁷ In light of these concerns, one of the earliest investigations conducted by the Eugenics Society was the Pauper Pedigree Project (1910-1933), which attempted to apply distinct classifications to different sectors of the poor linking “ideology and method in perfect union.”⁶⁸ This culminated in the publication of E.J. Lidbetter’s *Heredity and the Social Problem Group* (1933).⁶⁹

As the 1900s progressed, there emerged a “growing panic over the impact of ‘mental deficiency’ on the future of the British ‘race’.”⁷⁰ This presented the Eugenics Society with what would prove to be a rare opportunity for political influence at a parliamentary level. In 1912, Reginald McKenna (1863-1943), then Home Secretary, abortively put forward a bill which, influenced by eugenic ideologues, was intended to sanction the institutional confinement of ‘mental defectives.’ A year later, McKenna subsequently introduced a bill supposedly devoid of eugenic intent, instead concerned principally with the protection of

⁶⁶ Leonard Darwin, ‘The Cost of Degeneracy,’ *The Eugenics Review* 5, 2 (July 1913), 100.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 97.

⁶⁸ Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings*, 62.

⁶⁹ The Pauper Pedigree Project to an extent echoed an on-going project conducted in America that had started long before the eugenics movement was established in Britain. This project, represented by eleven separate family studies, took place from 1877-1919 and attempted to address the problems presented to society by highly fecundate and very poor, white families. The American project adopted increasing biological significance as the popularity of eugenics in America grew and the Eugenics Record Office began to dictate proceedings. One historian has written that these studies must be appreciated as significant to our understanding of “the relationship between humans and nature, biology and society, heredity and environment, and the meaning of evolution.” See: Nicole H. Rafter, *White Trash: the Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919* (Lebanon: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 30-1.

⁷⁰ Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, 164-5.

the individual sufferers.⁷¹ However, according to Bernard Harris, the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, as it was called, still imposed “sweeping restrictions on the liberty of those identified as ‘mentally defective,’ often for social rather than medical reasons.” In fact, as Harris continues, it even “provided for the compulsory detention of mentally defective women if they were found to be carrying, or giving birth to, an illegitimate child whilst dependent on poor relief.”⁷² Notably, Greta Jones has claimed there was “wide support for social hygiene among the churches” and indeed several religious leaders supported the Act.⁷³ While Claude Montefiore (1858-1938), a leading theologian of reformed Judaism, was a “signatory of the letters to *The Times* in support of the Mental Deficiency Bill,” the Convocation of the Church of England also passed a resolution in support.⁷⁴ In any case, whilst the Act claimed to be in the ‘defectives’ best interests and not established for eugenic reasons, it also sacrificed their rights to parenthood and citizenship for the benefit of society as a whole.

The catastrophe of the Great War (1914-1918) acted as an ideological accelerator for various modernist theories and heightened the already increasing eugenic fervour in Britain. The eugenics movement was largely in consensus that war “destroyed the finest physical, mental, and social stock in the country and seriously disrupted family life and selective reproduction.”⁷⁵ J.A. Lindsay thus informed the Oxford Summer School of Civics and Eugenics in August 1918 that the loss of life in war was “a question not only of quantity, but

⁷¹ Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, 164-5.

⁷² Ibid. Concannon also described the Act’s principle aim of “committing ‘mental defectives’ to a life away from the community in large isolated and rural institutions.” See: Liam Concannon, *Planning for Life: Involving Adults with Learning Disabilities in Service Planning* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 13.

⁷³ Greta Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain* (Worcester: Billing & Sons Limited, 1986), 47.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, 47. Montefiore was also part of a later petition to government in 1929 asking for voluntary sterilisation of the mentally deficient and the same year the signatories to the Grand National Council of Citizens Unions position in favour of sterilisation included the bishops of Exeter, Kingston and Durham.

⁷⁵ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 138.

of quality.”⁷⁶ Likewise, Dean Inge later described war as “a ruinously dysgenic institution, which carefully selects the fittest members of the community, rejecting the inferior specimens, takes them away from their wives for some of the best years of their lives, and kills off one in ten, or one in five as the case may be.”⁷⁷ In the wake of the First World War many, now disillusioned by modernity, desired new methods to rejuvenate society and save mankind. In Britain, while some eugenicists alleged that the Great War had “greatly lowered [the] average quality of the parents of the next generation,”⁷⁸ and the loss inflicted on the race could never be repaired, others, like Darwin, believed in ‘The Need for Widespread Eugenic Reform during Reconstruction.’⁷⁹ Turda has argued that at the time there was a “widespread agreement that scientific thinking was indispensable to legitimising and rationalising the social engineering and the biopolitical transformation of the nation-state.”⁸⁰ Combining Social-Darwinist ideas with modern fears of decline, the need for national biological rejuvenation was born.

Though not yet a member of the eugenics movement, Barnes, also disillusioned, earned notoriety during the war for his ardent pacifism. In fact, he was one of the few college fellows at Cambridge “who supported the philosopher Bertrand Russell during the campaign to oust him because of his opposition to the war.”⁸¹ Parker has written that Barnes’ opinions on war were shaped first by class bias, having “known amongst the fallen many of his Cambridge friends and colleagues;” second, by “theological reasoning;” and

⁷⁶ James A. Lindsay, ‘The Eugenic and Social Influence of the War,’ *The Eugenics Review* 10, 3 (October 1918), 135.

⁷⁷ Inge, ‘Eugenics,’ 264-5.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Leonard Darwin, ‘The Need for Widespread Eugenic Reform During Reconstruction,’ *The Eugenics Review* 10, 3 (October 1918), 145-162.

⁸⁰ Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics*, 12.

⁸¹ Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist,’ 456.

third, by “scientific racialism.”⁸² Parker thus concluded that while Barnes’ pacifism – which is discussed in more detail in Chapter’s II and V – may have “begun as a visceral repugnance of militarism,” later it was “logically supported by his eugenicism.”⁸³

In spite of such controversial beliefs, Barnes experienced success in the ecclesiastical field, which seemed a far cry from his past career as lecturer in mathematics at Cambridge. In fact the future Lord Bishop’s interest in religion dates back to his undergraduate days. Alfred Rawlinson described Barnes as “a professed atheist when he first went up to Cambridge but as an undergraduate experienced conversion to Christianity. In 1902 he was made deacon and in 1903 [...] was ordained priest.”⁸⁴ His religious career flourished when he left Cambridge for London and became Master of the Temple in 1915, which *The Times* deemed as “specially interesting” as Barnes was “only in his 41st year and [had] taken no conspicuous part in Church affairs, and though ordained in 1902 he had never had any clerical office outside his college.”⁸⁵ In 1919, the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, appointed Barnes Canon of Westminster. Following his acceptance, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, commented that “if a man is prepared to rise to the greatness of the opportunities offered by a Westminster Canonry he has notable work to do for a vast number of people of all classes. The very fact that his congregations are constantly changing widens the sphere of his possible influence.”⁸⁶ In the subsequent decades, as explored in this dissertation, Barnes would use his influence to become, in Bowler’s words,

⁸² Parker, ‘Blessed are the Pacifists,’ 208-9.

⁸³ Ibid, 208-9.

⁸⁴ Alfred E. J. Rawlinson, ‘Barnes, Ernest William (1874–1953),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30601, accessed on 27 July 2011].

⁸⁵ ‘Master of the Temple’, *The Times* (Sep 29, 1915), 11.

⁸⁶ Randall T. Davidson quoted in: Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 113.

“the most controversial exponent of the Modernist position.”⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Peter J. Bowler, *Reconciling Science and Religion: The Debate in Early-Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 260.

CHAPTER I:

FROM SCIENCE AND RELIGION TO RELIGION AND EUGENICS, c.1920-1925

*Christianity resembles a biological organism with a racial future.*¹

- EWB, 1923

Throughout his life Barnes did not wish to be a representative of or affiliated with any specific organisation outside of the Church. Nevertheless, he has been portrayed as a leading figure in the Anglican Modernist movement of the early 20th century.² The Anglican Modernists were defined by a historico-critical study of the Bible, and by attempts to bring Christianity into harmony with evolutionary biology. The Modernists formulated many of their ideas through the journal, *The Modern Churchman* and at their Theological College in Oxford. They also produced “a succession of books with the word 'Modernist' or 'Modernism' in their title of which the best known was H.D.A. Major's work, *English Modernism* (1927).”³ Though not affiliating himself directly with the movement, Barnes' position during this time was not dissimilar, representing, as Bowler has noted, “the extreme Protestant view of the Eucharist, in which the sacrament has a purely symbolic role, but it was also an integral part of his attempt to bring Christianity into line with

¹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'The Influence of Science on Christianity,' in Ernest W. Barnes *Should Such a Faith Offend?* (New York: George H. Doran, 1927), 142.

² Steve Bishop, 'Bishop Barnes, Science and Religion,' *Quodlibet Journal*, 3, 4 (October, 2001), [www.quodlibet.net/articles/bishop-barnes, accessed on 14 January 2014].

³ Paul Badham, 'Modernist Theology,' *Modern Church* [http://www.modernchurch.org.uk/resources/badham/, accessed on 14 January 2014].

modern science.”⁴ Indeed, he gave the following brief summary of this view in a 1931 broadcast to the BBC: “I wish to make it quite clear that many beliefs, associated with religious faith in the past, must be abandoned. They have had to meet the direct challenge of science: and I believe it is true to say that, in every such direct battle since the Renaissance, science has been the victor.”⁵

If Barnes was not a member of the Modernist movement, he was at least a strong sympathiser, as his 1924 speech at the Modern Churchmen’s Conference reveals: “English Modernists [...] affirm the unparalleled spiritual excellence of the Revelation [and] and they seek to combine the Revelation with modern knowledge, to give a reformulation of the Christian faith adequate to the mental, moral and spiritual needs of our own day.”⁶ He concluded the lecture with a familiar level of optimism that characterized many of his sermons: “A century hence the majority of Christians will accept the general standpoint taken at this Conference, and be surprised that at the beginning of the twentieth century it aroused so much disquiet.”⁷ It is important to understand how Barnes’ reformist interpretation of Christianity informed the construction of his eugenic philosophy.

At this time, Barnes developed a worldview that attempted to reconcile science and religion under the supposition that there was no quarrel between the two. He was not the only one to believe it so. In 1923, Barnes quoted his fellow theologian Dean Inge, who was also one of the original members of the Eugenics Society, thus:

⁴ Bowler, *Reconciling Science and Religion*, 260.

⁵ Ernest W. Barnes quoted in *Science and Religion: A Symposium* (London: Gerald Howe Ltd, 1931), 57.

⁶ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Faith and the Future,’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 184.

⁷ *Ibid.*

‘The right starting point,’ says the Dean of St. Paul’s, ‘is to examine the conception of the world as known to science.’ It is a sound position; but you here will not dispute his further contention that ‘such a conception is abstract because it ignores for its own purpose all aesthetic and moral judgements.’ He protests rightly that it does but give us a world of facts without values. [...] Both must be used in our search for reality.⁸

In the same book that Barnes had quoted from, *Outspoken Essays* (1922), Inge also made strong arguments for sterilization and birth control, reminiscent of Barnes’ later arguments. “Negative eugenics – the prevention of the multiplication of undesirable types” was for Inge, “more important than positive – the encouragement of the better stocks to reproduce their kind.”⁹ Encouraged by such influential eugenic ideologues, Barnes engaged with several issues that would prove important to the development of his eugenic ideology and that help to explain his decision to join the Eugenics Society, which are explored later in the chapter.

During the early 1920s Barnes delivered a number of sermons, which provide a useful explanation of his viewpoint at this time. These were later collectively published in the 1927 book, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*¹⁰ Barnes gave many of these lectures as Canon of Westminster, and thus before he became Bishop of Birmingham in 1924, the same year he joined the Eugenics Society. One can decipher three main themes in his rhetoric during this period. First, on several occasions he spent time introducing the apparent conflict

⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Psychology and Religion,’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 133-134.

⁹ William R. Inge, ‘Eugenics,’ in idem, *Outspoken Essays* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1922), 271.

¹⁰ Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*

between science and religion and then explained how science had in fact shaped modern religion. Second, Barnes defined his theory on the nature of existence, using both the teleological argument for the existence of God and the spiritual awareness of mankind as its defining feature. Finally, he discussed the decline of morality and religious aspiration, especially since the First World War, and proposed, repeatedly, the need for religious revival as a means to avoid the total collapse of modern civilization.

Science and Religion

For more than one hundred years there had been “strife – sometimes veiled, but more often open – between ‘religion and science’.”¹¹ Thus spoke Barnes in 1920. Moreover, since the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), he claimed, “opinions as to the origin of the earth and of men which were held as a result of Christian tradition have been directly challenged by a succession of novel theories put forward by men of science.” Darwin’s theory of evolution had inferred that man was merely one point on the evolutionary scale and not created, at least in his current form, by God. Such theories were often understood to be mutually exclusive with traditional Christian arguments that rendered man a fixed entity with an immortal soul.

By the 1920s, then, the popular understanding of the nature of existence had been transformed. The impact of the scientific movement, both on organized religion and on private faith, had been extraordinary and subsequently there was a prompt decline in Church membership in the late 19th and early 20th century. Barnes believed he had found a

¹¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Christian Revelation and Scientific Progress’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 1.

solution in a philosophy that would allow for both God and evolution. While many found in evolution grounds for disbelief in God, for Barnes, on the contrary, it delivered incontrovertible evidence of His existence: “Can we accept the idea that man and the gorilla have sprung up from a common stock and yet hold that man has an immortal soul? I answer emphatically that we can. [...] I am certain that man was created [so] that he might enjoy eternal life in communion with God in the world to come.”¹²

While many Churchmen had dismissed Darwin’s theory of evolution, none perhaps were more famous than Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (1805-1873) in 1860. As Barnes outlined, for forty years, after Wilberforce had with “deplorable prejudice” famously, and unsuccessfully, denounced “the idea that man shared a common ancestry with the higher apes,” evolution had represented a “*casus belli* between religion and science.” For Barnes, generally speaking, “Christian opinion [had] refused to accept the new doctrine, and religious teachers traversed it by arguments good and bad.”¹³ It was these “ignorant” comments that — according to Barnes — drove “men like Huxley, profoundly religious in temper” into a “position of agnosticism,” cutting them off “from that inheritance of religious experience which is preserved by worship and gives life to dogma.”¹⁴ Indeed, T.H. Huxley’s (1825-1895) stringent defence of Darwin’s theories in the late 19th century, often from religious opposition, and most notably the debate with the aforementioned Wilberforce, earned him the much referenced nickname, ‘Darwin’s Bulldog.’ One could argue that in some respects, eugenics was born out of this particular debate, with the founder of the British movement, Francis Galton, in attendance. It has been argued that following the

¹² Barnes, ‘The Christian Revelation and Scientific Progress,’ 6.

¹³ Ibid, 3.

¹⁴ Barnes, ‘Psychology and Religion,’ 133.

exchange between Wilberforce and Huxley, “Galton clearly felt the need to choose sides between scientific naturalism and its theological opponents. [...] He vigorously opposed the dogmas of revealed religion, and sought to replace the Christian faith by a system of belief based on natural science.”¹⁵ This quarrel between science and Christianity, so Barnes argued, was not helped by Pope Pius IX’s (1792-1878) comments in an 1877 letter to French Catholic physician Constantin James (1813-1888). On this occasion, Pius IX described Darwinism as “a system which is repugnant at once to history, to the tradition of all peoples, to exact science, to observable facts, and to even Reason herself. Pride goes so far as to degrade man himself to the level of the unreasoning brutes.”¹⁶

Barnes would later recognize that “Now-a-days we think of Wilberforce as a prejudiced Victorian bishop whose taste was not impeccable.”¹⁷ Not all Victorian theologians dismissed the theory of evolution, and it was from these few that Barnes drew most inspiration. For instance, the Irish theologian Fenton Hort (1828-1892), was a forerunner to the Anglican Modernists, and for Barnes, the “greatest of modern English theologians.”¹⁸ Hort commented that *The Origins of Species* “adds nothing to the proof or disproof of human immortality” and Barnes agreed with the further remark that, in fact, Darwin’s book “has merely given us a little more knowledge of the exquisite machinery of the universe.”¹⁹ Expanding his homage in a later paper, Barnes referred to Hort as “the great master of my thinking,” further explaining that Hort was “the only theologian in the

¹⁵ Donald Mackenzie, ‘Eugenics in Britain,’ *Social Studies of Science* 6, 3/4 (September 1976), 507.

¹⁶ Pope Pius IX’s Letter to Dr. Constantin James (1877) quoted in: Barnes, ‘Psychology and Religion,’ 134.

¹⁷ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Centenary of the British Association’ (20 September 1931), EWB 12/1/168.

¹⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Wonderful Works of God in the Creation,’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 126.

¹⁹ Fenton J. Hort quoted in *Ibid*, 128.

nineteenth century who," like himself, began with "thorough scientific training."²⁰ Hort was also notorious for editing a critical version of the bible entitled, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (1881), together with the Bishop of Durham, Brooke F. Westcott (1825-1901). In order to attain clarity and authenticity this work was centred upon the oldest New Testament manuscripts that were known of at the time.²¹ Yet, despite proving an influence on Anglican Modernism, during the 19th century, Hort was very much in a minority. Nevertheless, Barnes was confident that since the 1900s, the "leaders of Christian thought" had — much like Hort — begun to accept the conclusion that "biological evolution is a fact: man is descended from the lower animals."²² Reviewing this argument, Peter Bowler has argued that unlike the conflicts between religion and science in America at the time, in Britain there was a concerted effort by both conservative scientists and liberal theologians alike at reconciliation.²³

Feeding into this larger narrative, Barnes' sermons during the 1920s operated on the following premise: it is possible both to "accept evolution and yet believe that God, a loving father, made the world."²⁴ One technique he used to draw the scientific and religious communities together was to deliver his lectures to both audiences simultaneously. For example, in late August 1920 he presented a lecture to the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Cardiff Parish Church entitled 'The Christian Revelation and Scientific Progress.' Likewise, in 1923, he gave another lecture to the British Association at

²⁰ Barnes, 'The Influence of Science on Christianity,' 148.

²¹ Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, first edition: 1881).

²² Barnes, 'The Christian Revelation and Scientific Progress,' 4.

²³ See: Bowler, *Reconciling Science and Religion*.

²⁴ E.W. Barnes, 'The Christian Revelation and Scientific Progress,' in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 6.

the Lady Chapel of Liverpool Cathedral, characteristic both of his modernist worldview and reconciliatory agenda.

In papers such as 'The Influence of Science on Christianity,' Barnes' arguments were very much that of a "science shapes religion" approach.²⁵ He avowed that modern science, to its credit, exemplified "a movement of human thought as influential and valuable as that of Renaissance humanism," which has "changed the whole outlook of educated men."²⁶ In particular the "domain of physics and biology have radically altered our conceptions both of the structure of the visible Universe and also of the development of life on this earth." As the following quotation demonstrates, this was a view that Barnes embraced fully:

Science has not merely created a new cosmogony against which, as a background, religion must be set. As the character of its postulates and the extent of its limitations have become more clear, science has given us a new conception of what we mean by reasonable faith. In doing so, it has strikingly altered the way in which we approach religion.²⁷

Significantly, he also believed that religion had the innate ability to evolve alongside modernity. In the "struggle for existence," Christianity gained "strength and power by utilising its environment," seeking both "freedom from old limitations and increased mastery of hostile forces." Regardless of secular developments, the essential character of Christianity was preserved by the "permanent intuitions" of the human spirit: "men are

²⁵ Bishop, 'Bishop Barnes, Science and Religion.'

²⁶ Barnes, 'The Influence of Science on Christianity,' 141.

²⁷ Ibid, 145.

constrained by their very nature to believe that goodness and truth express the inner spiritual character of the Universe.”²⁸

To justify the existence of God, while at the same time accepting the latest theories of modern science, Barnes, along with other eugenically-inclined theologians, such as Dean Inge, argued that the universe and life within it must have been created through ‘intelligent design,’ alternately referred to as the teleological argument. This was not as controversial a viewpoint as one may assume. In fact, Darwin developed his theory of natural selection under the assumption that God had designed nature and the universe. This argument harked back to William Paley’s (1743-1805) famous watchmaker analogy, which reasoned that the complexity of nature, much like the construction of a pocket watch, implied that an intelligent being, must exist for such a perfect design to have been produced.²⁹ Barnes’ interpretation of the teleological argument held that, rather than simply a “meaningless dance of atoms or whirl of electrons that has gone on for infinite time,” the Universe had a beginning and “therefore a creator.”³⁰ From this perspective, the development of the Universe and life within it could be described as follows: “From fundamental stuff in the Universe the electrons arose. From them came matter. From matter life emerged. With life mind showed itself. From mind the spiritual consciousness of humanity is developing.” With this model of the Universe, just as life separated animals from “the matter of which they are made,” the immortal soul “separates us from the animals whence we have sprung.” The human race could still be distinguished from the animal kingdom, with the presence of

²⁸ Barnes, ‘The Influence of Science on Christianity,’ 144.

²⁹ William Paley, *Natural Theology; or, the Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, first published: 1802).

³⁰ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Rise and Growth of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 18-9. Also published in Travers G. Rogers, ed., *The Inner Life: Essays in Liberal Evangelicalism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1924).

spiritual aspiration rendering it superior. The human mind was “unique upon earth” for one reason: “religion has come into existence. Man is the religious animal.”³¹

The process of evolution, then, described a “wonderful development, an upward progress,” which implied “design in the mind of God.” If there was meaning to human life, so Barnes contended, then evolution must have been “contrived by a spiritual Being for spiritual ends: the ideas of God and human immortality [had thus] become necessary to solve the problem of human existence.”³² With man the “finest products of evolution” to date, existence was thus a “vast scheme planned by God” in which the soul of man was “the glory of the whole design.” Rather than insignificant, mankind was “the present end of this process, and his spiritual qualities, his love of beauty, goodness, and truth are its crown.” If science described the biological process by which man had come into being, then religion took man “as he is and offers him guidance towards his spiritual destiny.”³³ For Barnes, then, the evolution of man whilst scientifically demonstrable was not without religious purpose.

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Barnes’ philosophy had not simply arisen from a conceptual vacuum in the conflict between science and religion. The momentous social and political developments of recent years had also been hugely influential on his religious outlook. Barnes often preached fanatically on the need to reverse the apparent spiritual decay that had seemingly come to characterize

³¹ Barnes, ‘The Rise and Growth of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness,’ 18-9.

³² Barnes, ‘The Wonderful Works of God in the Creation,’ 128.

³³ Barnes, ‘The Christian Revelation and Scientific Progress,’ 6-8.

modern society. In ‘The Present Need for the Spirit of Christ’ – a sermon delivered in 1925 – he both reflected on the causes of spiritual decline and highlighted the need for spiritual revival. In passionate lectures delivered to progressive audiences, such as the Association of University Women Teachers (AUWT) in 1925 and the Modern Churchmen’s Congress in 1924, Barnes maintained that only the spirit of Christ could save modern civilization.

British society was changing. The Representation of the People Act of 1918 had enfranchised all men over 21 and all women over thirty, greatly transforming the political and social landscape.³⁴ One could argue that the leading politicians had little choice but to extend the vote, with millions of returning soldiers, who had fought to preserve the British political system and Empire, still not enfranchised. Equally, the on-going civil war in Russia was evidence of the cultural and structural damage that could be inflicted on a nation should a significant proportion of the population choose to unify against, among other things, disproportionate representation. Barnes warned that nothing could be “more dangerous to our social well-being than the growth of a pagan population whose religion would be a bundle of superstitions and whose political ethics would lead them to strive for a materialistic and therefore sordid communism.”³⁵ In 1920, several smaller Marxist parties merged to form the Communist Party of Great Britain to the alarm of many, though not all, eugenicists in particular.³⁶ Inge, for instance, wrote of the destructive nature of “social revolution, as we have seen it at work in Russia. The trustees of such culture as existed in

³⁴ See: Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*.

³⁵ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Problem of Religious Education,’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 78-9.

³⁶ James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain: Volume One: Formation and Early Years, 1919-1924* (London: Laurence and Wishart, 1968), 21, 25.

Russia have been exterminated; civilization in that unhappy country has been simply wiped out in a few years, and the nation has reverted to absolute barbarism.”³⁷

Arguably, the First World War put the final nails in the coffin of the sustained feeling of optimism enjoyed during the 19th century. Throughout the 1920s unemployment rarely fell below one million and many who were employed in key industries began to strike, demanding higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions. Rather than a sign of political stability and apparent triumph of laissez-faire economics, such social unrest was more a sign of the failing coalition government, highlighted further by events such as the resignation of David Lloyd George in 1922 and, following the decline of the Liberal Party, the newly founded Labour Party’s brief stint in power from 1924-1925.³⁸ Barnes commented that in place of the widespread feeling of progress during Victorian times, Britain had now entered “a period of reaction and disillusion” and throughout Europe there continued to be “profound moral disorder” and “deep-seated mental and spiritual disquiet.”³⁹

If nothing else, it appears that the First World War, along with the uncertainty of post-war reconstruction, greatly radicalized the way in which Barnes viewed the world. This was evident in the vitality of his rhetoric during the 1920s and, in the subsequent decades, the extreme nature of his eugenic proposals. During a period that witnessed a marked decline in Anglican Church attendance not experienced by the Catholic community, tentative post-war reconstruction, and, following the Russian Revolution, the fear of a revolutionary *coup d'état*, Barnes was anxious for the spiritual and moral health of the

³⁷ Inge, ‘Eugenics,’ 265.

³⁸ It has been argued that the Labour Party became the new home of many voters disenchanted with the Liberal Party. See: Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011, first edition: 1966), 23-48.

³⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Our Present Need of the Spirit of Christ,’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 185.

nation. From this position many perceived a widespread and degenerative decline in Britain's religious aspiration: society had moved rapidly from cogent Christianity to either primitive paganism or amoral atheism.

As scholars have argued, the collective feeling of restlessness that was felt during the inter-war period was a hotbed for modernist ideology.⁴⁰ If such a widespread search for existential peace of mind existed, it would go a long way in explaining the rise in popularity of radical movements with distinct and innovative methods for the transformation of society, such as fascism, communism and eugenics. Ezra Pound's publication *Make it New* (1934), in title alone perfectly characterized modernist thought, whether expressed, 'epiphanically,' through fields of art, literature and architecture or 'programmatically,' through ideology.⁴¹ Certainly Barnes was under no illusion that civilization, as it was once known, had been completely destroyed. The idea that Barnes can be understood as a modernist – in the palingenetic sense endorsed by scholars like Roger Griffin – is supported by the following statement, made by his biographer:

At all stages of his life, he tended to dramatize the current religious situation as a state of tension out of which something better might be born: it was always a period of turmoil or unrest, decay or degeneration, or, very rarely, and then usually in the future, of revival. [T]his divine discontent undoubtedly helped his restless spirit in the search for new solutions.⁴²

⁴⁰ See Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* and Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics*.

⁴¹ Ezra Pound, *Make it New* (London: Faber, 1934).

⁴² Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 290.

Indeed, much of Barnes' writing – in both his wish for a spiritual revival and later his adoption of eugenics as a 'new solution' – embodied the modernist desire for rebirth as a means to counter apparent spiritual and biological decay or degeneration. While the specifics of his ideology would be refined to accommodate his evolving scientific understanding of the world, it was characterized by the modernist wish for national rebirth.

This was certainly evident in 1925's 'Our Present Need for the Spirit of Christ.' According to Barnes, the war was "produced by and has bred [...] the spirit of the Anti-Christ."⁴³ Society, he argued, was now experiencing "deep-seated psychological distress" with the "mental and spiritual upset of the threatened catastrophe" still with us.⁴⁴ Most catastrophic for Barnes though was the loss of "faith in the goodness and wisdom of God," which seemed to have been replaced with a "recrudescence of superstition" and overbearing rise in the "greed of pleasure." Just as other civilizations in the past had decayed – so Barnes contended – that were "no less beautiful, no less fragile, than our own," one was forced to admit that "a great part of European culture [had] decayed" and as a result "there [were] ominous signs that in this country barbarized thought [had] become more common."⁴⁵ In the individual sense, if one is "obliged to live in destitution, physical misery will destroy his spiritual faculties" and for society as a whole, "when the social structure of a people is destroyed by economic disaster, religion is crushed by misery." In fact Barnes believed that the "urgency of our need of the spirit of Christ" was so great that a religious revival was imminent. He thence predicted in 1925 that the power of Christ would soon "burst forth anew." The recent social and political developments were seen as

⁴³ Barnes, 'Our Present Need of the Spirit of Christ,' 186.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 187.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

evidence that man could not do without Christ: it was something in “their very nature [that made] them search for the Kingdom of God.” Barnes thus determined that in order to exorcise the “Spirit of the Anti-Christ,” corrupting modern civilization, a religious revival was needed to “fire men with simple and sincere enthusiasm for the teaching of Jesus.”⁴⁶

If patient religious teaching was the only way to bring about this revival and to reanimate the spirit of Christ in society, it was essential for Barnes that the “clergy and ministers [...] [were] recruited from the best of our young men.”⁴⁷ At the Modern Churchmen’s Congress in 1924, Barnes reasoned that although “the labour may often [have seemed] wasted,” “no part of the teacher’s work [was] more valuable” than that of “Christian instruction.” Likewise, he advised the AUWT to show their students “what Christianity has done for human civilization” and once again spread the belief in God, something that was no doubt “still of supreme value to mankind.” According to Barnes, as Britain rebuilt the nation and educated the next generation, it could not do without Christianity.⁴⁸

Barnes wished to disseminate the teaching of Christ through clergymen and school teachers alike. To overcome the perceived decline in morality, he emphasized the importance of religion in education to the AUWT, a progressive organisation that supported, among other things, the enfranchisement of women. In 1920, campaigns had led to female lecturers in theory being given the same status as males, as well as the admission of 100 female pupils for undergraduate degrees, at the University of Oxford. The University of Cambridge would follow in 1921. The AUWT was led, among others, by historian Eleanor

⁴⁶ Barnes, ‘Our Present Need of the Spirit of Christ,’ 192-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 192.

⁴⁸ Barnes, ‘The Problem of Religious Education,’ 78-9.

Constance Lodge (1869-1936), then Principle of Westfield College, Oxford and later the first female recipient of a Doctorate in Literature from the University of Oxford (1928) for her work in modern history.⁴⁹

According to Barnes, the decline in religious aspiration was seen as nowhere more rampant than in the working class. Considering their increasing influence on society, both numerically and in terms of political representation, he wished to apply patient religious teaching in order to facilitate their spiritual reform. In fact, Barnes believed that “we need not despair the future,” as there were “great reserves of spiritual strength among the masses of our fellow country-men” and as the “distortion of feeling and energy caused by war ceases, a religious revival will show itself. As in the past, so once again Christian enthusiasm will arise among those whom we call common men. Christ did not say that none but the middle classes can enter the Kingdom of Heaven, nor would He say it if He were among us today.”⁵⁰ It was depicted as vital for the reconstruction of the nation that the “finest spiritual perception,” cultivated by such individuals as the members of the AUWT and those in attendance at the Modern Churchmen’s Congress, was “joined to the rough and sturdy demand for justice, mercy, and good faith which is always to be found in every form of Christianity which flourishes among the people.”⁵¹

Nevertheless, Barnes maintained, while all social classes must become spiritually unified, the people must always be led by their moral and religious superiors, as man should be led by God. According to Barnes, “human progress, intellectual, moral and spiritual [was] a fact,” with mankind pulled forward by “men of genius, of creative power,” who were

⁴⁹ Frances Lannon, ‘Lodge Eleanor Constance,’ *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34582>, accessed on 11 March 2014].

⁵⁰ Barnes, ‘The Problem of Religious Education,’ 78-9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

“relatively few in number.”⁵² As Barnes saw it, there were many whose minds were not creative but “[could] appreciate genius and seize upon and hold to its achievements” and meanwhile the large remainder of the population would “follow reluctantly, slowly” and, “under favourable circumstances,” would be “dragged upwards.”⁵³

Barnes’ evident dissatisfaction with the state of British society in the early 1920s was shared by many secular modernists as well as Anglicans. It is notable that soon Barnes found solace in the revolutionary nature of the eugenics movement, seen by him as at once religious and scientific. Furthermore, eugenics seemed for Barnes to contrast with materialistic, and ultimately, atheist, alternatives, such as “sordid communism,” which he seemed to deplore.⁵⁴

Religion and Eugenics

In 1924 Barnes joined the Consultative Council of the Eugenics Society. The main concerns of the Society at the time were arguably the differential birth rate among the classes – particularly the middle class being ‘outbred’ by the apparently less intelligent working class – and the disquieting rise of mental deficiency in society. Approaching the subject from a Christian perspective, his eugenic philosophy was rather different than the main tenets of the British eugenics movement, yet he was much admired within the Society. Barnes’ popularity within the movement is demonstrated by the fact that he was invited to give the

⁵² Barnes, ‘The Problem of Religious Education,’

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 78-9.

1926 and 1949 Galton lectures, both published in *The Eugenics Review*, as was his 1949 lecture 'Welfare and Population' delivered at the Birmingham Rotary Club.

Remarkably, the same year that Barnes was establishing himself as a member of the Eugenics Society, it would be the turn of another Prime Minister⁵⁵ to offer him a prestigious post in the Church of England. Newly-elected Ramsay Macdonald (1866-1937) in his first ecclesiastical appointment nominated Barnes for what would be his most prominent and controversial role yet: the Bishop of Birmingham. Greta Jones has written that it was Barnes' reputation as "an outspoken modernist and his speeches on the rights of the decent English working man" which earned him this accolade.⁵⁶ Typically the press tended to emphasize the sensational nature of his appointment. This included headlines like 'New Bishop who Refutes Genesis'; 'Darwinian Bishop'; 'Critic of the Bible'; 'Scientific Parson to be Bishop' and 'Garden of Eden a myth – new Bishop who does not accept Genesis.'⁵⁷ In the more reactionary, Protestant quarters, however, the decision was met with some hostility. The *English Churchman* commented on Barnes thus: "He has won a name for himself not by his affirmations, but by his denials, of the great God-given verities of our faith. [...] We cannot congratulate the Prime Minister upon his first attempt to fill a Diocesan Bishopric."⁵⁸ Later Glasgow's *Bulletin* newspaper spared him no kind words: "[a]t the time it was said that [Barnes] was the worst appointment the Church of England had had for many years."⁵⁹ Macdonald's response to his critics suggests there was a somewhat strained relationship between politicians and churchmen at the time: "My only interest is to put men in high

⁵⁵ David Lloyd George had elected him Canon of Westminster in 1919. See: Introduction.

⁵⁶ Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, 47.

⁵⁷ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 148-9.

⁵⁸ Quoted in: *Ibid*, 148.

⁵⁹ 'Bishop Who Rejected Miracles is Dead,' *The Bulletin* (30th November, 1953), 1.

position in the Church who really believe in Christianity and who regard it as a spiritual power influencing thought and conduct. If any of the ecclesiastical sections object to my appointment the only way out of the difficulty is for the Church to cut itself from the patronage of the State.”⁶⁰ Not all responses were negative. The *Westminster Gazette*, for example, wrote that Barnes was “young enough to leave the impress of his liberal-mindedness on a city which needs it theologically, socially and politically.” Also the *Evening News* wrote, “Canon Barnes will make a notable Bishop of Birmingham [...] Understanding modern thought, he is yet critical enough to weigh it in; liberal, he is detached from party allegiances; and he is still young enough to develop as a thinker and preacher.”⁶¹

As mentioned, 1924 was a pivotal year for Barnes. In addition to becoming Bishop of Birmingham and joining the Eugenics Society, there is evidence in his sermons that he began to formulate his own distinct eugenic philosophy: a blend of racism, biological determinism and Anglican Modernism.⁶² In fact, in 1923’s ‘The Influence of Science on Christianity,’ after boldly blending scientific theory with religion, he had already alluded to Christianity in the eugenic sense. Accordingly, Barnes established a basis for his Christian eugenics, declaring that “Christianity [resembled] a biological organism with a racial future” and at the same time that the “Christ of the Gospels [was] the ideal Man.”⁶³ After becoming Bishop, Barnes was truly exposed to the dire living conditions of the poor and subsequently drawn to eugenics. Soon after being ordained he would thus comment, “I have in my work of late come across terrible cases of large families born of tuberculosis parents in wretched houses

⁶⁰ Quoted in: Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 148.

⁶¹ Quoted in: *Ibid*, 149.

⁶² According to Valente, after becoming Bishop of Birmingham, “Barnes premised many of his sermons on an appreciation of contemporary scientific investigations and human enterprises, including cosmology, evolution, eugenics, public health and capitalism.” Valente, ‘A Finite Universe?’, 203.

⁶³ Barnes, ‘The Influence of Science on Christianity,’ 142.

in dismal courts.”⁶⁴ Prior to Barnes’ involvement in the Eugenics Society, the Anglican Church had adopted an adverse stance towards negative eugenics and any form of birth control. The clearest statement was made at the 1920 Lambeth Conference. Convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conferences (1867-) represent the decennial assembly of bishops of the Anglican Communion and discuss a variety of contemporary issues often concerning both matters within the Church as well as social and political issues and their relation to the Church. As one scholar has written, each Lambeth Conference “would affect the life of the whole Anglican Communion for another ten years.”⁶⁵ In 1920, the Lambeth Conference was chaired by Randall Davidson (1848-1930), who also served as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1903 to 1928. Davidson had been an influential figure in Britain since the late 19th century, first serving as Bishop of Rochester (1891-1895) then Bishop of Winchester (1895-1903). In fact Queen Victoria relied heavily on him for advice regarding Church appointments. However, for some, Barnes included, Davidson was too conservative and many of his opinions were seen as out-dated. His biographer argued that one of the reasons he resigned in 1928 was his natural reluctance to face the 1930 Lambeth Conference, at which Barnes, attending his first Lambeth Conference, would be a central figure.⁶⁶

Several of the 1920 Lambeth resolutions looked to address the controversial issues of ‘Marriage and Sexual Morality.’ The principle aim of this section of the conference was to establish firm “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.

⁶⁴ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 199.

⁶⁵ George K.A. Bell, *Randall Davidson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 1361.

⁶⁶ Bell, *Randall Davidson*, 1361.

[W]e steadfastly uphold what must always be regarded as the governing considerations of Christian marriage.” The Lambeth Bishops had thus approached with grave concern, the spread in modern society of “theories and practices hostile to the family.”⁶⁷ Indeed, the Anglican Communion viewed the widespread use of birth control as part of the broader decline in morality and spiritual aspiration in society that Barnes, as we have seen, drew much attention to. Members of the Church were implored to reach out and help cure those afflicted with so-called “sexual delinquency:” “We impress upon the clergy and members of the Church the duty of joining with physicians and public authorities in meeting this scourge, and urge the clergy to guide those who turn to them for advice with knowledge, sympathy, and directness.”⁶⁸

In order to combat the spread of vice, rather than making use of contraception, social workers were asked to keep in mind “the example of our Lord, and the prominent place that he gave in his ministry to protecting the weak and raising the fallen.” The Lambeth Bishops had come to deplore “the common apathy of Church people in regard to preventive and rescue work”⁶⁹ and emphasized the need for “all high-principled men and women” to work together so that “such incentives to vice as indecent literature, suggestive plays and films, the open or secret sale of contraceptives, and the continued existence of brothels” could be removed from society.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ ‘Resolution 68: Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality,’ *Lambeth Conference 1920*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-68.cfm, accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁶⁸ ‘Resolution 69: Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality,’ *Lambeth Conference 1920*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-69.cfm, accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁶⁹ ‘Resolution 72: Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality,’ *Lambeth Conference 1920*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-72.cfm, accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁷⁰ ‘Resolution 70: Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality,’ *Lambeth Conference 1920*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-70.cfm, accessed on 14 January 2014].

On the one hand, it was agreed that contraceptives were an unwelcome “invitation to vice” that contributed to the “prevalence of venereal diseases” and brought “suffering, paralysis, insanity, or death to many thousands of innocent as well as the guilty.” Yet on the other, not only was this warning “against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception” intended to address “the grave dangers – physical, moral and religious – thereby incurred” but equally it stood “against the evils with which the extension of such use threatens the race.” From this perspective, marriage existed to serve two purposes: first, “the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control;” and second, “the continuation of the race through the gift and heritage of children.”⁷¹ Although the official position of the Anglican Communion, as expressed here, was distinct from that of prelates like Inge and later Barnes, in the prevention of the use of birth control, it still recognized the importance of continuing the race through large families. Another commonality between the two positions was the continued importance of Church leaders in society. It is significant that not long prior to Barnes’ appointment as Bishop of Birmingham, the Church had emphasized the importance of religion to the future the British ‘race.’

The apparent need to reach out and help the so-called “sexually delinquent” was arguably an anti-thesis to the later arguments for negative eugenics put forward by Barnes. While it is important that the Church did express *racial* concerns at the time, he would later go against the position of the Church by supporting both the eugenics and birth control movements. Barnes soon described the official position of the Anglican Church as a “progressive denigration of human thought.”⁷² In 1925, he claimed that the conclusions

⁷¹ ‘Resolution 68: Problems of Marriage and Sexual Morality,’ *Lambeth Conference 1920*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-68.cfm, accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁷² Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Science and Modern Humanism,’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 252.

drawn at Lambeth were out-of-date and were helping to instigate the Church's decline. Barnes opined that civilization was so "dangerously weighted by carelessness on the part of the less provident that they may yet submerge us."⁷³ If the Churches were seen to be facilitating the increase of the feeble-minded, and others of equal hindrance to social progress, the rest of the population "under the heavy burden of taxation" would be provoked into a "violent reaction" that would no doubt "tacitly repudiate [...] Christian idealism." Barnes thus encouraged his contemporaries to adapt the Christian perspective on the "sexually delinquent" so that it could apply to modern social conditions:

Those who praise them in that they obey the law "increase and multiply and replenish the earth" merely evade serious thought by quoting a text which cannot be applied to modern conditions. [...] More than one law put forth by men of old was repudiated by Christ. He surely would have us today warn parents that they have a duty to their children, and that if they cannot perform that duty they should not bring children into the world.⁷⁴

A similar approach had been taken by contemporary novelist R. Austin Freeman (1862-1943) in 1923, in his paper on 'The Sub-Man.' Although slightly more sympathetic to the traditionalist Christian approach, Austin Freeman nonetheless arrived at the same conclusion as Barnes. He recognized that "Religious precept enjoins the prosperous, as a sacred duty, to make up out of their surplus the deficiencies of the less capable. The defective individual has become an object not only of pity but of care and solicitude."

⁷³ Barnes, 'Religion and Public Health,' 200.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

However this tendency produced inevitable effects: “the unfit are enabled to survive; and their survival perpetuates their defects and introduces an unfit element into the population which was previously absent.”⁷⁵ Barnes believed that the Churches must help in reversing this tendency and creating a healthier public opinion through which reckless childbearing would become a thing of the past. Moreover, he argued, assistance from religious figures was imperative for social progress as “all machinery fails unless behind it there is spiritual development. [...] We need to see this prayer fortify the spread of responsibility and knowledge through all classes of the community if our elaborately organized civilisation is not to break down.”⁷⁶

Although Barnes did not openly preach eugenic views until 1925, he was slowly adopting this position earlier. In 1924, Barnes declared that, particularly when “good stocks [had] been exhausted by war or wealth,” human society was susceptible to “periods of decay.”⁷⁷ While God had laid the path for the evolution of mankind, it was up to man to stick to it. Therefore, those born of racial and spiritual superiority were asked to help lead mankind forward in its social progress:⁷⁸ from “the heir of all the ages,” born of a good stock and soundly educated in clean healthy surroundings, more would be expected from a man brought up in the vice and misery of a slum.⁷⁹ For Barnes, the advanced races of mankind had a mutual and inherent understanding that they “must not fall below the level,” which they had touched but “struggle up to higher levels.” Thus he drew the following conclusion alluding to the need for unremitting improvement under the vigilant eye of the

⁷⁵ Richard A. Freeman, ‘The Sub-Man,’ *The Eugenics Review* 15, 2 (July 1923), 384.

⁷⁶ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 200.

⁷⁷ Barnes, ‘The Rise and Growth of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness,’ 25.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 28-9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 42.

Almighty: “Through heredity and environment we are what we are; and by what we are God will judge us. [...] The human race still has far to travel, and God alone knows how its earthly journey will end.”⁸⁰

In the same lecture, ‘The Rise and Growth of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness,’ many of Barnes’ comments demonstrate that by this time, the concept of race had become an essential component of his worldview. Although Britain was not a country so starkly divided along racial lines as America, for instance, it had already contributed to considerable, if isolated, cases of social disruption. This supports Bowler’s assertion that, “Certainly, race was less of an issue here than in America, where immigration restriction became one of the chief goals of the eugenics movement.”⁸¹ Nevertheless, in 1919 British society witnessed several riots in South Shields, Cardiff, Liverpool and several districts in London. Specifically during the 1919 Seaport Riots, as they are sometimes known, white crowds attacked black workers, their families and communities, in an event that until fairly recently has often been brushed over by historians.⁸² Moreover, Dan Stone has emphasized that in the early 20th century racism was not uncommon in Britain, especially among the intelligentsia and particularly many luminaries of the eugenics movement.⁸³ The sentiments conveyed by Barnes in 1924 draw clear parallels with his later eugenic espousals, particularly his 1926 Galton lecture.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Barnes, ‘The Rise and Growth of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness,’ 42-3.

⁸¹ Peter J. Bowler, ‘E.W. MacBride’s Lamarckian Eugenics and its Implications for the Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge,’ *Annals of Science* 41 (1984), 254.

⁸² See: Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

⁸³ Stone, *Breeding Superman*. See also: Gavin Schaffer, *Racial Science and British Society, 1930-62* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008); and Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2010).

⁸⁴ Barnes was not alone in combining racial categorisation with religious conviction. In America, for instance, the ideas of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a movement then at the height of its popularity were founded, like Barnes’

Barnes believed that a person's ethnicity dictated both their spiritual and eugenic value. However, he initially accepted that despite there being "considerable mental differences" between the "advanced and primitive races" one could claim with confidence that "such differences are more due to general tradition of culture into which children are born than to natural capacity."⁸⁵ All living races, for Barnes, belonged to the same species. We are all "different varieties of Homo Sapiens" and consequently "our brains show the same type of development." All humans, provided they possessed "normal brains," were markedly distinct from even "the most advanced of the anthropoid apes."⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Barnes belief in 'advanced' and 'primitive' races was predicated specifically upon heredity and the inheritance of mental characteristics. Not only did different races possess different physical characters, so Barnes believed, but different mental constitutions, and both appeared to have been inherited.

With this in mind, Barnes expressed his opinions on the idea of miscegenation, which he believed implied both social disruption and biological degeneration. Indeed, there was no doubt that when "different races with different traditions and thought mix, the immediate result is usually harmful." If an individual was born into such "an atmosphere of moral and spiritual conflict," unless he was "exceptional in character, he degenerates."⁸⁷ It was these assumed inherent differences between races that for Barnes explained why, if the

own ideas, on principles such as anti-immigration and anti-Catholicism. However, the KKK did preach and practice violence and hatred in a society starkly divided by race, which contrasted heavily with Barnes' pacifism and a racial view formulated using a conceptual framework set up largely by the on-going British colonial experience. It is hoped that more work may be produced on the history of racism in the Church of England to help explain where Barnes fits in to this multifarious philosophical climate and why many of the prejudices seem to persist today. For a detailed insight into the development of the KKK see: David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Duke University Press, 2000); or: Wyn C. Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1998).

⁸⁵ Barnes, 'The Rise and Growth of Man's Spiritual Consciousness,' 24-5.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

opportunity was favourable, in certain less advanced societies, so-called primitive superstitions could reassert themselves with disquieting vitality. Although in society one appeared to adopt actual religious ideas by suggestion or education, one's susceptibility to certain beliefs appeared to depend on their racial and biological background. In this respect, he also used racial theory to explain the seemingly primitive nature of Catholic beliefs which, so the Modernist movement generally contended, were based heavily on superstition. Christianity among a "pure Nordic race like [the] Scandinavian" was, for Barnes, more advanced than that of "the relatively pure Iberians of Southern Italy."⁸⁸ Although other figures in the Anglican Church were critical of the dogmatic tenets of Roman Catholicism, one may assume that Barnes was unique, at least in Britain, by attempting to explain the stark divide within Christianity using scientific racism, as some of his future sermons would also reveal.

It was not until 1925 that Barnes delivered his first lecture in which he sympathized overtly with eugenics. For the first time in Barnes' rhetoric this would see the idea of social progress taking on a biological as well as spiritual meaning. On 31 May 1925, he presented a lecture on 'Religion and Public Health' at Brighton Parish Church. It is symbolic that Barnes gave his first real eugenic-themed lecture, which disagreed with the Anglican Church's anti-birth-control standpoint, on Whitsunday, a day that traditionally commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ's disciples: the Protestant belief in spiritual revelation. Barnes' unique worldview allowed him to declare in the same lecture both that the "Holy

⁸⁸ Barnes, 'The Rise and Growth of Man's Spiritual Consciousness,' 24-5.

Spirit – need I emphasise the fact on Whitsunday? – is still active among men”⁸⁹ yet also that much more should be done “to prevent reckless child-bearing.”⁹⁰

Barnes was greatly concerned by the threat of over-population and particularly its apparent dysgenic implications. The developments in social welfare and public hygiene, particularly during the 19th century, astounding though they had been, allowed for the population to grow rapidly. He thus contended that despite prominent religious unrest, a “natural consequence of the great additions to human knowledge won during the nineteenth century,” “everybody expected that steady progress, alike political, social and moral, would continue.” However, for Barnes, during the 19th century, Europe had progressed to such an extent that all the nations had become inter-dependent with one another and trade, commerce and finance were all part of a single whole. Under the stimulus of this “ingenious adjustment,” which ensured that “the balance and supply of food and of manufactured articles, [...] the population trebled: it became, in fact, dangerously large.”⁹¹ In Britain this trend was especially alarming. Between 1801 and 1901, the population had almost quadrupled, from 10.9 million to 41.5 million people.⁹² With regimes across Europe attempting to support ever increasing populations, economic and structural competition between nations was heightened putting a pronounced strain on political relations. Consequently, Barnes argued that “the crowded state of Europe” was the “main underlying cause of the Great War.”⁹³ In other words, he maintained, it was the “Envy, hatred, jealousy, fear, selfishness between nations and people and classes and individuals,”

⁸⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health’ in: Barnes, *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 200.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 198.

⁹¹ *Ibid*.

⁹² ‘Historical Population of Great Britain, 43 AD to Present,’ *Charts Bin*, [<http://chartsbin.com/view/28k>, accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁹³ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 185-6.

developed in the previous century, which led to “the calamity from which came our present decadence.” Therefore unless an “altruism which limits population increase can be made to prevail” it was probable that a “like catastrophe [would] recur.” With this in mind, Barnes argued that a stable level of social progress could not be achieved until there was “spread throughout all classes a spirit of grave and serious consideration of the ethics of child-bearing.”⁹⁴

Barnes’ fear of over-population places his line of thinking alongside the Neo-Malthusian movement that gained increased admiration in the inter-war period. This refers primarily to the ideas of Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), proposed originally at the end of the 18th century. Many of the theories presented in his seminal work, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, a series of six editions published from 1798 to 1826, were a forerunner to inter-war proposals put forward by the eugenics movement in Britain. Malthus influenced eugenic thought with his opinions on the dangers of over-population, particularly in crowded, poverty-stricken areas. In order to ‘check’ the population, Malthus advised, among other things, that firstly, moral restraints should be recommend to couples, such as sexual abstinence and the delaying of marriage until children were economically viable; and secondly, that restrictions be placed on the marriage of those suffering with poverty or some form of physical defect.⁹⁵ Organisations such as the Malthusian League (1877-1927) replicated these ideas, advocating public education on the importance of family planning and in addition free discussion on birth control, particularly with the hope of disseminating these theories among the underprivileged. Neo-Malthusian groups such as this argued for population control to assure the health of current and future populations and, once theories

⁹⁴ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 197-8.

⁹⁵ See: Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Mineola: Dover, 2007, first published: 1798).

such as biological determinism became more prevalent, played a key role in the popularization of the eugenic cause.⁹⁶ As the 1920 Lambeth Conference demonstrated, though, issues such as contraception were still very controversial. Since Malthus published his work, many opponents to Malthusianism argued, improved sanitary conditions, increased agricultural productivity and advances in modern medicine had made possible a new type of civilization that supported much larger populations than ever before. The flipside of the coin was that an unprecedented number of people living on the edge of poverty were able to survive in the most sordid conditions.

These ideas were echoed by eugenicists at the time, most notably Eldon Moore's 'Social Progress and Racial Decline.'⁹⁷ Here Moore referenced the Report of the Ministry of National Service (1917-1919), which suggested that the average male had deteriorated physically since 1883:

| | 1917-1919 | | 1883 |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Grade A. | Average. | Average. |
| Height in inches | 65.3 | 65.1 | 66.9 |
| Chest Girth in inches | 33.9 | 32.2 | 34.2 |
| Weight in pounds | 119.4 | 116.5 | 131 |

(From Eldon Moore, 'Social Progress and Racial Decline,' *The Eugenics Review* 18, 2 (July 1926), 124.)

According to Moore, although one may have assumed that "this appalling deterioration [was] not real, the 1917-19 figures being obtained from the dregs of a war-drained population," the objection had been considered and "rejected, on good grounds, by the writers of the Report." Indeed, the Report thus stated that: "The men examined during the

⁹⁶ For a definitive history of Malthusianism see: Lesley Hall, *Malthus, Medicine & Morality: Malthusianism after 1798* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2000).

⁹⁷ Eldon Moore, 'Social Progress and Racial Decline,' *The Eugenics Review* 18, 2 (July 1926), 124-7.

year under review may be regarded in the aggregate as fairly representing the manhood of military age of the country in the early part of the twentieth century from the standpoint of health and physique.”⁹⁸

There was perhaps one specific aspect of Barnes’ earlier sermons that resonated most with contemporary eugenic thought: the correlation between high birth rate and the religious culture of primitive tribes. Between 1901 and 1911, the population of Great Britain had increased from 41.5 to 45.2 million. However between 1911 and 1921, it fell by 1.2 million.⁹⁹ The First World War had had the biggest negative demographic impact since the plague. Given this unprecedented loss of life, particularly from the “best stocks,” it is not surprising that those holding eugenic views were concerned about the varied fecundity of different societal groupings. Barnes had explained in 1924 that among “savage or half-civilized peoples, where medicine is undeveloped,” religion was often “associated with Nature’s generative forces” and as a result human fecundity was highly prized. With such worship usually associated with, as he put it, “gross and repulsive practices,” in primitive cultures, “Goddesses of fertility are characteristic of a certain stage of religious development.”¹⁰⁰

Arguably, the task of improving the nation through negative eugenics would have been somewhat easier if those deemed ‘unfit’ to reproduce were easily identifiable. Contemporary eugenicists in Britain spent much time drawing attention to the high birth rate of the lower, and less intelligent, classes of society. If Barnes’ comments were not overtly eugenic at this stage, these conclusions suggest that the new Bishop was becoming

⁹⁸ Moore, ‘Social Progress and Racial Decline,’ 124-7.

⁹⁹ ‘Historical Population of Great Britain, 43 AD to Present,’ [<http://chartsbin.com/view/28k>, accessed on 15 January 2014].

¹⁰⁰ Barnes, ‘The Rise and Growth of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness,’ 21.

increasingly influenced by the hope for biological improvement and, significantly, the fear of racial degeneration. From the late 1920s he would express sympathy for the birth control movement and those campaigning for sterilization, seeing it as a means to counter the high birth rate associated with the so-called 'primitive' stocks of Britain.

For Barnes, the effect that over-population had had on the nation was two-fold: it restricted both religious and social progress. In many of Barnes' earlier lectures he argued that one could judge social value based on religious awareness and response to religious teaching. In 'Religion and Public Health,' then, he also claimed to the Royal Institute of Public Health, "Dirt and disease injure the spirit no less than the body" and consequently, "moral degradation follows physical squalor."¹⁰¹ The spirit of the British race had been compromised by overpopulation and the cramped living conditions of the urban working class. Barnes argued that "the physical conditions in which we live profoundly affect our ethical aspirations" and therefore the spheres of religion and public health were "much closer than many imagine."¹⁰² In fact, inspired by inherent spiritual aspiration, the "urge to purify and beautify life comes from within man." However, the "vision of a world made perfect, which is the source of human aspiration, is dulled or destroyed when conditions are such that the decencies and sanctities of life become impossible." On the one hand, human beings of "exceptional character" will "let religion touch them with its magic wand and they will lift themselves above the slime where they may have bred, and show the creative energy through which all social progress comes." On the other, distressingly, men and

¹⁰¹ Barnes, 'Religion and Public Health,' 195.

¹⁰² Ibid, 194.

women born into such surroundings that did possess this “religious sense” were comparatively rare.¹⁰³

Negative Eugenics in 1920s Britain

The social problem presented by Barnes in ‘Religion and Public Health’ arguably relates more to improving the quality not the quantity of the population, which is where he fell most in line with the core principles of the Eugenics Society.¹⁰⁴ By the 1920s, the common explanation among British eugenicists for the existence – and apparent rise – of pauperism, feeble-mindedness and, especially since the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, mental deficiency in society was biological determinism.¹⁰⁵ As Reginald Gates wrote in 1920, “the practical problems of eugenics centre about heredity.”¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the reported findings of E.J. Lidbetter’s on-going Pauper Families Project in 1925 did nothing to dispel this notion. Lidbetter produced the following data, displaying statistics that he had recorded on three different groups:

¹⁰³ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 195.

¹⁰⁴ See for example: John Brownlee, ‘The Present Tendencies of Population in Great Britain with Respect to Quantity and Quality,’ *The Eugenics Review* 17, 2 (July 1925), 73-6.

¹⁰⁵ One issue of *The Eugenics Review* even had three separate articles dedicated to the problem: Ronald A. Fisher, ‘The Elimination of Mental Defect;’ R.A. Gibbons, ‘State Certificate of Marriage;’ and R.A. Potts ‘Racial Dangers of Mental Defect,’ *The Eugenics Review* 16, 2 (July 1924), 114-139.

¹⁰⁶ Reginald Ruggles Gates, ‘Heredity and Eugenics,’ *The Eugenics Review* 11, 4 (January 1920), 193.

| Group (60 each) | Insane Relatives | Mentally Deficient Relatives |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Insane | 30 | 15 |
| Mentally Deficient | 8 | 22 |
| Normal | 1 | 3 |

(From Ernest J. Lidbetter, 'The Present Position of Mental Deficiency under the Act,' *The Eugenics Review* 16, 4 (January 1925), 265-6)

For many eugenicists, research such as this was considered proof of the hereditary nature of conditions associated with mental health. An increasingly popular solution that emerged was the voluntary sterilization of those considered biologically 'unfit.'¹⁰⁷ Leonard Darwin wrote in his 'Suggested Programme for Eugenic Reform' (1924), that "Sterilization should be adopted as an alternative to segregation when accepted voluntarily by the individual in question, or by his relatives. [...] The amount of pressure which the State may justifiably and wisely bring to bear on the individual to induce him to accept sterilization should depend largely on the state of public opinion, and would, it may be hoped, become more and more effective as time went on."¹⁰⁸ It was believed that, as the eugenicist R.A. Fisher, a former mathematics student of Barnes argued, "Even on the most unfavourable assumptions, the segregation or sterilization of the feebleminded would lead to a substantial immediate progress in the elimination of the defect."¹⁰⁹ Barnes was not yet prepared to make a direct reference to eugenics or sterilization. Nevertheless, his main focus of 'Religion and Public

¹⁰⁷ See: Macnicol, 'Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization,' 147-169.

¹⁰⁸ Leonard Darwin, 'Suggested Programme of Eugenic Reform,' *The Eugenics Review* 15, 4 (January 1924), 595.

¹⁰⁹ Fisher, 'The Elimination of Mental Defect,' 116.

Health' was the need for some form of birth limitation to be applied to the "recklessly fecundate."¹¹⁰

Another discourse among British eugenicists during the 1920s was the idea that advances in medicine and hygiene had allowed for the multiplication of seemingly inferior stocks. F.C.S. Schiller had approached this subject in his 1921 paper, 'Eugenics Versus Civilization,' published in *The Eugenics Review*.¹¹¹ Schiller argued that civilization may even prove "fatal" to the "continuance of the human race."¹¹² This was not to say that civilization and eugenics were naturally hostile. Rather, as it stood, civilization was "unable to control the social influences it has generated, has identified itself with its vices, and so has fallen short of being truly civilized."¹¹³ Providing an elucidation to this notion, Barnes claimed that, until less than a century ago, those born 'inferior' were eliminated by the relatively harsh conditions once common throughout England: the "stench of even small towns in Elizabethan England was an offensive witness to conditions which led to an appalling rate of infant mortality" and should we return to such conditions, "three-fourths of the population of this land would be swept away."¹¹⁴ In post-war Britain, growth in population had already been so extreme that "the vast masses are deprived of the uncramped freedom necessary to a healthy existence." Consequently there would always be "a large residuum in every population consisting of individuals who can only just manage to exist:" civilization was being "choked by its waste products," which reduced the idea of "healthy social progress [to a] vain dream."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Barnes, 'Religion and Public Health,' 197.

¹¹¹ F.C.S. Schiller, 'Eugenics Versus Civilization,' *The Eugenics Review* 13, 2 (July 1921), 381-393.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 381.

¹¹³ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁴ Barnes, 'Religion and Public Health,' 197.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 196.

One method to counter over-population was to disperse undesirable citizens throughout the Empire and Western world. Despite increasing hostilities in colonial India and Ireland, the latter resulting in Irish independence via the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, the Empire still covered one fifth of the globe and was of utmost importance to British national identity and patriotism.¹¹⁶ Thus, at this time many Britons considered themselves among the world's political and biological elite. With this in mind, Leonard Hill had argued in 1920 that there were "vast tracts of the British Empire waiting to be populated by the British race. Let the youth of the overcrowded cities then emigrate and secure room for a healthy, natural sexual life, a more virile character, and a far greater happiness."¹¹⁷ Alternatively, Barnes contended that the emigrants had to be "worthy of the race" and "free from the taints which make for racial inferiority."¹¹⁸ Australia had been colonized in the late 18th century, with a significant proportion of the new population made up of unwanted convicts. It has been noted that many of the displaced convicts had few of the skills required to build a colony and many were also too sick or unfit to work.¹¹⁹ These arguments were not confined to Britain alone. In 1926 the French eugenicist, Andre Siegfried gave an analysis of immigration in the United States, which in terms of race was, as he put it, "highly composite" compared to any other nation. The US had been monitoring the 'racial profile'

¹¹⁶ See for example: Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2002); Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacas, 2004); and P. Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Vintage, 2007).

¹¹⁷ Leonard Hill, 'Biological Aspects,' in: James Marchant ed., *The Control of Parenthood* (London: Putnam, 1920), 52.

¹¹⁸ Barnes, 'Religion and Public Health,' 198.

¹¹⁹ Arthur Phillip, 'Letter to Marquis of Lansdown,' (3 July 1788), [www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/terra_australis/letters/philip/index, accessed on 14 January 2014].

of immigrants for decades, most notably at Ellis Island during the 1900s.¹²⁰ Siegfried recognized that presently in America, “in regard to immigration, a scheme has already been proposed carrying the examination of the individual immigrant as to his fitness for citizenship, into his family stock, in order to learn whether he bears as a recessive, hereditary taints which will appear among his progeny.”¹²¹

With this idea in mind, in ‘Religion and Public Health’ Barnes conceded that the unwanted ‘inferior’ stocks of Britain, “bred recklessly in squalor, and brought up amid physical and moral dirt,” would for the most part “bear throughout life the handicap of their origin.”¹²² Through lack of energy and initiative, the racially inferior would “remain at home, a burden to be borne.” Therefore the other lands had every right to reject what would be an influx of inferior stock. Moreover, after observing such groups it had become obvious to Barnes that many of the social reforms intended to rebuild the nation following the war would be rendered moot: the “great housing schemes of our present social legislation,” for instance, were “mere palliatives,” with any positive effect destined to be “speedily swamped by the fecundity of inferior stocks.” Barnes was forced to conclude that the social conscience, which provided a safety net for those on the edge of poverty, was unwittingly “conniving at racial degeneration.”¹²³

It had also been an on-going issue for the British eugenicists, especially since the war, that the ‘better’ stocks were not producing enough children to replenish the population with a sufficient number of so-called eugenically desirable types. This was

¹²⁰ See: Sewell Chan, ‘Ellis Island’s Forgotten Hospital,’ *The New York Times* (26 October, 2007), [http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/26/ellis-islands-forgotten-hospital/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0, accessed on 11 March 2014]

¹²¹ Andre Siegfried, ‘American Emigration and Eugenics,’ *The Eugenics Review* 18, 3 (October 1926), 217-222.

¹²² Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 198.

¹²³ Ibid.

epitomized by the study, 'The Fertility of the English Middle Classes,' conducted by the Birth Rate Inquiry Commission and published in 1920 in *The Eugenics Review*.¹²⁴ This provided no reassurance to the natural fear that the rate of fertility of was not high enough to "maintain the numbers of the middle classes by natural increase."¹²⁵ Although not generally welcomed by eugenicists in Britain, it was an understandable development. Indeed, Leonard Darwin had recognized that "[children] belonging to small families [were] likely to receive a better education and in many other ways to get a better start in life, with the result that they [would] on the average rise higher in the scale of society as graded by the incomes earned."¹²⁶ Not all eugenicists were pessimistic about the situation, as John Brownlee demonstrated. Brownlee, who was at one time Chief of Statistics at the Medical Research Council (1913-),¹²⁷ believed that the problem could not be explained by an increased use of birth control alone, rather the birth rate of populations were prone to natural fluctuation: "I feel in favour of the view that there is a race physiology behind the matter and that the fall of the birth-rate just now is not essentially different from what must have taken place in England in former times."¹²⁸

Barnes' opinions at the time contrasted with Brownlee's. Indeed, the Bishop believed the differential birth rate to be a problem caused exclusively by modern civilization. During the Victorian population boom of the mid-19th century, he thus contended, the 'better' stocks had been increasing almost as rapidly as the general

¹²⁴ J.W. Brown, Major Greenwood and Frances Wood, 'The Fertility of the English Middle Classes. A Statistical Study,' *The Eugenics Review* 12, 3 (October 1920): 212-217.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 159.

¹²⁶ Leonard Darwin, 'Some Birth Rate Problems,' *The Eugenics Review* 12, 3 (October 1920), 147-8.

¹²⁷ Christopher Lawrence, *Greater than the Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 308.

¹²⁸ John Brownlee, 'The Present Tendencies of Population in Great Britain with Respect to Quantity and Quality,' *The Eugenics Review* 17, 2 (July 1925), 75.

population, by the 1920s they were increasing slowly, if at all.¹²⁹ Differing somewhat from the views of eugenicists, such as the abovementioned Darwin,¹³⁰ at the time Barnes did not believe it necessary to increase middle-class birth rate: “the change from large to small families in the middle classes” should not be “impatiently condemned.” The trend was portrayed as simply “eagerness for the welfare of the children” and considered an admirable choice for ensuring that the children were well cared for.¹³¹ Even so, unless the middle class idea of responsible parenthood could be diffused among all walks of life, social progress would be reversed.

This notion served only to increase the already disproportionate attention that eugenicists placed on the lower classes, which — as Barnes believed — appeared largely unresponsive to religious teaching, had a high birth rate and seemed to produce a large number of feeble-minded individuals. While not directly referencing sterilization, Barnes did acknowledge that there existed a “dispute as to the means which should be used to secure a decrease of reckless fecundity.”¹³² One argument that seemed to justify the use of birth limitation for Barnes was based on the great public expenditure on taking care of “inferior stocks.” Through “heavy taxation,” then, the community did so much “for all those born within it” and therefore it should “have the right to take measures to prevent the increase of tainted stocks” and teach its “more improvident members” that their large families are a “hindrance to social progress.”¹³³ With children representing “the heirs of the race – the

¹²⁹ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 198.

¹³⁰ Leonard Darwin, for instance argued for family allowances to increase the number of children born to middle class families. See: Leonard Darwin, ‘Family Allowances,’ *The Eugenics Review* 16, 4 (January 1925), 276-284.

¹³¹ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 197. For a similar contemporary argument see also: M. Freeman, ‘The Relation of Temperament to Size of Family,’ *The Eugenics Review* 17, 3 (October 1925) 169-173.

¹³² *Ibid*, 199.

¹³³ *Ibid*.

hope of the race,” Barnes urged the need for a collective “sense of grave responsibility on the part of parents towards their children.” Moreover, in order to achieve stable social advance, knowledge on techniques of birth control had to be disseminated, as he put it, “in all ranks of the community.”¹³⁴

Barnes’ evolving social ideology earned the attention of eugenicists and advocates of birth control alike. The phrase ‘birth control’ was first used in 1914 and popularized by the American nurse, Margaret Sanger (1879-1966).¹³⁵ In Britain, the birth control movement – often advocated in conjunction with the move for universal enfranchisement – gained a considerable following during the 1920s. For many of its proponents, the foremost being Marie Stopes (1880-1958), who opened the first birth control clinic in 1921 in Walworth, it represented far more than simply the prevention of unwanted pregnancies. In addition, it allowed women the choice to emancipate themselves from their traditional “slavery to the reproductive function.”¹³⁶

Equally, with many adopting a position that was at best sceptical towards sterilization, for some birth control provided a less controversial means to lower the fecundity of the working class and counter racial degeneration. No one encapsulated this hybrid of female emancipation and eugenics more than Stopes herself, who argued in 1920 that “once the women of *all* classes [had] the fear and dread of undesired maternity removed from them, they [would] be free to put all their delicate strength into creating desired and beautiful children. And it is on the feet of those children that the race will go

¹³⁴ Barnes, ‘Religion and Public Health,’ 199-200.

¹³⁵ See: Ellen Chesler, *Women of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007, first published: 1992).

¹³⁶ Norman E. Himes, *Birth Control for the British Working Classes: A Study of the First Thousand Cases to Visit an English Birth Control Clinic, Hospital and Social Service* (London: World Microfilms Publications, 1970, first published: 1929), 580.

forward into the promised land of Utopia.”¹³⁷ This viewpoint was not confined to women alone. For example, the prominent Scottish naturalist, J. Arthur Thompson (1861-1943) also appreciated both the ‘racial’ and democratic implications of birth control. The same year he presented an equally positive outlook:

It makes earlier marriage more practicable; it facilitates non-parental marriages; it makes for independence of women and increases their opportunities of self-development. It will probably work against war, of which nations with a low birth-rate tend to be most intolerant. Personally, we share the view of Mr. Havelock Ellis that birth-control within limits makes for progress and is likely to continue to do so, being not ‘race suicide’ but race-saving.¹³⁸

Unlike eugenicists at the time, the birth control movement did not have a central organisation as such, with the exception, perhaps, of Stopes’ Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress – established in 1921. Rather, it was made up of a number of local organisations and centres all aiming for the universal acceptance of contraception, albeit with a variety of underlying motives. One example was the North Kensington Women’s Welfare Centre in London (NKKWC), which, led by Margaret Spring Rice (1887-1970),¹³⁹ offered free birth control advice to women.

If there was an ideal environment to nurture progressive feminism, Rice was born into it. Her father, Samuel Garret (1850-1923), was one of the first solicitors to accept

¹³⁷ Marie C. Stopes, ‘Imperial and Racial Aspects,’ in: Marchant ed., *The Control of Parenthood*, 202.

¹³⁸ John A. Thompson, ‘Biological Aspects’ in: Marchant ed., *The Control of Parenthood*, 24.

¹³⁹ Who as it happened was an old friend of Barnes’ wife, Adelaide (1881-1963).

women pupils, and two of her aunts, Millicent Fawcett (1847-1929) and Elizabeth Garret Anderson (1836-1937), were significant figures in the suffragettes' campaign for female emancipation, as a recent biography correctly asserts, the seeds were sown for her "lifelong interest in social welfare and reform."¹⁴⁰ In 1925, the NKWWC were planning to host a meeting to discuss birth control. In a private letter Rice asked Barnes to "do us the great honour and favour of being one of the speakers" as it would give the movement great strength to have had the Church, as she put it, "with us." As Rice revealed, Barnes would be in good company, with three other influential public figures invited to speak: the politician and diarist, Violet Bonham Carter (1887-1969), a physician to the Royal Family, Bertrand Dawson (1864-1945) and the lawyer and politician, Lord Buckmaster (1861-1934). Dawson is notable for his famous defence of Stopes' proposals as "economically essential" as well as guaranteeing "healthy mothers and children."¹⁴¹ Rice reassured Barnes that "We do not want on this occasion to appeal for funds, we hope for the enlightenment and attention of the public." Moreover, she would be "delighted to answer any questions about our particular clinic, from which I could tell you many tragic stories to illustrate the need for the knowledge we are trying to give these poor women."¹⁴² Nevertheless, Barnes, with some regret, declined Rice's offer:

As a Bishop I am part of a system and, to some extent, bound by views authoritatively put forward by its leaders. [...] I feel that it is for me to point out the danger which results from the way in which bad stocks in the community increase

¹⁴⁰ Sylvia Dunkley, 'Rice, Margaret Lois Spring,' *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74760?docPos=2, accessed on 14 January 2014].

¹⁴¹ Roy Hattersly, *Borrowed Time: The Story of Britain between the Wars* (London: Abacas, 2008), 185.

¹⁴² Margaret Spring Rice, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Birth Control Meeting,' (9 July 1925), EWB 9/20/1.

faster than good, and to leave to others, especially eugenicists and members of the medical profession, the duty of instructing the community as to the measures which ought to be taken to promote sounder development.¹⁴³

Popular opinion was by no means wholly in favour of contraceptive measures. Organized religion often provided the stiffest opposition, as Hattersly has written with regard to the use of birth control: "The Church of England, barely less than the Church of Rome, fought a rearguard action."¹⁴⁴ As will be discussed in Chapter II, because of the negative stance towards contraception held by the majority of bishops, in the late 1920s Barnes continued in his reluctance to take part in the formal birth-control movement, even though widespread use of the practice had the potential to help fulfil his ideological goal of correcting the differential birth-rate. Religious circles often portrayed couples who had chosen not to have children, or even limit their family size, as having "turned their backs upon the ancient injunction of the Bible and Marriage Service."¹⁴⁵ This obligation to parenthood was understood by figures such as the religious author, Rev. Alfred E. Garvie as "the divine intention for the race" and the refusal to fulfil this "privilege" was a "wrong done to God and man."¹⁴⁶ There were also secular arguments against birth control, often with the dual fears of population decline and the racial strength of the British Empire in mind. The novelist, H. Rider Haggard (1856-1925), for instance, emphasized that, "in a world of many enemies, existent or potential, the British Empire, if it is to continue, must at the very least

¹⁴³ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Margaret Spring Rice RE: Birth Control Meeting,' (11 July 1925), EWB 9/20/2.

¹⁴⁴ Hattersly, *Borrowed Time*, 185.

¹⁴⁵ Rider Haggard, 'Imperial and Racial Aspects,' in: Marchant ed., *The Control of Parenthood*, 173-174.

¹⁴⁶ R.E. Garvie, 'Social and Religious Aspects,' in: Marchant ed., *The Control of Parenthood*, 159-160.

maintain its existent numbers.”¹⁴⁷ The best thing that could be done, from this perspective, was to prevent the dissemination of knowledge on birth-control and instead, “appeal to the women of the Empire to save the Empire, and to impress upon them the fact that great nations are not destroyed: they commit suicide.”¹⁴⁸

In any case, as the 1920s progressed, birth control became increasingly accepted and theories of negative eugenics became increasingly attractive to a wider range of people. This was largely propagated by a mounting popular concern over the prevalence of congenital mental deficiency in society and an ever-present fear within large sectors of the ‘intelligent’ classes that they would be overrun numerically, biologically and socially by the poorer classes. Barnes too would express sympathy for such practices as sterilization and continue to disseminate ideas about birth control throughout society. This began the following year when he delivered his first Galton Lecture, entitled ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion.’

¹⁴⁷ Haggard, ‘Imperial and Racial Aspects,’ 172.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER II: TOWARDS NEGATIVE EUGENICS, c.1926-1929

When they breed freely they are an impediment to the creation of what the Christian terms the Kingdom of God.¹

- EWB on the 'feeble-minded,' 1926

The late 1920s saw the Conservative Party back in power (1925-1929). However, Stanley Baldwin's (1867-1947) ministry was never particularly stable. Events during the years 1926-1929, such as the 1926 General Strike and the escalating tensions between Britain and the Soviet Union in 1927, undermined Baldwin's regime. Moreover, inter-class tensions grew in intensity, with 1926 a particularly disastrous year. In March that year the government's Samuel Commission - a report on the coal industry - called for sweeping wage reductions, which caused mass strikes within the industry. With added support from rail and other transport workers, the Triple Alliance was formed, resulting in the 1926 General Strike and the subsequent declaration of martial law, lasting until December when the workers returned to their posts.² Although a seemingly decisive victory for the Conservatives, this dispute – apart from contributing to the intensifying distrust of socialism – left the party divided. It eventually ceded power to the new Labour Party in 1929, again under the

¹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' *The Eugenics Review* 18, 1 (April 1926), 14.

² Patrick Renshaw, *Nine Days in May: The General Strike* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1975).

leadership of Ramsay MacDonald. The 1920s ended with the Wall Street crash of October 1929, which led to unprecedented levels of unemployment during the 1930s. Even so, the political turmoil of the late-1920s had made it all too clear that, even before the Great Depression, British society was anything but stable.

At this time, modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf (1881-1942) created characters and storylines with which to express their own feelings of alienation and distaste for modern society, and the principles for which it appeared to stand. Thus, 'Mrs Ramsay' in Woolf's landmark novel, *To the Lighthouse* (1927), openly dismissed out-dated Victorian ideals, questioning the existence of God and the nature of mankind.³ This anxious and unsettled atmosphere also contributed to an increased interest in social biology and negative eugenics, as a growing number of intellectuals and politicians embraced the belief that only a new biological order could cure society's well-documented ills and malaise. A recent biography of the political theorist Leonard Woolf (1880-1969) – Virginia's husband – has described the general penchant for eugenics felt by many middle-class intellectuals at the time: "Eugenics was a radical, progressive ideal, supported in Britain by the left-leaning *bien pensants* with whom Leonard was to be working – the Webbs, G.B. Shaw [and] the young academics at the London School of Economics."⁴

The articles published in *The Eugenics Review* at the time reflected this growing radicalism. In 'Decline in the Birth-Rate and "fecundability" of Woman,' the leading Italian Fascist theorist, and President of the Italian Society of Genetics and Eugenics, Corrado Gini

³ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2002, first published: 1927).

⁴ Victoria Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A Life* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 162.

(1884-1965),⁵ blamed the “rationalization” of reproduction in Britain for the increase in the number of women using contraception and the subsequent decline in the birth-rate.⁶ Leonard Darwin seemed to sympathize with these arguments in his 1926 contribution, ‘Expenditure on Education and its Effect on Fertility.’⁷ Barnes also contributed to this debate. He recognized that those considered “genius” were “curiously and distressingly infertile,” in contrast to the “disastrously prolific” nature of the feeble-minded, whose fecundity should be “a grave concern to every religious man and woman.” According to Barnes, mankind had to “make [the] human environment favourable to the survival of those qualities in humanity which we rightly value and of human beings in whom those qualities occur.”⁸

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, programmes of state sponsored negative eugenics were becoming ever more appealing to the British professional classes, many of whom shared a heightened fear of being overrun – both numerically and biologically – by the poorer segments of the working class. Religious convictions aside, Barnes was no different from secular intellectuals, with his eugenic ideology characterized by its excessive focus on those considered “a source of weakness to the community.”⁹ The frustration and helplessness often expressed during discussions on middle-class fecundity contrasted heavily with the definitive nature in which negative eugenics was proposed. As Macnicol has argued, “voluntary sterilization was the principal issue in the eugenics movement, and its

⁵ See, for example, Maria S. Quine, *From Malthus to Mussolini: The Italian Eugenics Movement and Fascist Population Policy, 1890-1938* (London: University of London, 1990); idem, *Population Politics in Twentieth Century Europe: Fascist Dictatorships and Liberal Democracies* (London: Routledge, 1995); and *Italy's Social Revolution: Charity and Welfare from Liberalism to Fascism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

⁶ Corrado Gini, ‘Decline in the Birth-Rate and “Fecundability” of Woman,’ *The Eugenics Review* 17, 4 (January 1926), 258-274.

⁷ Leonard Darwin, ‘Expenditure on Education and its Effect on Fertility,’ *The Eugenics Review* 17, 4 (January 1926), 233-241.

⁸ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 11.

⁹ Ibid.

implementation in legislation was seen as the key to the success of the movement generally.”¹⁰ Greatly influenced by this developing discourse, as will be discussed in Chapter IV, during the 1930s the campaign for voluntary sterilization reached the peak of its popular support with the publication of the Brock Report in 1934, when Britain came close to the enactment of a nationwide eugenic policy.

The Eugenics Society also published work by such international authors as the eminent Norwegian racial hygienist, Jon Alfred Mjøen (1860-1939), an adviser to the Norwegian government on its sterilization programme.¹¹ In January 1926 Mjøen presented his understanding of heredity in *The Eugenics Review*, which resonated strongly with Barnes’ own emerging eugenic ideas:

It is the quality of the stocks more than the quality of the parents which determines the ability of the children. Thus the biological appearance of eminent ability can be explained:

1. By the ability of the parents.
2. The ability of the stocks.
3. By the combination of congenital traits.¹²

In the years that followed, *The Eugenics Review* featured a number of articles which argued for the introduction of a sterilization law, including: ‘Suggested Programme of Eugenic

¹⁰ Macnicol, ‘Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization,’ 147.

¹¹ Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hanson, *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland* (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press, 2005), 164.

¹² Jon A. Mjøen, ‘Genius as a Biological Problem,’ *The Eugenics Review* 17, 4 (January 1926), 257.

Reform,' 'The Treatment of the Congenitally Unfit and of Convicts by Sterilization,' 'The Legalization of Voluntary Eugenic Sterilization,' and 'The Sterilization Bill: The Eugenics Society's First Draft.'¹³

Barnes' 1926 Galton Lecture: 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion'

During this period, Barnes began to sympathize with the idea of voluntary sterilization, as his ideology progressed further towards negative eugenics. Though Barnes felt the need to proselytize, in this respect his new position as Bishop of Birmingham proved a limiting factor. There is evidence – especially in his private correspondence – that Barnes placed a certain level of self-restriction on his public comments and actions. This is partly reflected in the cautious nature of Barnes' discussion of sterilization in his 1926 Galton Lecture to the Eugenics Society, and in his reluctance to become directly associated with the birth control movement. Barnes explained his position to Mary Stocks soon after his Galton Lecture: "you may think it pusillanimous: but one cannot break too violently with one's official colleagues, especially when they are slowly modifying their attitudes."¹⁴ Between 1926 and 1929, then, Barnes hoped to gain credibility and adherents to his eugenic views, while also gaining favour within the Church of England.

In February 1926 Barnes presented the paper 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion' at the annual dinner of the Eugenics Society in the New Criterion Restaurant,

¹³ See Leonard Darwin, 'Suggested Programme for Eugenic Reform,' *The Eugenics Review* 15, 4 (January 1924), 595-596; R.A. Gibbons, 'The Treatment of the Congenitally Unfit and of Convicts by Sterilization,' *The Eugenics Review* 18, 2 (July 1926), 100-109; Harry H. Laughlin, 'The Legalization of Voluntary Eugenic Sterilization,' *The Eugenics Review* 19, 1 (April 1927), 12-18; and Eldon Moore, 'Sterilization Bill: The Eugenics Society's First Draft,' *The Eugenics Review* 20, 3 (October 1928), 166-168.

¹⁴ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Stocks RE: Galton Lecture,' (7 May 1926), EWB 9/20/10.

London. To give the Society's flagship 'Galton Lecture' was, no doubt, an honour for Barnes who had only become a member in 1924. This paper deserves more attention than it has hitherto received, not least because it was Barnes' first major public espousal with direct reference to sterilization. As his biographer noted, Barnes "was already seen by many as a radical figure in the eugenic movement, and the arguments expressed here did nothing to dispel this."¹⁵ He began the lecture by defining eugenics as "the science of human betterment." Furthermore, he noted:

Its object is to discover how we may breed better human beings. The eugenicist seeks to improve human racial stocks in the belief that he can thereby quicken the process of civilisation. [...] He is concerned with nature rather than nurture, with the innate qualities which the individual inherits rather than with the environment in which those qualities have an opportunity of growth and expression.¹⁶

The lecture aimed to answer the following question: "How can we secure the survival of the fittest and therefore the survival and development of the fittest types of religious aspirations and understanding?"¹⁷ To achieve this, Barnes explored a range of connected subjects, as follows: 1) race; 2) heredity; 3) sterilization; and 4) religion.

¹⁵ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 211.

¹⁶ Barnes, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

1. Race

Although he had expressed similar opinions before, in this lecture Barnes expanded on his views on the biological implications of racial differences. The 'primitive' manner in which some native populations of the colonies lived seemed to provide definitive proof that there was a direct connection between race and intelligence.¹⁸ While early colonial exploitation had often been justified in the sense of Christian superiority, with the advent of Social Darwinism in the late 19th century, imperialism tended to favour biological notions of racial superiority. One may thus consider that though Barnes, along with many others, believed himself to be progressive and though he based his concept of race on contemporary scientific knowledge, his ideas were also derivative of late-Victorian imperialist ideals.¹⁹

During the inter-war period, the Empire still played a central role in British national identity. For many eugenicists, this was connected to the concept of 'race.' Indeed, one could argue that, although it was not discussed as often in Britain as – for instance – birth rate or mental deficiency, the concept of race was an essential component of mainstream eugenic ideology. The concerns of the British eugenics movement often appeared to be wholly class-based, but these concerns were nonetheless “articulated primarily through a racist world view.”²⁰ Indeed, Barnes was not the first British eugenicist to advocate racist views; the movement's founder set the bar in this respect. Galton had overtly expressed a belief in superior and inferior races and their relation to eugenics in an 1873 letter to *The*

¹⁸ For an analysis of how imperialism foreran inter-war racism see: George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1992).

¹⁹ For more on the 'race question' in Britain see: Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London: Archon Books, 1982).

²⁰ Stone, *Breeding Superman*, 114.

Times: “My proposal is to make the encouragement of Chinese settlements of Africa a part of our national policy, in the belief that the Chinese immigrants would not only maintain their position, but that they would multiply and their descendants supplant the inferior Negro race.”²¹ In the same vein, Galton’s protégé, Karl Pearson (1857-1936), was convinced of white superiority and British imperial destiny and in the 1900s even articulated concerns over the influx of Jewish immigrants into London that had taken place during the late 19th century.²² The importance of such ‘scientific racism’ to Barnes’ eugenic ideas, then, is something that should not be understated.

Primarily, Barnes believed that civilization should be considered “a racial product,” namely the “ultimate creative power of a civilization resides in the innate racial qualities of the people which make it, whatever be the process by which those qualities were initially produced.” Although all races had resulted from “a blend of peoples of different types,” what Barnes termed a “pure race” was one that had lived “so long free from alien intrusion that a uniform type has been gradually evolved.”²³ After several generations, during which the new ethnic group had evolved “a unity in diversity of its own,” a new type of harmony was created. Moreover, whichever ‘race’ was “indigenous to the soil” would usually be the “dominant strand of the mix.” Thus, for Barnes, should “black and white in England mate,” the white strand would survive, while in Jamaica, “black survives.” According to Barnes, this resulted in a civilization that possessed a strong social cohesion in which people thought, felt and acted in much the same way and were held together by a “uniformity of religious

²¹ Francis Galton, ‘Africa for the Chinese,’ *The Times* (5 June 1873), 8.

²² Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science*, 135-8.

²³ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 7-8.

outlook.”²⁴

At this time in his career, the Bishop often used religion to strengthen his biological arguments for the categorization of people. He thus contended here that the “religious ideas” of a group or individual aptly illustrates “which strain in a mixed race has proved stronger.” The religious practices and beliefs of “the black Republic of Haiti,” for example, were “not, according to good observers vastly different from those of the African jungle.”²⁵ Developing this idea further, Barnes spoke of the effect that “Iberian stock” had had on religious practice in Southern Italy. As it seemed had often been the case with British colonialism, higher culture or a new religion may be “given to a race” but “its old culture and its old religion [would still] emerge, slightly camouflaged.” Thus, the “mental tendencies” of their “Iberian” ancestors had proved “much more permanent” than had originally been supposed. According to Barnes, while “invaders may sweep over the land” and establish a new religion, “the old stock with the old faith” would still triumph.

With this in mind, Barnes noted that the people of Southern Italy had been considered “Christian for some 15 centuries,” yet they seemed to practice a form of primitive “magical polytheism, camouflaged as sacramentalism” — the form of worship apparently prevalent “among the Mediterranean Iberians before the Christian era.”²⁶ Barnes believed that these so-called “low-grade worshippers” were a “drag on spiritual progress” and subsequently lowered the “moral level of the group-consciousness.”²⁷ He would later use a combination of racial and religious prejudice when making disparaging remarks about the immigration of the “Southern Irish” to Britain.

²⁴ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 7-8.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 9.

²⁷ Ibid, 12.

After the Irish Free State was declared in 1922 many Irish citizens, faced with continued political violence, chose to migrate to Britain. Barnes believed that this had negative implications for the British race as he revealed in reply to a “Mrs. Bevan” in March 1928. Bevan shared similar views to Barnes — as she admitted — being a member both of the Eugenics Society and Inge’s Religious Thought Society.²⁸ The issue that Bevan wished to discuss was the need to “keep the Irish out of England.” With population already believed to be too high, as Bevan recognized “700 to the square mile,” Britain could not allow for immigration, especially with the Irish already a “great menace in Scotland.”²⁹ Agreeing with this, an added issue — Barnes replied — was the cultural threat that the Southern Irish, being of a largely Catholic disposition, seemed to pose to the English population:

My plea that the immigration of Southern Irish should be restricted has brought me somewhat angry criticism from Roman Catholic journals. Our own people for the most part seem unsure of the danger of over-population and of the further danger that the Southern Irish with their lower social culture will add heavily to the burden of our social charges.³⁰

The fact that people from Ireland were portrayed as culturally inferior and not welcome in an over-populated England shows how much racism had come to influence Barnes’ perspective. Just as the feeble-minded were assumed to be polluting the national gene pool, those born with a tendency for “low-grade” worship, such as the Irish, would surely prove a

²⁸ Trevor Beeson, *The Deans* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 138.

²⁹ Angela Bevan, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Keeping the Irish out of England,’ (6 March 1928), EWB 9/19/11.

³⁰ E.W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Mrs. Bevan RE: Keeping the Irish out of England,’ (10 March 1928), EWB 9/19/12.

drag on the spiritual progress of the nation. Thus as he concluded later, "Great Britain must sooner or later close its doors on promiscuous immigration, and must try to produce not more, but better citizens."³¹

For Barnes, then, different races appeared to possess different capacities for intellectual and religious understanding. Furthermore, he argued, "where the physical characteristics of one of two mixed races prove the stronger, the mental qualities of that race are usually dominant." This led Barnes to believe that miscegenation, particularly in the colonies, was undesirable. When the inter-breeding of different races had taken place in Jamaica, for instance, according to Barnes, the "half-caste" not only became "darker" in complexion in successive generations but also "more negroid in his habit of mind." Even in Britain, when so-called "mixed marriages" occurred, the child lacked any "stability of organisation" due to "disharmony in the "fundamentals of the mind." All that considered, the popular "distrust of half-castes" was, for Barnes, "not the outcome of mere prejudice," as some supposed. Rather, the children of "mixed-marriages," albeit through no fault of their own, were often "unstable in character" and it was "impossible to foretell which side of their mental inheritance [would] be uppermost on any particular occasion."³²

Barnes was by no means alone in these beliefs; the mixture of two ethnic groups was often portrayed as undesirable in the eugenic sense. Robert R. Rentoul, the Liverpool physician and staunch promoter of eugenic sterilisation, shared Barnes' distaste for miscegenation. In his 1906 book *Race Culture; or Race Suicide*, for instance, Rentoul warned of the dangers of immigration: "The intermarriage of British with foreigners should not be encouraged. A few of us know the terrible monstrosities produced by the intermarriage of

³¹ 'The Church and Birth Control: A Professor's Challenge,' *The Manchester Guardian* (28 November 1929), 11.

³² Barnes, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' 8.

the white and the black.”³³ Another eugenicist who influenced Barnes directly was Reginald Gates (1882-1962), a strict biological determinist who also held a firm belief in the concept of race. In ‘Heredity and Eugenics’ – a paper Barnes would later use to defend his own beliefs – Gates argued that “the intermixture of unrelated races is from every point of view undesirable, at least as regards race-combinations involving one primitive and one advanced race.”³⁴ Another theorist who shared strikingly similar views on race with Barnes was his close friend, E.W. MacBride (1866-1940). Despite his outspoken belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics, MacBride was an active member of the Eugenics Society and remarkably – considering the contrast of his biological convictions with the hereditarian leanings of the eugenics movement – even became one of the vice presidents in the late 1920s.³⁵ In his 1924 *An Introduction to the Study of Heredity*, MacBride expressed concern for the “‘submerged tenth’ of the urban population” who, so it seemed, were made up largely of “Iberian or Mediterranean” strands, and resided exclusively in the slum districts of Britain’s cities.³⁶ While Barnes was beginning to fear more for the prevalence of mental deficiency rather than different ethnic groups in these districts, MacBride shared the Bishop’s dismissal of the idea that education could reform these individuals whose “inferior qualities” had been “imprinted over thousands of generations.”³⁷

Even so, according to Barnes, this was evident when one studied the decline of the Greek Empire. Though at its height it was “racially pure,” once it had “reached its zenith,” the “ruling stocks died out, dissipated by war or luxury. Such of their descendants as

³³ Robert Rentoul, *Race Culture; or Race Suicide* (London: Walter Scott, 1906), 5.

³⁴ Reginald Ruggles Gates, ‘Heredity and Eugenics: Part II, Mental Characters,’ *The Eugenics Review* 12, 1 (April 1920), 10.

³⁵ Geoffrey R. Searle, ‘Eugenics and Politics in Britain in the 1930s,’ *Annals of Science* 36 (1979), 163.

³⁶ Quoted in Bowler, ‘E.W. MacBride’s Lamarckian Eugenics,’ 251-2.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 252.

survived were the offspring of mixed marriages, racially impure.”³⁸ For Barnes, then, the mixing of races was so disastrous it could help bring about the decline of great empires, something he did not want replicated with Britain. MacBride had also concluded likewise on this subject: great civilizations of the past had been destroyed after the dying out of the “organizing race.” If society continued along its dysgenic path, the vision was adequate “to make a patriotic Englishman shudder.”³⁹

As has been emphasized, in Britain, promoters of negative eugenics did not seek to employ scientific racism to target specific ethnic groups directly, as was often the case with many of the racial hygiene movements in Germany and Central and Southeast Europe.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, an overtly ‘racial’ view of humanity – like the one endorsed by Barnes – undoubtedly helped to shape British eugenics. Moreover, as we shall see, Barnes was a testament to the notion that, regardless of their understanding of heredity or race, a necessary ideological facet of the contemporary eugenicist was how to identify the ‘inferior’ strands in a race.

2. Heredity

Despite Barnes’ detailed explanation of the racial development of mankind, his predominant concerns at this time were not focussed on the apparent threat posed by immigrant ethnic groups to the British race. The main threat, as Barnes saw it, came from within, in the form

³⁸ Parker, ‘Blessed are the Pacifists,’ 208.

³⁹ Ernest W. MacBride, *An Introduction to the Study of Heredity*, (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1931, first published: 1924), 245. For a similar contemporary argument see: B.S. Bramwell, ‘Observations on Racial Characteristics in England,’ *The Eugenics Review* 15, 3 (October 1923), 480-91.

⁴⁰ See: Turda and Weindling eds., *Blood and Homeland.*

of the ‘feeble-minded.’

Barnes’ ideology drew parallels with both biological determinism and Neo-Lamarckism. Whilst the former was the most popular understanding of the nature of heredity within the Eugenics Society, at least in the early 20th century, it was the latter which proved more influential to Barnes’ Galton Lecture. Based on a synthesis of Social-Darwinism, popularized in the late 19th century by figures such as Galton and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), and Mendelian inheritance, biological determinism held that human behaviour and social standing were largely premeditated by inherited characteristics, something particularly important when discussing the apparent congenital nature of mental deficiency.⁴¹ This combination was crucial to the various selective breeding programmes advocated by eugenicists in the inter-war period whether negative, as was the case with birth control and sterilization, or positive, in which genetically ‘superior’ couples were encouraged to have more children. On the other hand, Lamarck’s theories, which are examined later, had also earned a variety of interpretations at the beginning of the 20th century, one of which – chemical Lamarckism – Barnes employed here.

Notably, Barnes was one of several theorists in Britain who held both openly racist and elitist views commonly attributed to the political right, while also adopting environmentalist theories that were traditionally popular among left-wing ideologues. After experiencing mass industrial strikes in 1926, British politics, at least in the late 1920s, was somewhat characterized by a constant fear of socialism. From the late 1920s, the Soviet Union began to heavily favour a variety of Lamarckism as a state-imposed scientific

⁴¹ While Mendelian theory had initially been dismissed by Pearson in the 1900s, by the inter-war years it had been largely accepted both by the scientific and eugenic communities in Britain.

position.⁴² At this time, Lamarckism also received some notable support in Britain. Though Barnes had expressed distaste for Socialism, on a cultural level, he also sympathised with Lamarckism, drawing inspiration from the environmentalist views of such figures as MacBride, the German palaeontologist Gustav Tornier (1858-1938) and American eugenicist H.S. Jennings (1868-1947). Nonetheless, Lamarckism was a rather marginalized view in Britain, at least amongst the eugenicists. Many biologists too were fervently hostile. This famously led to scandal and suicide in the case of Austrian biologist, Paul Kammerer (1880-1926). It is worth noting in brief, Kammerer's interactions with British scientists in order to understand the context in which Barnes formulated his own opinions on heredity.

Kammerer spent much of his professional life experimenting on amphibians in an attempt to prove his deep-seated conviction that acquired characteristics were inheritable. One notable example stems from his successful attempt to make midwife toads breed uncharacteristically in water. Considering the toads were cold-blooded, to achieve this Kammerer increased the temperature of their tanks, forcing them to retreat to the water in order to lower their body temperature. To provide more traction when mating underwater, the toads had developed darkened nuptial pads, which he claimed were subsequently passed on to multiple generations.⁴³ Kammerer visited England in 1923 to promote his 'discovery,' lecturing in Cambridge and London. Responses were greatly polarized, demonstrated by the on-going debate in the journal *Nature*. When the English geneticist William Bateson (1861-1926) questioned the validity of Kammerer's experiments, MacBride

⁴² This arguably culminated in 1927 with the Mi5-led raid of the All Russian Co-operative Society (ARCOS) office in London under suspicion of stolen military information; the severing of diplomatic relations with Russia after "underground agitation;" and the Soviet execution of twenty British citizens for alleged espionage. See: Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs: A History of the Relations between the Soviet Union and the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 686-687.

⁴³ Thomas Schmuck, 'The Midwife Toad and Human Progress' in: Robert Hofrichter ed., *Amphibians: The World of Frogs, Toads, Salamanders and Newts* (New York: Firefly, 2000), 212-13.

came to his defence, arguing that the only means to disprove the experiments was to repeat them.⁴⁴ In 1926, a few months after Barnes' Galton Lecture, the American experimental biologist G.K. Noble (1894-1940) proved that the experiments had in fact been fixed. It was apparent that Indian ink had been used as a dye to make the acquired darker nuptial pads appear inherited. Amid the ensuing controversy, six weeks later, Kammerer committed suicide in the forest of Schneeberg, Austria, which for many was admission of his guilt.

With the exception of MacBride who persevered with the theory until his death in 1940, the Kammerer controversy dealt a serious blow to Lamarckism among British academics, from which it never truly recovered. Feeding into the heightened political tensions at the time, it had the reverse effect in the Soviet Union, where in 1928 the film *Salamandra* – a propagandist distortion of the above events – portrayed Kammerer as a political martyr.⁴⁵ By the 1930s, under the leadership of Stalin's Minister of Agriculture, Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976), Lamarckism – or Lysenkoism as it became known – was established as the official scientific position of the Soviet Union and was sustained until long after the Second World War.⁴⁶ It is significant that Kammerer's death, and the subsequent fall of neo-Lamarckism in Britain, took place only a few months after Barnes' Galton Lecture. Just as with his brief sympathy for the theory, detailed below, the fact that he later refuted it demonstrates that a constant theme of his rhetoric was to accommodate the latest scientific theories into his worldview.

⁴⁴ See also: MacBride, 'Chapter IV: The Inheritance of Habits and of their Effects,' in: Idem, *An Introduction to the Study of Heredity*, 77-111.

⁴⁵ Robert G.B. Reid, *Evolutionary Theory: The Unfinished Synthesis* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1985), 174.

⁴⁶ See Nils Roll-Hansen, *The Lysenko Effect: The Politics of Science* (New York: Humanity Books, 2005); and David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). One may argue that this goes a long way in explaining the assumption made by several scholars during the Cold War period that scientific knowledge is primarily a social construct. See also: Paul, *The Politics of Heredity*.

Barnes' definition of the detailed mechanisms of evolution was not dissimilar to that of the 'mainstream' eugenicists. To an extent, this rested on the following quotation from the Scottish biologist D'Arcy Thompson (1860-1948): "Fit and unfit arise alike but what is fit to survive does survive and what is unfit perishes."⁴⁷ As Barnes had also detailed in 1925, although nature would usually, as he put it, "weed out" the unfit, our "humane instincts" had recently chosen to revolt against this "ruthless" process.⁴⁸ In this "more Christian organisation of the state," the once unfit were now able to survive. According to Barnes though, the protection of "mental-defectives" jeopardized the biological future of mankind: "We must not create an environment in which the feeble-minded, the criminal, and the insane can multiply rapidly" because although "such persons may have some descendants of social value, it is statistically demonstrable that the average of their descendants will be below normal."⁴⁹ As we shall see, for Barnes, if modern civilization was Frankenstein, it seems the feeble-minded were its monster. Despite the blunt tone with which he discussed the feeble-minded, Barnes admitted that mankind was still relatively ignorant "as to how far a child receives from its parents at conception a set of physical and psychical fundamentals which no environment will change." Thus, via genetic mutations, "good stocks" may produce "degenerate offspring" and "bad stocks" may produce a "genius." However, "statistical biology" had made it almost certain that while the descendants of a "man of genius," were usually of above average ability, "feeble-mindedness, once established, will crop out generation after generation."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ D'Arcy W. Thompson, 'Natural Science,' in Richard W. Livingstone, *The Legacy of Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), 157.

⁴⁸ Barnes, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

While in this sense, Barnes heavily sympathized with the ‘mainstream’ views of the Eugenics Society, in 1926 he was yet to fully embrace the Mendelian theory of inheritance and “confidently reject Lamarckism,” as he would in the 1930s.⁵¹ Through a process of ideological osmosis he seems to have adopted the theory of environmental “germ-weakening” advanced by some Lamarckists at the time. One of the earliest thinkers to advocate this idea was the German biologist Gustav Tornier, whose work – following MacBride’s advice – Barnes referenced.⁵² The view that conditions encountered during the organism’s early development could result in heritable changes was coined “chemical Lamarckism” by J.T. Cunningham in 1921.⁵³ As opposed to the dramatic theory of inheritance proposed by Kammerer, ‘chemical Lamarckism’ was a more subtle and longer process, which took multiple generations for a noticeable effect to occur. This allowed Barnes to also keep the basic principles of Darwinian evolution and even, to an extent, fall in line with the hereditarian preconceptions of the Eugenics Society. Furthermore, the apparent compatibility of *weak*-Lamarckism and more mainstream eugenic thought in Britain was reinforced by MacBride’s prominence in the Society at this time.

After considering Tornier’s research on Chinese goldfish and the appalling living conditions he had witnessed while visiting the slum districts of Birmingham, Barnes was forced to ask the question, “Has man not produced conditions which make for a similar disorder in his own race?”⁵⁴ MacBride had also attempted to apply the theory of chemical Lamarckism to human society in the aforementioned *An Introduction to the Study of*

⁵¹ Ernest W. Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion: The World Described by Science and its Spiritual Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 515. See ‘Chapter IV’ for more on Barnes’ full adoption of Mendelism.

⁵² Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 12.

⁵³ See Joseph T. Cunningham, *Hormones and Heredity* (London: Tebbo, 2012, first published: 1921).

⁵⁴ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 12.

Heredity. Here MacBride argued that whatever race the “slum dwellers” belonged to, their exposure to poor living conditions meant that they were more susceptible to degeneration, in particular conditions such as mental deficiency, as a result of “germ weakening.”⁵⁵ Likewise, as Barnes had recognized, this idea was also advocated by H.S. Jennings in *Prometheus: Or, Biology and the Advancement of Man* (1925).⁵⁶ Jennings argued that “the artificial conditions of modern urban life are injurious to the development of the genes which the individual receives from his parents.”⁵⁷ Therefore, so Barnes contended, an unhealthy living environment may have weakened the germ-plasm of people living in city slums. Barnes hypothesized that this artificially-weakened biological state would then have been passed on to subsequent generations facilitating a disastrous process of self-induced racial degeneration.

For Barnes, there appeared to be no concrete evidence that from *all* ‘bad’ stocks, ‘good’ could never be created. Perhaps of great influence, he considered, was the fact that the industrial revolution had “within half a dozen generations” removed the “greater part of our people from the healthy influence of unspoiled nature.” Rather than simply hereditary transmission, then, the prevalence of “mental deficiency” in society may have in fact been caused by “germ-weakening under artificial conditions:”

The development of the constituents of chromosomes in the germ-cells is injuriously affected by the way in which infants are reared in crowded areas, by life under

⁵⁵ MacBride, *Introduction to the Study of Heredity*, 247-8. See also Ernest W. MacBride, ‘The Inheritance of Acquired Characteristics and its Bearing on Eugenic Theory and Practice,’ *The Eugenics Review* 14, 2 (July 1922), 71-82.

⁵⁶ See: Herbert S. Jennings, *Prometheus: Or, Biology and the Advancement of Man* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1925).

⁵⁷ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 13-14.

artificial light, by alcohol, by conditions which militate against a natural and healthy sexual life. [...] The average level of 'mental life' in a slum area is much lower than that of the community as a whole and shows every possible degree of what I venture to call germ-weakening.⁵⁸

Barnes also added his own religious interpretation of the theory. The idea of germ-weakening went a long way in explaining the apparent spiritual decline of modern society. Although it seemed that "the type of our population is changing: that the Nordic strain is less resilient than the Iberian to hostile influences in our present matter of life, [...] it is hardly likely that such a change should have been so rapid." Perhaps urban life was to blame for the popularity of "religious fancies," such as the practice of sacramentalism, which, according to Barnes, more closely resembled pagan superstitions that were "widespread in classical civilization" than they did Christianity. However, with this "old narrow teleology" destroyed, Barnes reasoned, "we must assign as such importance to the environment which God has created as to the capacity for variation which He has given to living organisms."⁵⁹

To address the problems of biological and spiritual decline, Barnes suggested "a return to the simple life," which would involve the migration of people from the crowded cities to the countryside. Barnes was not the only one advocating a return to nature. As well as being a recurrent trope, in Britain, throughout the mid- to late-19th century, this idea had also been put forward in the 1920s by "a group of representative citizens, including some leading surgeons" who had recently urged the value of the simple life as a protection against ill-health. This was referring to the 'simple living' movement, which included the

⁵⁸ Barnes, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' 12-13.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

influential American social philosopher and supporter of Gandhi, Richard Gregg (1885-1974) and radical economist, Scott Nearing (1883-1983). The philosophy still exists today and tends to involve a number of voluntary practices, like reducing one's possessions and increasing self-sufficiency as opposed to surviving on the many indulgences associated with city life.⁶⁰ For Barnes, the religious connotations were clear: in order to further "religious progress," he argued, society must replicate "our spiritual aristocrats, [...] the Quakers," who stood apart from the "great mass of the community" by the "simplicity of their manner of life." With Galton, the founder of the eugenics movement, having been a devout Quaker throughout his life, this no doubt resonated well with those in attendance.

Thus, Barnes arrived upon a distinct synthesis to explain human behaviour in society: "It seems to me that such knowledge as we have indicates that a more natural way of living would create mental no less than physical health and, in particular, that it would be of direct religious value."⁶¹ Even so, he still dismissed the idea that, in the case of the 'feeble-minded,' a return to "the simple life" could ever produce "a mentally healthy stock." In fact the concept of "germ-weakening" provided yet another validation for Barnes' belief that the very poor should be prevented from bringing children into the world, especially given the dysgenic surroundings that many of them inhabited. In terms of the health of the race, the feeble-minded were still a fundamentally dysgenic strand of the population. With this in mind, Barnes was led to the most disputatious section of the lecture: sterilization.

⁶⁰ See, for example: Linda B. Pierce, *Choosing Simplicity: Real People Finding Peace and Fulfilment in a Complex World* (Seattle: Gallagher Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Barnes, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' 14.

3. Sterilization

According to Peter Bowler, in his Galton Lecture Barnes “welcomed efforts to limit the reproduction of the feeble-minded and other desirables,” but felt as a Christian he too must “oppose compulsory sterilization.”⁶² Nonetheless, the Bishop also made clear his belief that “very strong arguments [could] be brought forward for the sterilisation of mental defectives” and later detailed how Christian opposition could potentially be overcome.⁶³ Though Barnes did not officially state that the feeble-minded should be sterilized, in light of his later views, it seems his consideration of the benefits of the practice expressed here provides some indication of his opinion on the subject. In fact, this non-committal nature is characteristic of his eugenic rhetoric during the inter-war period, particularly when compared with his extreme and direct proposals after 1945.

Barnes referred to sterilization at a time when, as has been emphasized, it was still growing in popularity, with some doctors and intellectuals alike now beginning to support the practice. Indeed, on behalf of the Eugenics Society, C.S. Hodson had noted that year: “Not only is this becoming a topic of frequent discussion (which on the whole appears rather to be favourable to Sterilization than adverse), but those of us who are frequently in touch with popular audiences, and particularly audiences of women interested in social progress, find this the key word which above all others draws enthusiastic applause.”⁶⁴ Providing one example of compelling evidence in favour of the practice, Barnes cited recent dialogue that had taken place in the correspondence section of *The Times*. Here a number of

⁶² Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist,’ 463.

⁶³ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 11.

⁶⁴ Cora S. Hodson, ‘Notes and Memoranda: Sterilisation,’ *The Eugenics Review* 18, 1 (April 1926), 50.

‘medical men’ – made up of eight doctors and medical officials – signed a letter to the editor of *The Times* supporting the practice.

The letter, entitled, ‘Mental Deficiency: The Influence of Heredity,’ argued that sterilization must be employed to counter the increasing prevalence of mental deficiency in British society. Arguably, since the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act it had become easier for doctors and medical officials to identify those considered either insane or mentally deficient. This resulted in inflated figures and what seemed like a massive increase in the number of cases in the years since the Act had been passed. According to a 1925 report from the Board of Control, there were 51,000 recorded ‘congenital’ mental defectives.⁶⁵ However, considering that many mentally deficient individuals were cared for by relatives or friends, for the authors of *The Times* letter this number was probably even higher.⁶⁶ In the vast majority of cases, so it was argued, heredity was the predominant cause:

We consider that everything possible should be done to render the lives of these mental defectives as happy as possible under the circumstances, but [...] are strongly of the opinion that sentiment and ignorance should not be allowed to interfere with a means of treatment by which the capacity to produce an imbecile progeny would be arrested. [...] Surely the available facts are sufficiently strong to call for legislation on this question for the future good of the nation.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ See: Home Office, Great Britain, *Lunacy and Mental Deficiency: The Twelfth & Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Control for the years 1925 & 1926* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1926).

⁶⁶ William Arbuthnot Lane, B. Bruce-Porter, A. Fripp, James Dundas Grant, R.A. Gibbons, T. Horder, James Purves Stewart, T.E. Knowles Stansfield, G. Robertson Turner and J. Thompson-Walker, ‘Mental Deficiency: The Influence of Heredity,’ *The Times* (18 January 1926), 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

However, sterilization was a divisive issue with many in decisive opposition. As well as natural resistance from the religious community – from both Catholic and Protestant quarters⁶⁸ – many in the medical field were by no means convinced. Indeed, the *British Medical Journal* in particular took an adverse stance to sterilization and eugenics during the inter-war period. Two days later, *The Times* received another letter entitled, ‘Mental Deficiency: Case for Institutional Treatment,’ authored by judge and politician Leslie Scott (1869-1950) and physician A.F. Tredgold (1870-1952), representing the Central Association for Mental Welfare (CAMW). The CAMW, founded in 1913, as one of the more philanthropic implications of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, was one the first organisations to provide accommodation for those with psychiatric problems as well as psychiatrists and teachers for children with learning difficulties. As one may assume, the CAMW has had a more successful existence than the eugenics movement. Led by Scott and renowned social worker Evelyn Fox (1874-1955), the pioneer schemes of the CAMW became an integral part of the National Health Service (1948-) and – after unifying with the National Council for Mental Hygiene and the Child Guidance Council – became the National Association for Mental Health (1946-).⁶⁹

The CAMW were opposed to sterilization on both scientific and moral grounds: not only would it be ineffective in reducing the number of mental defectives in future generations, it would be also harmful both to society and the defectives themselves. Scientifically, Mendel’s theory of dominant and recessive alleles was used as evidence against the effectiveness of sterilization. Thus, most of those afflicted were born to ‘normal’

⁶⁸ See: Chapter IV.

⁶⁹ R.R. Thomas, ‘Fox, Dame Evelyn Emily Marian (1874-1955),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33231, accessed on 14 January 2014].

parents, assumed to be recessive 'carriers' for mental deficiency. Although the majority of cases of 'mental defect' were the result of inheritance, it was argued, the proportion of cases who were the offspring of overtly 'defective' parents was extremely small.⁷⁰ Moreover, the preventive effect of "a general policy of sterilization would be very slight:" even if "every defective now existing" were to be sterilized, "the result a generation hence would be insignificant."⁷¹

In terms of morality, according to the CAMW a general policy of sterilization would be "attended with serious social evils." For one, if the practice were legalized there would be "thousands of feeble-minded persons" leading "hurried" existences "between workhouse, refuge, prison, and the street." Even worse, their prevalent habits of "promiscuous sexual intercourse" would provide "a great centre for the spread of venereal diseases."⁷² The CAMW perceived eugenic sterilization – seemingly based on false science and irresponsible social policy – as the potential harbinger of society's demise rather than its saviour. Even so, the CAMW at this time, like the eugenicists, clearly believed that the mentally deficient were a menace to society, and, under this assumption, both endorsed their categorisation and facilitated their segregation.

The original consortium of 'medical men' replied with great frustration, demonstrating the diametrical opposition of the two approaches to deal with what was, in some respects, the same problem. The authors contended that "the weight of modern medical experience" had rendered it "beyond doubt that neuropathic heredity [was] the

⁷⁰ See also: W.A. Potts, 'Racial Dangers of Mental Defect: The Desirability of Greatly Increased Institutional Accommodation for Mental Defectives,' *The Eugenics Review* 16, 2 (July 1924), 132.

⁷¹ L. Scott and Alfred F. Tredgold, 'Mental Deficiency: Case for Institutional Treatment,' *The Times* (January 20, 1926): 8

⁷² Scott and Tredgold, 'Mental Deficiency: Case for Institutional Treatment.'

predominant factor in the production of mental deficiency.” Therefore, sterilization would have an undeniably positive effect on future generations. Furthermore, the “lurid picture of vast numbers of mental defectives [disseminating] venereal diseases among the community” would not occur: even after sterilization, the more severe cases of mental deficiency, “where home conditions are inadequate for their protection, [would] continue to be treated in public institutions.” From this perspective, the argument in favour of sterilization seemed incontestable: “All congenital mentally defective children are rendered incapable in later life of producing a fresh generation of imbecile and idiot progeny, many of these individuals will no longer require segregation in asylums. The benefit to the State is obvious, while no discomfort is inflicted on the mentally defective individual.”⁷³ However, joining the debate, Leonard Darwin, had some reservations on this conclusion, arguing that too narrow a viewpoint had been adopted. Darwin made a final appeal to the CAMW to support the proposal:

I strongly urge on the members of the Central Association for Mental Welfare not to adopt a purely negative attitude on this most important question, but themselves to take the lead in considering when sterilization should be adopted, and what changes in the law are necessary for its adoption. It will only be in this way that this Association will be able themselves to exercise any influence in preventing the unwise use in the future of this powerful racial agency.⁷⁴

⁷³ James Purves Stewart and T.E. Knowles Stansfield, ‘Mental Deficiency,’ *The Times* (January 28, 1926): 10.

⁷⁴ Leonard Darwin, ‘Letter to *The Spectator*,’ quoted in: Hodson, ‘Notes and Memoranda: Sterilisation,’ 50.

Notably, later that month, the Board of Guardians (1835-1930) – the local authorities originally established to administer the Poor Law in Britain – also spent some time considering this debate.⁷⁵ In conjunction with the Consultative Council of the Eugenics Society, of which Barnes was a member, the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Guardians, A.H. Waddington, proposed the following resolutions, which were sent to several of its local branches:

- That His Majesty's Government be urged, through the Members of Parliament, to seriously consider the urgent question of the sterilization of the mentally unfit, not later than the age of puberty, and thus save untold suffering and expense.
- That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Prime Minister, Local Members of Parliament, the Poor Law Unions Association, and other Boards of Guardians throughout England and Wales.⁷⁶

These suggestions were fully endorsed by and can therefore be considered the official position of the Society on the subject. The similarities that can be drawn between arguments such as this and Barnes' later statements provide a testament to how influential they were on the development of his ideology.

Though sterilization had become a significant talking point for medical professionals and academics, there were a number of practical difficulties, as Langdon-Down detailed in

⁷⁵ Hodson, 'Notes and Memoranda: Sterilisation,' 49.

⁷⁶ 'Letter to Lutterworth Board of Guardians' (8 October 1925) quoted in: Hodson, 'Notes and Memoranda: Sterilisation,' 51.

the 1926 paper, 'Sterilization as a Practical Policy.' The problems faced when pushing for parliamentary approval were three-fold: first, it had to be ensured that sterilization could only take place if the individual was the "subject of a germinal abnormality," and that their potential offspring would have "similar defective tendencies;" second, Parliament had to be convinced of the "magnitude of the evil" and show that "the evil [was] a growing one," with existing measures "inadequate to cope with it;" and third, that any "evil consequences" would be by far outweighed by the "advantages to be secured."

Langdon-Down also drew attention to sterilization in the United States. Although the practice had been legal in some states since 1907, little over three thousand operations had taken place. It appeared there was nothing in such figures that would "encourage Parliament to take the step that is proposed."⁷⁷ Indeed, eugenicists had already failed to get legislative backing for sterilization in Britain, with the most recent example taking place earlier that year. John Erskine, a leading eugenicist and author during the 1910s and 1920s,⁷⁸ had brought the apparent need for the sterilization of 'mental defectives' to the House of Lords. It was reported in the press that Erskine had asked Prime Minister Chamberlain whether he would set up "a committee to consider the best means of dealing with the problem of ever-increasing numbers of mentally deficient persons, whether by resorting to sterilisation or by other means. [...] As regarded the last part of the question he was not prepared to give any undertaking in the matter."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Reginald Langdon-Down, 'Sterilization as a Practical Policy,' *The Eugenics Review* 18, 3 (October 1926), 205-210.

⁷⁸ See, for example: John Erskine, *The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent and Other Essays* (New York: Duffield, 1915).

⁷⁹ 'Questions in the Commons: Mental Deficients,' *The Manchester Guardian* (5 February 1926), 5.

It seems, even at this stage, that the illusory nature of the proposed grounds for sterilization would prevent it from ever being legalized. This prompted many to turn to the dissemination of knowledge on birth control instead. Nevertheless, during the 1920s and 1930s, there would be several more campaigns for the voluntary sterilization of 'mental defectives,' with Barnes one of those in support. Most notably, as documented in Chapter IV, the Commission led by Laurence Brock looked to provide conclusive scientific justification. Although the 1934 Brock Report failed to achieve legislative success, Barnes still referenced it after the Second World War when defending his own arguments.

4. Religion

The sterilization debate is also significant when analysing Barnes' discussion of 'Eugenics and Religion' and his belief that together the eugenics movement and Church could build a 'spiritually-eugenic society.' G.B. Shaw had once argued that there was "now no reasonable excuse for refusing to face the fact that nothing but a eugenic religion can save our civilization from the fate that has overtaken all previous civilizations."⁸⁰ Taking this idea further, Barnes' added his belief in the spiritual nature of evolution, detailed in his earlier sermons, as a fundamental component of eugenic ideology.

As we have seen, for Barnes, the process of evolution was dictated by the creative activity of God. Having allowed "degeneration as well as progress to take place," in the form of various gene mutations, through the ruthlessness of nature, God "weeded out the less

⁸⁰ George Bernard Shaw quoted in: Galton, 'Eugenics: Its definition Scope and Aims,' 21.

valuable products of His plan.”⁸¹ Notably, this led Barnes to a relatively distinct interpretation of the problem of evil. One could assume that by allowing such degenerative mutations to occur, God had allowed evil to exist. How could God, a supposedly omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent deity, allow children to be born with, for instance, congenital tuberculosis? To address the apparent contradiction, Barnes employed what can be termed a ‘greater good’ response: in order to actualize ‘good’ of any great value, it was necessary for God to also permit the evil. In Barnes’ example, rather than “perfecting human civilization, by causing offspring to be always slightly better or slightly more highly organised than were the parents,” God instead allowed “a type of change which to our value-judgements can be either good or bad.” Essentially, it was only through this scheme of creative activity that “the successive emergence of more highly organized types” could transpire. Degenerative mutations were a *necessary evil* in the life process: only by allowing fit and unfit to arise alike and use the natural environment to destroy the unfit, could true “spiritual understanding” have arisen in man.⁸²

As his lectures throughout the 1920s had emphasized, religious aspiration was understood as something that surfaced at a certain point during evolution in advanced species. Applying this premise to human society, it was assumed that individuals who had failed to show any religious enthusiasm were ‘sub-human.’ After becoming Bishop of Birmingham, Barnes had discovered that religious work was practically hopeless in poor urban areas: “among the children the response is slight” and “among adults it is negligible.” He reasoned that such absence of spiritual awareness was inheritable. Moreover, only those born in such districts with “exceptional enterprise” and “religious sense,” migrated to

⁸¹ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 14.

⁸² Ibid.

healthier pastures. It seemed to Barnes that modern society had encouraged what he called an “automatic segregation of the unfit:”

There are stocks in which spiritual aspiration shews itself, in various manifestations, generation after generation. Few religious leaders of fame and power lack ancestors, possibly in quite humble circumstances, who shewed religious enthusiasm. Equally of course parents of poor mental quality and vicious tendencies, unresponsive to the elevating influences with which they may gain contact, have like children. Such stocks are a burden and a source of weakness to the community.⁸³

According to Barnes, then, the absence of any kind of religious interest was “evidence of mental abnormality.” Taking this further, rather than a temporary sign of “social ill-health,” the apparent religious decay that society had been experiencing was instead, “increased social degeneration.”⁸⁴

To help counter this development, the Bishop believed it imperative to win the favour of the Christian community. Although he had been working to reform the Church, Barnes admitted solemnly that “Christian religious sentiment instinctively sets itself against [eugenic] proposals.”⁸⁵ As *The Times* later reported, during the lecture Barnes “devoted much of his time to a discussion of the Christian attitude,”⁸⁶ maintaining that although Christian opposition may “not be permanent, its grounds [were] worth stating.”⁸⁷ As things

⁸³ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 10.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*,’ 11.

⁸⁶ Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist,’ 461.

⁸⁷ ‘Sterilization of the Feeble-Minded,’ *The Times* (February 17, 1926), 9.

stood, if Christianity affirmed “the rights and value of the individual simply as a human being” and that “all men [were] potentially sons of God,” then anyone, defective or not, could supposedly enter the Kingdom of God. Barnes believed this to be true for both Protestants and Catholics: while the Protestant evangelist argued, “No man is so vile, so degraded [...] that we can pronounce *a priori* that his conversion is hopeless,” the Catholic maintained that, “Through the sacraments there is salvation for all.”⁸⁸ Nonetheless, although such opposition to eugenic proposals represented a serious obstacle, Barnes believed that it was one that could in time, be overcome. As Christine Rosen has summarized, if eugenics was understood as “a tool for pursuing the larger goal of creating the Kingdom, accepted as merely part of God’s plan for society, religious men and women would not resist its entreaties. Appeal to them as Christians, as Barnes said, and they [would] eagerly join the eugenics crusade.”⁸⁹

Barnes believed it possible to convince his contemporaries in the Church of England that there was no religious obstacle to preventing the feeble-minded from reproducing. The aforementioned medical consortium in favour of sterilization had argued that “the feeble-minded remain as they are, no matter what is done for them” and therefore, “all these individuals should be prevented from propagating their species.”⁹⁰ Likewise, for Barnes, considering that the feeble-minded were not affected by religious teaching, they were not “potential sons of God,” but, effectively, a different species to humankind. While the “great bond of social unity is that we regard our fellow-citizens as sharing with ourselves the full heritage of humanity,” to Barnes, eugenicists had made it clear that “mental defectives not

⁸⁸ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 12.

⁸⁹ Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 127.

⁹⁰ Arbuthnot Lane et al, ‘Mental Deficiency: The Influence of Heredity,’ 10.

only lack some of the most valuable qualities of our human heritage, but also they often transmit such lack to their off-spring.”⁹¹ As *The Manchester Guardian* reported, Barnes supposed that it was doubtful whether “we would do unto others as we would that they should do unto us, if we thought they were not fundamentally of potentially equal value to ourselves.”⁹² If an individual could not be considered human, then the moniker “all men are potential sons of God” would not apply:

If you could demonstrate that the feeble-minded were not only in themselves a social burden but also there was nothing latent in them of value to the race you would rapidly win Christian sympathy and support. [...] [I]f you show [...] that the feeble-minded normally have so many defective descendants, that their fecundity is a barrier to the extension of spiritual perception, you will gradually get Christians to approve action by which such fecundity is checked.⁹³

For the Bishop, God had made man “to a small yet increasing degree master of his own fate.” With this in mind, he concluded that only by preventing the fecundity of the feeble-minded, could Christians and eugenicists go forth and unite to create the “spiritually-eugenic society.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 12.

⁹² ‘Sterilization of the Unfit,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (17 February 1926): 8.

⁹³ Barnes, ‘Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,’ 11.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Barnes Receives Support

Barnes received some significant support and perhaps, as we shall see, unwanted attention following his Galton lecture. Although he had covered a range of subjects, the newspaper reports that followed centred on his somewhat hesitant advocacy of sterilization. Thus, *The Times* led with the headline, 'Sterilization of the Feeble-Minded,' while *The Manchester Guardian* reported it under 'Sterilisation of the Unfit: The Christian Attitude.' Barnes' lecture also featured in the American newspaper, the *Houston Chronicle*.

The following month, C.S. Hodson, then secretary of the Eugenics Society, told Barnes with notable enthusiasm that "for a long time we have not had such wide-spread interest shown in the subject matter." Hodson continued, informing Barnes of "how very many expressions of interest and satisfaction have reached us here on your lecture," which included Leonard Darwin, who was reportedly "delighted" with the paper. Indeed, for a long time, no Galton Lecture had been so "outspokenly and splendidly eugenic."⁹⁵

Another significant figure in the eugenics movement to congratulate Barnes was the eminent British psychiatrist and first President of the Eugenics Society (1908-1909), James Crichton-Browne (1840-1938). As well as being one of the key advocates of Social Darwinism in the late 19th century, Crichton-Browne earned widespread acclaim for his studies on the relationship between mental illness and brain injury, becoming an important figure in the development of public health policies and for a short period President of the British Medical Association in 1913.⁹⁶ Crichton-Browne told Barnes that he was "gratified to recall" that

⁹⁵ Cora S. Hodson, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Regarding 1926 Galton Lecture,' (March 11, 1926), EWB 9/19/4.

⁹⁶ For more on Crichton-Browne see: Michael Neve and Trevor Turner, 'What the doctor thought and did: Sir James Crichton-Browne, 1840–1938,' *Medical History*, 39 (1995), 399–432.

“some fourteen years ago” he had arrived at some of the same conclusions that Barnes had “so forcibly set forth.”⁹⁷ In fact, as early as 1908, during the lobbying process that would eventually lead to the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, Crichton-Browne had given evidence on what was then the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded. Here he recommended “the compulsory sterilisation of those with learning disabilities and mental illness,” describing them as “our social rubbish” that should be “swept up and garnered and utilised as far as possible.”⁹⁸ Additionally, he presented Barnes with the somewhat common analogy that tended to compare human breeding with the cultivated breeding of other species, something the Bishop would later use himself: “We pay much attention to the breeding of our horses, our cattle, our dogs and poultry, even our flowers and vegetables; surely it's not too much to ask that a little care be bestowed upon the breeding and rearing of our race.”⁹⁹

Barnes' support was not confined to members of the British Eugenics Society alone. Some of his most enthusiastic support came from America, in the form of Texas-based dermatologist and surgeon, one ‘L. Norsworthy.’ It is notable that Barnes' overt discussion on the superior nature of the white race may have proved significant to the fact that his lecture was reported on in Texas, which was at the time violently divided by race. Either way, this letter would do nothing to dissuade him from his increasingly interest in negative eugenics. Having “practis[ed] thirty-one years in Houston,” Norsworthy considered himself to be of some authority as a member of “all the accepted organisations from my profession from County Medical Society to American Medical Association and American College of

⁹⁷ James Crichton-Browne, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Sterilisation,’ (21 March 1926), EWB, 9/19/5.

⁹⁸ Victoria Brignell, ‘The Eugenics Movement Britain Wants to Forget,’ *New Statesman* (9 December 2010), [<http://www.newstatesman.com/society/2010/12/british-eugenics-disabled>, accessed on 2 June 2013].

⁹⁹ Brignell, ‘The Eugenics Movement Britain Wants to Forget.’

Surgeons, and Chairman of the Board of Stewards of Saint Pauls Methodist Church Houston, Texas, USA.”¹⁰⁰ Moreover, he had been an active member of the eugenics movement in Texas, serving on the State Eleemosynary Commission for the Betterment of the Insane and Mental Defectives of the State of Texas. The Commission had lobbied, albeit abortively, for a reform in the local education system so that the public understood the biological significance of “sterilising mental defectives.” Norsworthy was glad to read that “a Clergy man and a Student of the Bible” had written on eugenic sterilization, a subject that he was “especially interested in himself.” He even looked to further enlighten Barnes’ views on the practice of sterilization: “I am convinced that mental defectives, including chronic drunkards, habitual murderers, and moral perverts – both sexes – should be sterilized. The operation can be performed without danger to life [...] under local anaesthesia and classed as minor surgery under modern hospital surrounding.”¹⁰¹

Continuing in the vein of support from eminent ‘medical men’ was the renowned Scottish surgeon and eugenicist, W. Arbuthnot-Lane (1856-1943). Arbuthnot-Lane was an influential public figure and would later earn a knighthood for his services to medicine, particularly for the treatment of a number of unusual conditions including the congenital disease, palatoschisis. Moreover, he was at the time President of the New Health Society, among the first organisations to be concerned with ‘social medicine’ as a subject. In an interview with *The Manchester Guardian*, Arbuthnot-Lane said that Barnes’ lecture had come as “a matter of great satisfaction to medical men, generally, and especially to the New Health Society:” “Dr. Barnes has won the admiration and respect of all medical men and layman who are actively interested in the future of our race by his frank and able discussion

¹⁰⁰ O.L. Norsworthy, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Sterilization of the Unfit’ (3 March 1926), EWB 9/19/3.

¹⁰¹ Norsworthy, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Sterilization of the Unfit.’

on this subject, an attitude which is characteristic of him and of other leaders in his profession.”¹⁰² Arbuthnot-Lane agreed that, “by the propagation of their species these defectives not only became a charge upon the State, but are easily led into evil habits and into serious crime, since they cannot have the power of control of normal people.” Furthermore, he reasoned that, when considering the sterilization of such individuals, although “in the vast majority of cases no question can arise, [...] to ensure that sterilisation shall not take place without adequate precautions, a Committee comprising expert medical men and lawyers should decide as to the advisability or necessity of resorting to it.” Finally, it was apparently most encouraging for the members of the New Health Society, “to watch the great progress the leaders in the Church are making in attempting to add to the health and happiness of the community by improving the race and by culminating those who by no fault of their own are a danger to society.”¹⁰³

Barnes’ final correspondence regarding the Galton Lecture was from the radical politician E. J. St. Loe Strachey (1901-1963).¹⁰⁴ At this time Strachey was an MP for the Aston district of Birmingham representing Oswald Mosely’s (1896-1980) New Party, in many respects a precursor to the British Union of Fascists. Having read a report of Barnes’ lecture, Strachey initially told the Bishop he was “of course” entirely with him “about sterilization, and nothing could have been more illuminating than the way you met the instinctive objections.” One may assume that, given Strachey’s apparent political leanings, he would have identified above all else with Barnes’ elitist concepts of ‘race.’ However, Strachey,

¹⁰² ‘Sterilising the Unfit: Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane and Dr. Barnes Declaration,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (19 February 1926), 4.

¹⁰³ ‘Sterilising the Unfit: Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane and Dr. Barnes Declaration,’ 4.

¹⁰⁴ See John St. Loe Strachey, *Revolution by Reason* (Ipswich: Garland, 1925); and *The Coming Struggle of Power* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1932).

although for a time Parliamentary Secretary to Mosley, soon left the New Party and joined the Communist Party once Mosley's fascist leanings became apparent.¹⁰⁵ In any case, at this time, inspired by Barnes, Strachey appeared a religious man at heart, identifying with the Bishop's "definition of the highest type of religion as a harmony between mysticism, reason, and ethical principles." He continued with elation that Barnes' lecture, which "could not have been made by a leader in any church in the world but our own," had moved him "very deeply." Strachey thus hoped the "law of the land" would continue to protect Barnes in keeping "the light of truth burning." Barnes had even aroused Strachey's "old desire to support the Established Church, in which I confess I had lately been weakening in view of the Anglo-Catholic arrogance and superstitions."¹⁰⁶ This letter in particular would no doubt have pleased Barnes who, given the perceived rise of agnosticism in Britain, among other factors, had feared for the popularity of the Anglican Church. Interestingly though, as we subsequently discuss, it would be Barnes' wish for effective reform within the Church that led him into a state of self-restriction when approached by the birth control movement.

Barnes and Buckmaster's Proposal

After reports of his Galton Lecture had surfaced in the national press, there was no doubt that one of Barnes' main social concerns was the birth rate of the working class. As 1926 progressed, he received correspondence from a number of important figures in the birth control movement. It is worth emphasizing again two of the movement's underlying

¹⁰⁵ Stuart Macintyre, *John Strachey, 1901-1931: The Development of an English Marxist*, MA thesis, Monash University, 1972. For more on Strachey's position on fascism see: John St. Loe Strachey, *The Menace of Fascism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933).

¹⁰⁶ John St. Loe Strachey, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Galton Lecture,' (February 17, 1926), EWB 9/19/2.

motives. Firstly, as well as simply preventing unwanted pregnancies, birth control was often perceived by its proponents as a means to bring about the emancipation of women from the traditional role of housewife and mother. In this respect, the movement also neatly dovetailed with the long-running campaign for the full enfranchisement of women, which later gained legislative success with the 1928 Representation of the People Act.¹⁰⁷ A second motive of equal importance to many birth control enthusiasts was to lower the birth rate of the 'unfit' and further the eugenic cause. If Barnes had appeared to sympathise with the ideals of the movement in some of his lectures, then it was arguably through reference to this aspect. Even so, at this time Barnes wished not to cause any controversy within his profession by contradicting the official position of the Church. As he revealed to Mary Stocks in 1926, "I have tried to consider how far I could advance the cause of Eugenics without exciting such a violent opposition that I could no longer appear to be working from within the Church. I have therefore contented myself with pointing out the consequences of our present too large and notoriously unsatisfactory birth rate. But I have not gone further and explicitly associated myself with Birth Control Clinics."¹⁰⁸ Curiously, then, while Barnes would openly discuss radical issues such as the fecundity of the poor, the prevalence of mental deficiency and the benefits of sterilization, as he did during his Galton Lecture, he did not feel the title "birth control advocate" was appropriate for a recently ordained bishop.

During the months of March and April 1926, birth control enthusiasts were somewhat unified behind the parliamentary proposal of Lord Stanley Buckmaster (1861-

¹⁰⁷ If Britain encountered a political transformation during the 1920s, in many respects it was epitomized by the 1928 Representation of the People Act. Sixty-one years after political philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) had originally put forward his universal suffrage amendment in 1867, all women over 21 finally had the same voting rights as men. See: Martin Pugh, *We Danced all Night: A Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009); and Hattersley, *Borrowed Time*.

¹⁰⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Stocks RE: Birth Control Clinic,' (7 May 1926), EWB 9/20/10.

1934). Buckmaster was a leading politician who had served as Lord Chancellor (1915-1916) to former Liberal Prime Minister H.H. Asquith (1852-1928). The proposal, which Buckmaster was to put forward on behalf of the National Union for Equal Citizenship (NUEC) in the House of Lords, read thus: "To ask His Majesty's Government if they will withdraw all instructions given to, or conditions imposed on Welfare Committees for the purpose of causing such Committees to withhold from married women in their district information when sought by such women as to the best means of limiting their families."¹⁰⁹

Barnes received several letters urging him to publicly support the proposal, the authors of which included: prominent feminist and Parliamentary Secretary of the NUEC, Eva Hubback (1886-1949), the philosopher Bertrand Russell and Margaret Spring Rice, who had contacted him the previous year asking for support for the movement. In March 1926, representing the NUEC, Hubback, who was both a eugenicist and key figure in the women's suffrage movement, requested that Barnes would be "one of the principle speakers" at a conference of "women's organisations" that was being organized in support of Buckmaster's resolution.¹¹⁰ As a means to gain wider support, Barnes would be part of a platform of speakers who had not in the past been "directly connected with any of the organisations working for Birth Control." It was vital to the goals of the movement to gain new supporters and, as Hubback wrote, should Barnes give a speech, it would be "of the very greatest assistance in attracting many of those who might otherwise be opposed to the policy we are advocating." Hubback believed that the NUEC had a distinct view on birth control: namely, that it was "a matter of the individual liberty of every married woman citizen to decide for

¹⁰⁹ Stanley Buckmaster quoted in: Eva M. Hubback, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Birth Control Conference,' (12 March, 1926), EWB 9/20/3. See also: 'Lords and Birth Control,' *The Times* (29 April 1926), 8.

¹¹⁰ While the NUEC stood primarily for universal suffrage, their participation in the birth control movement shows how interwoven the two causes were at the time.

herself when and if she wishes to have children.”¹¹¹ Barnes was dismissive in his reply, holding particular abhorration for the apparent political connotations: “I have always stood apart from your propaganda, and feel that it is sound policy to continue to set forth general principles and to leave the question of practical methods to Sociologists and medical men.”¹¹²

The next month, under the misguided assumption that “the Archbishop of Canterbury will probably not oppose this motion,” Bertrand Russell wrote to Barnes on behalf of his second wife, Dora. Dora Russell (1894-1986), who was arguably one of the most progressive women of her age and, as secretary of the Workers Birth Control Group (WBCG),¹¹³ devoted much time to fervent and often provocative attempts at eroding traditional gender roles and female subjugation. In order to push through Buckmaster’s motion, Russell asked Barnes to do two things: first, “if you could let us know of any Bishops in the House of Lords who, in your opinion, could be usefully approached, e.g. with literature on the subject and with the facts as to the present practice of the Ministry of Health;” and second, “to use your influence with any Bishops in the House of Lords who may be hesitating as to their attitude, but if so would you increase the gratitude which advocates of birth control already feel to you.”¹¹⁴

According to Barnes, however, the Bishops in the House of Lords were in a difficult position: even though it “met with more approval from American and Colonial Bishops than from the wiser members of the Episcopate,” they were “to a considerable extent bound by

¹¹¹ Hubback, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Birth Control Conference.’

¹¹² Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Hubback RE: Birth Control Conference,’ (15 March 1926), EWB 9/20/4. For more on the political nature of the birth control movement see, for example: Jane Lewis, *The Politics of Motherhood* (London: Croom-Helm, 1980).

¹¹³ The WBCG had been established on her behalf by Bertrand Russell in 1924 along with H.G. Wells and founder of Keynesian economics, John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946).

¹¹⁴ Bertrand Russell, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Buckmaster,’ (6 April 1926), EWB 9/20/5.

the report of Lambeth Conference of 1920. They also [had] to take account of the fact that the opinion of the majority of the clergy and of the more enthusiastic Church workers among the laity [was] strongly conservative.”¹¹⁵ Barnes believed the best Russell could hope for was abstention from the more sympathetic Bishops, particularly Frank Woods (1874-1932), the Bishop of Winchester (1923-1932), and Barnes’ close acquaintance and fellow eugenicist, Hensley Henson (1863-1947), the Bishop of Durham (1920-1939). While Barnes did talk with a “number of Bishops,” as requested, he found that, “on the whole, they are well informed, and I doubt whether the dissemination among them of further information is needed.”¹¹⁶

Despite her failure in 1925, on 16 April, Margaret Spring Rice again wrote to Barnes, this time also with the request that he “assist the cause as a whole by signing the enclosed letter,” which was to be sent to *The Times* and the *Nation* journal in support of Buckmaster’s motion.¹¹⁷ According to Rice, the motion did not stand for birth control per se but rather “claims the right of those women who wish the information and cannot pay for it, to receive it in the cleanest way at those centres to which they are accustomed to for information about their own health and that of their children.” Rice had already collected some illustrious signatures, including Inge, Bonham Carter, A.H. Gray as well as Keynes.¹¹⁸ Despite this, Barnes felt “it would be wiser for me not to take such action” as supporting Buckmaster’s resolution would “alienate Church opinion by taking up a position which a large majority of Church people would regard as extreme. The policy which I can more

¹¹⁵ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Russell RE: Buckmaster,’ (9 April 1926), EWB 9/20/6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Margaret Spring Rice, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Letter to *The Times*,’ (April 16, 1926), EWB 9/20/7.

¹¹⁸ Rice, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Letter to *The Times*.’

usefully adopt is so to lead opinion within the Church by pointing out social needs and changes that gradually a new attitude is created.”¹¹⁹

This general position is to an extent reflected in a series of lectures delivered from 1927-1929, which became known as the ‘gorilla sermons.’ As with his earlier sermons, here Barnes promoted an evolutionary theory of man’s genetic descent from ape-like creatures. According to Bowler, “It is in the light of Barnes’s determination to forge a Christianity acceptable to the modern world that we should interpret the ‘gorilla sermons’.”¹²⁰ These lectures were eventually published in 1933 as *Scientific Theory and Religion*. As we shall see, during the editing process, it is apparent that Barnes became influenced by Mendel’s theories on inheritance and ultimately rejected Lamarckism. For this reason, the implications of this text on his eugenic ideology are explored in detail in Chapter IV. Another radical move by Barnes was in 1927, when he publically opposed proposed revisions to the Book of Common Prayer. It had been suggested by some of his Anglican contemporaries that moderate Anglo-Catholicism should be incorporated into the life of the Church, implying, among other things, the practice of transubstantiation. As we have seen, Barnes frequently dismissed the ‘primitive’ nature of Catholicism as well as the apparently damaging effect it had on the spiritual progress of society. He believed that, disastrously, a revision to the Book of Common Prayer would bring “our Communion Office nearer to the Roman Mass and it will give colour to the belief that a particular form of words effects a miraculous change in the bread and wine over which they are said.”¹²¹ Considering the

¹¹⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Rice RE: Letter to *The Times*,’ (21 April, 1926), EWB 9/20/8.

¹²⁰ Bowler, *Reconciling Science and Religion*, 267.

¹²¹ EWB 6/6/29.

definitive nature in which he argued for the reform of the Church, one could describe Barnes' position on birth control as curiously hesitant.

If the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act is to be seen as evidence of limited parliamentary success for the eugenic cause, the same could be said to an extent for Lord Buckmaster's 1926 motion. Using overtly eugenic rhetoric, Buckmaster was successful in passing the resolution that intended to prevent doctors and medical officials refusing to disseminate birth control advice upon request. In Buckmaster's 1935 obituary in *The Eugenics Review*, Maurice Newfield was most appreciative of his "passionate sincerity and eloquence with which he espoused the cause of birth-control:" "It is no exaggeration to say that the mere fact of his advocacy, apart entirely from the reasons by which he supported it, was sufficient to win for birth-control the adherence of a great public which had learned to respect the combined idealism and reasoned judgment that were his most prominent characteristics."¹²² Further, regarding his 1926 motion, Newfield claimed that it more than "any other single factor" was to thank for "the present comparatively enlightened attitude of the Ministry of Health in this matter. His concluding words on that occasion form one of the most moving appeals for a wider knowledge of birth-control that have ever been made."¹²³

Notably, then, as *The Times* reported, Buckmaster made his case "not merely in the interests of justice, but in the interests of the race."¹²⁴ In defence of the proposal he reasoned with his contemporaries that regrettably the "better and more thoughtful people were limiting their children," while the "sickly, the diseased, and the underfed were

¹²² Maurice Newfield, 'Notes of the Quarter,' *The Eugenics Review* 26, 4 (January 1935), 257.

¹²³ Newfield, 'Notes of the Quarter,' 257.

¹²⁴ 'Lords and Birth Control,' *The Times* (29 April 1926), 8.

reproducing at a rate nearly double that of anyone else.” As a result, society now had “a decreasing scale of intelligence,” which was the “exact inverse ratio to this standard of birth-rate.” The dissemination of birth control was thus in part required to prevent the intelligence of the nation deteriorating any further. Dismissing the idea that a reduction in the national birth-rate would see Britain descend in “the scale of nations,” Buckmaster contended that “[i]t was not numbers that would win the next war but brains.” *The Times* reported his impassioned conclusion thus:

On behalf of the women upon whose bare backs felt the untempored lash of the primeval curse declaring that in sorrow they should bring forth children, and to whom motherhood had turned into nothing but decaying wood; on behalf of the children who were thrust into this world unwanted, unwelcomed, uncherished, and unsustained, children who did not bring trailing behind them clouds of glory but the taint of inherited disease, and over whose heads there was ever hanging the horror of inherited madness, and also on behalf of the future of the race, he begged their Lordships most earnestly to support his motion.¹²⁵

Responses to the proposal revealed that general opinion on the matter in the House was divided fairly equally. Those opposed to the motion included arguably one of the most authoritative men in politics at the time, Lord of the Privy Seal, James Gascoyne-Cecil (1861-1947), the Marquess of Salisbury. With reference to the country’s “maternity and child welfare system,” Gascoyne-Cecil argued that passing the motion would “strike a vital blow

¹²⁵ ‘Lords and Birth Control,’ 8.

at a work of service which was doing infinite good to the poorest classes of the community” with many volunteers whom opposed birth-control likely to disengage entirely. Contrary to Russell’s assumption, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson (1848-1930), repeated the stance taken in 1920 at Lambeth: that “The Church of England [...] regarded with grave concern any increase in the habit of contraception.” In a similar vein, Viscount FitzAlan of Derwent, Edmund FitzAlan-Howard (1855-1947) went as far as saying that if passed the motion would no doubt “let the country down” as “the effect of the message [...] would in the minds of many people be absolutely contrary to the moral and natural law.”¹²⁶

Nevertheless, a number of influential figures came to the defence of Buckmaster. There was no reference to eugenics or ‘race’ in the discussion, which to some extent speaks of the contemporary acceptance of – or at least indifference to – eugenic rhetoric. This contrasts heavily, for instance, with the way in which such language has been discussed since 1945. Lord Balfour of Burleigh (1883-1967), for instance, said that, contrary to Davidson’s comments, “religious people,” were in fact “not all on one side on this question” and even so had no right to “impose their views on women who were helpless simply because of their poverty” and therefore he “would support the motion if it were pressed to a division.” Additional backing came from Earl de la Warr, William Herbrand Sackville (1900-1976), who was a key supporter of Ramsay MacDonald; the liberal politician and Baron Rathcreedan, Cecil Norton (1850-1930); Lord Wrenbury (1890-1940), who was the son of the influential judge Henry Buckley (1845-1935); and the aforementioned Bertrand Russell, who was the Third Earl Russell. Arguments in support of the motion included the idea that just as “men in the industrial world were no longer content to be mere wage-slaves, so

¹²⁶ ‘Lords and Birth Control,’ 8.

women were no longer content to be mere machines for the production of children.” Russell seemed to embody the general feeling among supporters, as *The Times* reported: “[T]he time was surely past when a woman could be regarded as a serf either to her husband or the State. Now that women had the vote their right to liberty would perhaps be more insisted upon than it had been.” With birth control having somewhat shed its taboo status in society, Buckmaster’s motion “in the interests of the race” was passed by 57 votes to 44.¹²⁷ The success of the motion in the House of Lords may also suggest that the largely middle-class concerns of the Eugenics Society with regards to the poor were also shared by influential members of the aristocracy.

It is perhaps overly simplistic though to assume that just as birth control was gradually becoming more accepted in Britain, so were the main tenets of the eugenics movement. The Arch Deacon of Aston, Harold Richards (1869-1952), an opponent of both movements, reasoned, the arguments of the eugenicists “do not greatly arouse my fears or my enthusiasm. I am not belittling them, but if they are felt by the Eugenicist to be of serious importance it is remarkable that more of us are not conscious of any effort on their part as a Society to enlist the co-operation of other qualified & reasonable bodies to try & deal with a matter which they view with such gravity.”¹²⁸ Though like Stopes a number of birth control’s more prominent proponents were not shy with their eugenic sympathies, for many, supporters or opponents, it seemed to depend more on either one’s interpretation of liberty or Christianity. Either way, while Barnes had not supported Buckmaster’s motion, during this period he would take a stance against those actively opposing birth control. In this respect, Marie Stopes told Barnes that she considered him a “magnificent fighter” and

¹²⁷ ‘Lords and Birth Control,’ 8.

¹²⁸ Harold Richards, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Birth Control Clinic,’ (16 May 1927), EWB 9/20/16.

hoped he would not let anyone “bully him into silence on this tremendously important subject.”¹²⁹ To some extent, it seems the Bishop followed her advice.

In 1927, several members of the Diocese had proposed to send a letter against the establishment of a birth control clinic in Birmingham to the Mayor, Alfred Henry James. These included Harold Richards, the Archdeacon of Birmingham, Charles Hopton, Canon F.G. Belton and Canon G.N.H. Tredennick. The overall argument was that the clinic would be “contrary to the social and moral interests of the City.”¹³⁰ Barnes suggested Hopton consider whether this was a wise choice: “Opposition to such a clinic is difficult to justify in the light of the exhortation at the Anglican marriage service. Eugenists, with whom I am closely associated by reason of my membership of the Eugenics Society, continually lament the fact that at the present time ignorance increases the multiplication under undesirable conditions of the poorest and sometimes of the worse stocks.”¹³¹ At this stage, it seemed the religious opposition was a minority position. As Hopton replied, though it was “quite true that those who think with me intend to protest,” he conceded that “public utterances have almost entirely been made by those in favour of the clinic.”¹³² This view was reflected when the opposition failed and Birmingham’s first birth control clinic was established.

Regarding birth control and the Church, Barnes had confessed to K.M. Walker in 1927 “I do not think that the pronouncement of the Lambeth Conference of 1920 [...] can be considered as the final judgement of the Anglican Communion.”¹³³ In this instance, he would soon be proven correct. There would be some tentative progress within the Church

¹²⁹ Marie Stopes, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Birth Control,’ (14 May 1927), EWB 9/20/14.

¹³⁰ Richards, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Birth Control Clinic.’

¹³¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Letter to Hopton RE: Birth Control Clinic,’ (12 May 1927), EWB 9/20/12.

¹³² Charles Hopton, ‘Reply to Barnes RE: Birth Control Clinic,’ (14 May 1927), EWB 9/20/15.

¹³³ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Letter to Walker RE: Birth Control,’ (13 May 1927), EWB 9/20/13.

that allowed Barnes to publically espouse his sympathy for the practice. In 1928, a new forward-thinking Archbishop of Canterbury was ordained in Cosmo Lang (1864-1945). Although early in his career Lang had held a broadly Anglo-Catholic stance, he arguably proved to be the most progressive Archbishop yet. At Barnes' first Lambeth Conference in 1930, Lang presided over the Church's official approval of the use of contraception for responsible married couples.¹³⁴

Biological Determinism Questioned

If not earlier, the 1920s certainly witnessed negative eugenics become a subject of national debate. However, by the end of the decade the determinist assumptions on which it was based had been somewhat undermined. The popularity of eugenics continued into the 1930s; but strict biological determinism was fast proving to be an overly simplistic viewpoint, something reflected in the 1927 Mental Deficiency Act. The Eugenics Society had campaigned to extend the legislation to allow for the prevention of marriage in overtly dysgenic cases. Hodson even asked Barnes to support this proposal, which was concerned about the "absence of any legislative safe-guards preventing such marriages" and dealt with the "misery resulting from this marked gap in the nation's scheme for the protection of its children."¹³⁵ Here there was no doubt as to Barnes' allegiances on the matter: "As to the undesirability of the marriage of mental defectives there can be no two options. Furthermore, I feel strongly that the clergy ought not to be in a position in which they must

¹³⁴ Adrian Thatcher, *Marriage after Modernity* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 178-9. This episode, significant to Barnes in the eugenic sense, is discussed further in Chapter IV.

¹³⁵ Cora S. Hodson, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Mental Deficiency Act,' (22 January 1927), EWB 9/19/7.

solemnize marriages which no Eugenist could defend.”¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the 1927 Mental Deficiency Act proved to be more in line with the ideals of organisations such as the CAMW than the Eugenics Society. Thus, in addition to the segregation of severe cases, the revised Act emphasized the need for care outside of the institutions, redefining “mental deficiency” to include environmental influences. The term would now refer to “a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind existing before the age of 18 years whether arising from inherent causes or induced by diseases or injury.”¹³⁷

However, this is not to say that the convictions of eugenicists in Britain, from which Barnes would draw great strength, became any less resolute. Its proponents simultaneously perceived eugenics as the single great hope for the future as well as the next stage in human evolution. As Leonard Darwin put it in 1929, on the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Eugenics Society: “The nation which first sets out on this path of eugenic reform will not only have added a page to its history of which its nationals ought for ever to be proud, but will have conferred an incalculable benefit on all mankind.”¹³⁸ Meanwhile, at this stage, Barnes appears to have continued his mediatory role between the modernist creed of eugenics and traditional Christianity. Thus in 1929, emphasizing public neutrality, he replied to a certain W.A. Potts, who had questioned Barnes’ position on sterilization:¹³⁹ “I do not know why both the ‘Birmingham Post’ and apparently yourself thought that in my speech I

¹³⁶ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Hodson RE: Mental Deficiency Act,’ (26 January 1927), EWB 9/19/9.

¹³⁷ Quoted in: ‘Legislation & Policies: History of Legislation on Disability,’ *Rescare* [www.rescare.org.uk/history-of-legislation-on-disability/, accessed on 15 January 2014]. For more information on the conceptual development of the term, ‘mental deficiency’ see: Thompson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*; or alternatively: Anne Digby and David Wright, *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency: Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹³⁸ Leonard Darwin, ‘The Society’s Coming of Age: The Growth of the Eugenic Movement,’ *The Eugenics Review* 21, 1 (April 1929), 20.

¹³⁹ W.A. Potts, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Sterilization,’ (28 November, 1929), EWB 9/19/13. Potts had co-authored with George E. Shuttleworth, *Mentally Deficient Children: Their Teaching and Training* (New York: Blakiston, 1916). This was largely in line with the reformist proposals of the CAMW.

had advocated the sterilisation of mental defectives as a satisfactory practical policy. [...] I said that arguments for and against sterilisation could not be conclusive until we had more accurate knowledge than was at present available.”¹⁴⁰ This was referring to a public debate between himself and MacBride. At the 1929 conference of the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement, the two friends had engaged in what *The Manchester Guardian* called an “extremely interesting discussion on the sterilization of mental defectives and the control of population.”¹⁴¹ MacBride, at this time Professor of Zoology at the Imperial College of Science, avowed that if the well-documented present trends in population continued then the “thrifty” would soon be replaced by the “dole-fed thriftless.” Considering that famine, disease, and infanticide had been largely conquered in Britain, birth control and sterilization were now the only means left for “keeping down the unfit.” In addition, MacBride put to Barnes that it was essential “to the future of civilization” that reconciliation was made between science and the Church. MacBride concluded that for this to occur the teaching of the Church must not “defy biological facts.”¹⁴²

Barnes was in agreement regarding the Church, with its modernization having been one of his main goals throughout the 1920s. He also addressed the issue of the unfit with no less alarm than MacBride. However, he did have some reservations as to whether the introduction of sterilization in Britain was wise at this stage. Before any decisive action could be taken, Barnes felt that the following questions, facilitated by “millions of pounds” of government funding, must be answered:

¹⁴⁰ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Mrs Potts RE: Sterilization,’ (29 November, 1929), EWB 9/19/14.

¹⁴¹ MacBride quoted in: ‘The Church and Birth Control: A Professor’s Challenge,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (28 November 1929), 11.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

1. Is feeble-mindedness a single disorder or does it imply a number of different types of defects?
2. Can these types be discriminated?
3. Have they characteristic signs?
4. Is feeble-mindedness due to weakening of the germ plasm?¹⁴³

Until then “questions affecting the use of sterilisation could not be regarded as soundly based.” In terms of his own understanding of the matter, Barnes too admitted that currently a definitive understanding of the nature of heredity was something he “did not possess.”¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, in the 1930s, the Bishop looked to address this shortcoming, with extensive reading of the latest secondary literature on the subject as well as his own attempt to define the feeble-minded. As Chapter III details, it is evident in several of Barnes’ lectures and publications at this time that he was making a concerted attempt to expand his scientific understanding of heredity. This resulted in increasing references to Mendelian inheritance – and a subsequent move away from theories connected to Lamarckism – in order to evidence his newly adopted eugenic worldview and arrive upon a decisive conclusion on the validity of sterilization. Furthermore, Barnes also wished to keep his theories of racial progress in line with Modernist Christianity. As we shall see, one of his more successful attempts was the 1930 paper, ‘God and the Gene.’

The 1930 Lambeth Conference saw the Church hesitantly accept the need for birth control, while Barnes became more established as one of the leading members of the

¹⁴³ Barnes quoted in, ‘The Church and Birth Control.’

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Anglican community. To an extent, this gave him the peace of mind he needed to more publicly express his biological convictions. However, soon after the Lambeth resolutions were declared, Pope Pius XI (1857-1939) replied with a typically reactionary affirmation, rejecting birth control on behalf of the Catholic Church. This prompted a number of eugenic activities, including a debate that spanned two years in the pages of *The Eugenics Review*, to assess the compatibility of eugenics and religion. At the same time, Laurence Brock was assembling a Committee that hoped to obtain scientific evidence and legislative backing for sterilization. The campaign would face stiff opposition from members of the scientific community, the labour movement and, of course, much of the religious community.

CHAPTER III:

‘GOD AND THE GENE’ PART I, c.1930-1932

In the Divine scheme of things we shall be judged not by absolute standards but according to our genes.¹

- EWB, 1930.

In much of the western world, the early 1930s were characterized by the Great Depression. At the time, Britain had yet to recover from the effects of the First World War. Ohanian has noted that economic output fell by 25% between 1918 and 1921 and did not recover until after the depression, as Britain prepared itself for another European war.² The nation had already suffered from a significant level of unemployment in the 1920s, and following the stock market crash the economic divide – particularly between the professional and working classes – was greatly increased.³ The latter group, in particular, was faced with the unenviable task of raising families in increasingly desperate economic circumstances.

The economic developments of the period also coloured the demographic concerns already expressed by the eugenics movement.⁴ Indeed, one of the more extreme eugenic solutions to the perceived societal decline was Laurence Brock’s accelerated legislative push for the sterilization of mental defectives in 1934. The years 1930-1932 saw much attention

¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Heredity and Predestination,’ (7 November 1930), EWB 12/1/456.

² See: Harold L. Cole and Lee E. Ohanian, ‘The Great U.K. Depression a Puzzle and a Possible Resolution,’ in Timothy J. Kehoe and Edward C. Prescott eds., *Great Depressions of the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2007), 19-44..

³ Ibid.

⁴ See: Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 193-225.

drawn to the eugenics movement and to the technique of sterilization. In 1931, for instance, the BBC even hosted a 1931 series titled, 'What I Would Do with the World.'⁵ During this several prominent figures – including the Chairman of the Medical Research Council, Vincent D'Abernon (1857-1941), Conservative MP, L.S. Amery (1873-1955) and the Director of the Bank of England, Basil Blackett (1882-1935), the latter also head of the British Social Hygiene Council – articulated their own independent theories on how eugenics should play a key role in social progress.⁶

The impact of the Great Depression was also felt by middle class families. For many eugenicists, this appeared to further aid the seemingly widespread adoption of family limitation practices, among this demographic. Accordingly, texts such as R.A. Freeman's 'Segregation of the Fit: A Plea for Positive Eugenics' and Fisher's 'Family Allowances: In the Contemporary Economic Situation,' recommended that financial aid should be provided to enable small – but eugenically desirable – families to grow while maintaining their social standing.⁷ Fisher also advanced this idea at the 1931 'Conference on Eugenics,' convened by the Bishop of Winchester, and to which Barnes was one of the key contributors.

At this time, Barnes' general rhetoric and activities were becoming increasingly radical. Before attending the Winchester conference, at the 1930 Lambeth Conference Barnes called for an increased focus on the problem of mental deficiency. Barnes also delivered several sermons in which he argued for the biological improvement of society,

⁵ This was following the success of a previous series titled, 'If I were a Dictator.'

⁶ Eldon Moore, 'Notes of the Quarter,' *The Eugenics Review* 23, 4 (January 1932), 295.

⁷ See: Richard A. Freeman, 'Segregation of the Fit: A Plea For Positive Eugenics,' *The Eugenics Review* 23, 3 (October 1931), 207-213; and Ronald A. Fisher, 'Family Allowances: In the Contemporary Economic Situation,' *The Eugenics Review* 24, 2 (July 1932), 97-105.

including 'Heredity and Predestination' (1930) and 'At the Heart of the Universe: Mechanism or Mind?' (1932).

The early 1930s also witnessed something of a religious renaissance within eugenic circles. Issues related to eugenics were discussed, for instance, at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, which was most notable for its tentative approval of birth control. In 1933, a debate began in *The Eugenics Review*, initially as a riposte to some of the disparaging comments made by Pope Pius XI attacking these conclusions, which evolved into a discussion of the compatibility of eugenics and religion.

The 1930 Lambeth Conference

By 1930, the birth control movement had essentially won over popular opinion on the use of contraception. With this in mind, the Church of England's official approval of the practice at Lambeth was, in some respects, something of a formality. Even so, the 1930 Lambeth Conference – in which the Anglican Church addressed a number of broad social issues – at the very least provides an interesting insight into the contemporary religious climate. As one of the attending bishops revealed, rather than a merely insular affair within the Church concerning the particulars of religious doctrine and practice, the Conference looked to cover a wide range of "corporate and personal problems of marriage and of sex, of race and of government, of education, of peace and of war."⁸ Barnes' own contributions – both to the general discussion and to the resolutions themselves – reveals much with regard to his

⁸ Frederic Warman, 'Lambeth 1930: Conference of 300 Bishops,' *The Manchester Guardian* (4 July 1930), 11.

position on questions of birth control, sterilization and abortion. Between 1930 and 1935, he expanded on some of these issues in lectures, sermons and publications.

Barnes began the 1930s much as he did the 1920s; that is, as Greta Jones has noted, carrying his “scientific spirit in theology as far as ecclesiastical authority would allow.”⁹ Taking into consideration the controversial reputation that Barnes had rather justifiably earned, his biographer described the significance of the Conference thus:

It reaffirmed the wish for Christian reunion, with particular reference to the South Indian scheme. It declared that war was incompatible with Christ’s teaching and no war should be countenanced unless the dispute had first been submitted to arbitration. It gave guarded approval to contraception, in the only resolution where the Bishops found it necessary to quote the majority, 193 votes to 67, by which it had been passed.¹⁰

Prior to the convening of the conference, the Bishop of Manchester, Frederic Warman (1872-1953), provided a useful impression for *The Manchester Guardian* of what the Conference represented. During the first Lambeth Conference (1867), so Warman began, many bishops were fearful that the conclusions drawn would encroach on the “freedom of the dioceses and provinces of the Anglican Communion.”¹¹ Looking to dispel any lingering fears of this nature, Warman avowed that in fact the Lambeth Conferences were not part of the official machinery of the Church but rather played more of a, as he put it, “consultative

⁹ Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, 47.

¹⁰ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 305.

¹¹ Warman, ‘Lambeth 1930: Conference of 300 Bishops,’ 11.

and advisory” role for Church officials and laymen alike. That considered, Warman argued that rather than “the Vatican of Anglicanism,” Lambeth should be considered “the centre of our freedom.”¹²

Archbishop Lang’s supplementary encyclical letter provided a compelling argument – not dissimilar to some of Barnes’ previous rhetoric – on the need for a religious revival of society. With reference to the Russian Revolution, Lang recognized that “The ten years since we last met have seen the development of one vast political and social experiment which is, at least professedly, rooted in the denial of God’s existence.”¹³ In the face of such widespread degenerating morality, Lang believed that “there [was] much in the scientific and philosophical thinking of our time which provides a climate more favourable to faith in God than has existed for generations. New interpretations of the cosmic process are now before us which are congruous with Christian theism.”¹⁴

According to George Bell (1883-1958), then Bishop of Chichester and secretary of the Lambeth Conference, the “conditions of modern life” had also called for “a fresh statement from the Church on the subject of sex.”¹⁵ This alluded to the Conference’s much referenced ‘Resolution 15,’ which *The Eugenics Review* later referred to as the Church’s “qualified approval of birth control.”¹⁶ Notwithstanding the unanimity of the vote, in which 75 of the attendees voted in favour, an interesting and divisive debate precluded the passing of Resolution 15. Theresa Notare has argued that the most pervasive fear of those at the Conference who were opposed to birth control was based not on Christian scripture or

¹² Warman, ‘Lambeth 1930: Conference of 300 Bishops,’ 11.

¹³ ‘Lambeth Conference Decisions: Encyclical Letter’s Call to Alienated Youth,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (15 August 1930), 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ ‘Epoch-Making Decision: Bishop of Chichester Broadcasts,’ *The Observer* (16 August 1930), 18.

¹⁶ Eldon Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 22, 3 (October 1930), 168.

references to the will of God but rather that the widespread use of birth control would encourage promiscuous behaviour. In short, “If abused within marriage, contraception was expected to open the way to licence and gross indulgence.”¹⁷ On the other hand, some believed the resolution did not go far enough, with eugenic concerns clearly palpable. Although Reverend Fiske, for instance, supported the resolution, he argued that the better educated would use birth control far more effectively than would those living in poorer communities. For Fiske, this would naturally lead to “the disappearance of cultured families.”¹⁸ Likewise, the seasoned eugenicist Dean Inge added: “In my country the learned professionals have the lowest birth rate; the slum dwellers and especially the feeble-minded, have the highest. [...] This ruinous process is world-wide, and may herald the progressive decline of the white race, or at any rate the Nordics.”¹⁹

Biological concerns aside, it seems that the majority at Lambeth aligned themselves with the Bishop of Armidale, Australia, J.S. Moyes’ (1884-1972) pragmatic acceptance: “When you have tried to find your way through your difficulties under the guidance of God, we agree that you should use, under the guidance of God, the best methods you can find.”²⁰ The “epoch-making,”²¹ ‘Resolution 15’ read thus: “[W]here there is such a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for

¹⁷ Theresa Notare, *‘A Revolution in Christian Morals’: Lambeth 1930 – Resolution Number 15* (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 2011), 488.

¹⁸ ‘Rev. Fiske’ quoted in: *Ibid.*

¹⁹ William R. Inge quoted in: *Ibid.* With the Eugenics Society looking to expand its influence, racially motivated pronouncements such as this could only have embarrassed the Eugenics Society’s younger members. See for instance: Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, 47.

²⁰ John S. Moyes quoted in: *Ibid.*, 454.

²¹ As it was described in *The Observer*, see: ‘Epoch-Making Decision,’ 18.

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.”²²

Following the Conference, Bell further explained that there were some circumstances in which parenthood would be immoral and in opposition to, as he put it, “the true interests” of the family itself. For instance, parenthood was not desirable if a birth would either involve “a grave danger to the life of the mother, inflict upon the child to be born a life of suffering, or where the mother would be prematurely exhausted.”²³ This notion related – though perhaps not intentionally – to the idea that if one were to allow a mentally defective child to be brought into the world, one would in turn have allowed a life of suffering to occur. Barnes would endorse such a philosophy in many of his later statements. Indeed, in 1934 Barnes expanded on the moral arguments for eugenic birth control thus:

[F]eeble-mindedness and congenital diseases of speech and sight are evils. Surely, it is a religious duty to prevent such evils from being handed on to future generations. If, in the troubled years that lie ahead, England is to save herself by her exertions, and the world by her example, she must be racially sound. We cannot indefinitely carry the burden of a social-problem class, riddled with mental defect and comprising one-tenth of the community.²⁴

²² ‘Resolution 15: Marriage and Sex,’ *The Lambeth Conference, 1930*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1930, accessed on 15 January 2014].

²³ ‘Epoch-Making Decision,’ 18.

²⁴ Ernest W. Barnes quoted in: Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 299.

However, judging by the general proceedings at Lambeth, one should consider this a minority opinion. Even after Resolution 15 had been passed, some participants were not without reservations regarding contraceptive practice. Indeed, some ground was later conceded to the significant minority that believed Resolution 15 had gone too far. The bishops felt it necessary to pass the subsequent 'Resolution 18' as follows: "Sexual intercourse between persons who are not legally married is a grievous sin. The use of contraceptives does not remove the sin."²⁵

Significantly, then, the Church's limited acceptance of birth control seems more to have represented a means to protect the sanctity of marriage and celebrate its perceived divine purpose of responsible procreation. Interestingly, this seems to have been the case when Barnes, looking to leave his stamp on the proceedings, pointed out to his fellow bishops that the Church had not yet condemned abortion and thus should extend Resolution 15 to include a stance wholly opposed to the practice. Notably, abortion was not made legal in Britain until the 1967 Abortion Act.²⁶ During the inter-war period, abortion was illegal and was unsafe for the majority, lacking as it was any of the social and clinical safeguards available today. For Barnes, its abolition was imperative, considering that – especially in larger industrial areas – there was a "lax state of public opinion on the matter."²⁷ This was therefore not such a curious position for Barnes to take despite that he, as much as anyone at the conference, wished to prevent the spread of dysgenic conditions associated specifically with those inhabiting large industrial areas. Barnes' suggestion was accepted as 'Resolution 16,' in which the Conference "further record[ed] its abhorrence of

²⁵ 'Resolution 18: Marriage and Sex,' *The Lambeth Conference, 1930*.

²⁶ See: Angela Kennedy, 'Abortion Legalised in Britain,' *History Today* 49, 8 (1999), [<http://m.historytoday.com/angela-kennedy/abortion-legalised-britain>, accessed on 11 March 2014].

²⁷ Barnes quoted in: Notare, 'A Revolution in Christian Morals,' 454.

the sinful practice of abortion.”²⁸ Barnes reiterated this stance in 1932 when considering the position of the pro-abortion judge, Henry McCardie (1869-1933). McCardie had supported the legalisation of abortion as early as 1931, arguing that “I cannot think it right that a woman should be forced to bear a child against her will.”²⁹ However, Barnes, when asked his opinion by prominent public safety author, Rupert L. Humphris, replied that “from the moment of conception the human foetus is living and surely it cannot be denied that is human. Destruction of what, with normal development, would be a human individual.”³⁰ It was not until 1938 that Barnes, along with the Modern Churchman’s Union, formed an interdepartmental committee as a diplomatic means by which to reassess their position.³¹ By the late 1930s, abortion had become a prominent social issue, which – like birth control before it – had demographic implications for the eugenics movement. As we shall see, many eugenicists were concerned at this time with what has been labelled the ‘Population Scare.’³²

A further contribution from Barnes at Lambeth was the proposal of a resolution to address the prevalence of mental deficiency in society. During the late 1920s, as we have seen, Barnes had given increasing consideration to the benefits of negative eugenics. His suggested resolution at Lambeth was no doubt a product of this mind-set:

[T]he children who carry on the race should come from sound stocks. [...] [W]e need accurate knowledge of the way in which different types of mental defect are

²⁸ ‘Resolution 16: Marriage and Sex,’ *The Lambeth Conference, 1930*.

²⁹ Quoted in: Malcom Potts, *Abortion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 286.

³⁰ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Humphris RE: Abortion,’ (12 January 1932), EWB 9/22/2.

³¹ See: Chapter V.

³² See: Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 193-225.

transmitted by inheritance. [...] [R]esearch into this question should be encouraged by Government aid in order that practical means may be found for the diminution of those groups of families showing mental weakness and moral instability, [...] which are becoming an increasing burden in Great Britain and elsewhere.³³

In defence of his resolution, Barnes attempted to disseminate his own scientific knowledge among the clergy.³⁴ In order to achieve this, at Lambeth Barnes launched into a technical explanation of heredity, and in the process recommended Ruggles Gates' aforementioned *Heredity in Man* (1929).³⁵ On recollecting his speech, Barnes' fellow eugenicist and Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson (1863-1947), referred to him as "the very model of a 'heresiarch'," providing the following sketch:

Tall, pallid with much study, with stooping shoulders, and a voice at once challenging and melancholy, he commands attention as well by his manner as by his opinions, which are almost insolently oppugnant to the general mind. He is a good man, but clearly a fanatic, and in a more disciplined age, could not possibly have avoided the stake.³⁶

Curiously, early in the proceedings Henson had wasted no time in proposing that "The ethics of sterilization ought to be frankly faced by such a conference as this."³⁷ Henson has been

³³ Quoted in: Notare, *'A Revolution in Christian Morals,'* 434.

³⁴ Something he had previously expressed in his 1926 Galton Lecture and 1929 debate with MacBride.

³⁵ Notare, *'A Revolution in Christian Morals,'* 434. See also: Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 291.

³⁶ Hensley H. Henson, *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life, 2: 1920–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943), 272.

³⁷ Hensley H. Henson quoted in: Notare, *'A Revolution in Christian Morals,'* 339.

described both as “an advocate of sterilization” and famous for his conservative defence of the “established order.”³⁸ In line with Barnes’ statements on mental defect, then, he was found asking his contemporaries, “Why should the highest physical power, the power of reproducing life, lie outside responsible control?” Moreover, as “responsible Christian leaders,” the Lambeth attendees must recognize that there was “no remedy for this most formidable factor of the lowering of social, moral and intellectual types.” It was time for the Church to address “the unimpeded marriage of the sub-normal criminal classes,” whose children would be born with “the multitude to do evil.”³⁹ Later, seeking clarification on the subject, the Bishop of Pretoria, South Africa, Neville Talbot (1879-1943), asked Barnes whether his suggested resolution implied that the bishops would in turn be advocating sterilization. Barnes conceded that it did not, due predominantly to the “lack of scientific evidence.”⁴⁰ Although eight other bishops supported Barnes’ eugenic resolution, it was ultimately rejected. Nevertheless, Barnes went on to read a number of texts on the matter, most notably, as we shall see, R.A. Fisher’s 1930 *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*.

A final point of interest on the 1930 Lambeth Conference concerns its conclusions on race. As Lang pointed out after the conference: “There still [survived] among Christians the peculiar form of pride known as race superiority. Anglo-Saxons, perhaps, [were] especially liable to this infection.”⁴¹ To an extent, this reflected the state of race relations in some of the countries represented at the Conference, such as South Africa, America and India.⁴² Lang’s apparent wish for racial inclusivity within the Church was underlined by ‘Resolution

³⁸ Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, 47.

³⁹ Henson quoted in: Notare, ‘*A Revolution in Christian Morals*,’ 339.

⁴⁰ Barnes quoted in: *Ibid*, 435.

⁴¹ ‘Lambeth Conference Decisions,’ *The Manchester Guardian*, 6.

⁴² The latter referring to the hope for Church Unity in what was still a vital component of the British Empire.

22,' which urged that "where, owing to diversity of language or custom, Christians of different races normally worship apart, special occasions should be sought for united services and corporate communion in order to witness to the unity of the Body of Christ. The Conference would remind all Christian people that the ministrations of the clergy should never be rejected on grounds of colour or race."⁴³ Philanthropic in intent, 'Resolution 23' referred to "liquor traffic among natives of Africa," and advised for "a complete avoidance of any exploitation of the weaker races."⁴⁴ In a similar vein, the Conference stipulated 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 the constant aim of the government."⁴⁵ Finally, while "the guiding principle of racial relations should [have been] interdependence and not competition," the Conference was clear that "this interdependence [did] not of itself involve intermarriage."⁴⁶

One could be led to conclude that within the Church Barnes was not entirely alone in some of his racial convictions. Though Lang may have wished to eradicate the evident "infection" of "race superiority," the language and concepts employed in the conference's official pronouncements, particularly those recognizing the existence of supposedly weaker races, could only have facilitated the spread of such ideas. Notably, in the decade since the previous conference, the way in which the Church, in this most broad sense, discussed 'race' seems to have changed entirely. As Chapter I explored, the 1920 Conference framed its dismissal of birth control by portraying it as a demographic threat to the *race*, used then as a general term referring to the national population. However, by 1930 this understanding

⁴³ 'Resolution 22: Race,' *The Lambeth Conference, 1930*.

⁴⁴ 'Resolution 23: Race,' *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ 'Resolution 21: Race,' *Ibid*.

⁴⁶ 'Resolution 23,' *Ibid*.

seems to have vanished and a biologically determinist hierarchy of stronger and weaker *races* had appeared in its place. In this respect, the proceedings of the Lambeth meetings provide a microcosm of wider debates taking place in Britain at the time, with the eugenics movement also vacillating between these two ill-defined delineations. In terms of a specific definition of race, then, this supports the notion that, during the inter-war period, a level of unity, either within the Church or wider society, did not exist.

The Eugenics Society was beginning to take an increasing interest in religion during these years. Soon after Lambeth, C.S. Hodson requested that Barnes take part in a debate convened by the Society on the subject of 'Eugenics and Religion.'⁴⁷ Hodson vented to Barnes that the Society was "still sorely hampered in getting the support we ought to have among Church people by a tiresome feeling that the Church frowns on eugenics."⁴⁸ Alas, the Bishop was unable to attend: in the "scanty intervals," as he put it, which he could snatch between his various ecclesiastical duties, Barnes was attempting to complete *Scientific Theory and Religion*, eventually published in 1933 and detailed in 'Part II.'⁴⁹ Barnes however confidently asserted that Hodson was mistaken in believing that the Church frowned upon eugenics:

At the Lambeth Conference I made a number of attempts to get a fuller recognition and, in particular, a pronouncement with regard to mental defect. I had much sympathy from individuals; but a prevailing feeling of ignorance and consequent

⁴⁷ This would eventually take place in 1933. See: 'Part II.'

⁴⁸ Cora S. Hodson, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Eugenics and Religion,' (28 August 1930), EWB 9/9/17.

⁴⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Hodson RE: Eugenics and Religion,' (September 12 1930), EWB 9/19/18.

insecurity was too strong. If the Eugenics Society continues to teach for another ten years, it will get all the backing it needs.⁵⁰

This theory would be tested after 1930 as many attempted to prove or disprove the idea that Christianity had a significant role to play in the eugenic discourse.

If Barnes' eugenic philosophy during the late 1920s was in part, characterized by his sympathy for 'chemical Lamarckism,' as discussed in Chapter II, then for the early 1930s it was his endorsement of Mendelian inheritance. His correspondence with Fisher during September and October 1930 proved especially influential here. In fact, he would later admit of Fisher that "for precision of statement and insight into biological problems it would be hard to find his equal."⁵¹ Fisher was best known for his work on evolutionary biology and is still held in high esteem by the scientific community. Richard Dawkins respectfully referred to him as "the greatest of Darwin's successors" due in large part to his 1930 *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*.⁵² Although much of the book concerned itself with the refinement of existing theories of natural selection, evolution and inheritance, the last four chapters put forward Fisher's more mainstream views on eugenics. Soon after its publication Fisher sent the book to his former university lecturer, Barnes, who he had been informed was "interested in birth rate from a eugenic as well as a religious standpoint."⁵³ In reply, Barnes revealed that having spent some three weeks "working hard" on it, he had found the concluding chapters relating to man "relatively easy," but "some of the earlier

⁵⁰ Barnes, 'Reply to Hodson RE: Eugenics and Religion.'

⁵¹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Donaldson RE: Divorce' (8 April 1932), EWB 9/17/31.

⁵² Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* (London: Basic Books, 1995).

⁵³ Ronald A. Fisher, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Eugenics and Birth Rate' (25 September 1930), EWB 9/19/19.

mathematical stuff most difficult.”⁵⁴ His former student explained that while he would be happy to discuss the technical side of his book, the mathematical difficulty was of little importance, particularly when considering the eugenic implications. Barnes was impressed by Fisher and revealed that he was “especially glad that experts are coming forward with regard to problems of human population.”⁵⁵ Fisher then proposed a programme of positive eugenics, which would encourage the clergy – whose “children regularly [stood] high on the average in intelligence tests [and] proportion of eminent men”⁵⁶ – to have bigger families by offering financial allowances. Subsequently, in 1931 Fisher and Barnes – along with Julian Huxley and Reginald Gates – attended the 1931 ‘Conference on Eugenics’ at Winchester, where Fisher’s proposal was a major item on the agenda.⁵⁷

The Lloyd Roberts Lecture

Barnes’ appreciation of Mendel’s theory and Fisher’s research in particular was evident as early as November 1930, when he delivered his Lloyd Roberts Lecture⁵⁸ on ‘Heredity and Predestination’ at the Manchester Royal Infirmary. As Barnes confessed to his audience, the intended title for the lecture was ‘God and the Gene.’ However, in a tongue-in-cheek take on the public sensitivity essential to his profession, Barnes explained that “when Bishops speak in monosyllables their ideas may excite alarm. Words of four or five syllables are

⁵⁴ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Fisher RE: Eugenics and Birth Rate’ (4 October 1930), EWB 9/19/20.

⁵⁵ Barnes, ‘Reply to Fisher RE: Eugenics and Birth Rate.’

⁵⁶ Fisher, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Eugenics and Birth Rate.’

⁵⁷ S.A. McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics’ (7-8 February 1931), EWB 9/19/31.

⁵⁸ The Lloyd Roberts Lecture was established as a tribute to the well-known surgeon, David Lloyd Roberts (1835-1920) and ran more or less annually from 1921 to 1953, featuring themes from medicine to social welfare.

impressive and comfortable.”⁵⁹ Thus in ‘Heredity and Predestination’ he once again looked to identify God’s role in the machinery of evolution, while simultaneously drawing attention to the eugenic impact of the feeble-minded. According to Barnes, Mendel’s discovery – based on “inheritable factors” and “gene mutations” transmitted by “a non-blending process” – had provided man with “the clue to evolution.”⁶⁰

Here Barnes also gave credence to the work of the American evolutionary biologist, T.H. Morgan (1866-1945), whose book *A Critique of the Theory of Evolution* (1916) had redefined the Darwinian understanding of evolution by integrating Mendelian inheritance with chromosome theory.⁶¹ Barnes believed that evolution was driven by random genetic mutations, which allowed the given organism to flourish in a changing environment in which others would perish, a system he referred to as “the pruning knife of the environment.”⁶² To support his argument, he also made reference to the work of Fisher, who had estimated that: “In a species in which a thousand million individuals come to maturity in each generation, a mutation, with a frequency-rate of one in a million, would easily establish itself in the first generation if it had a selective advantage of merely 1 per cent: it would then in due course sweep over the whole species.”⁶³

This understanding of evolution dovetailed neatly with the Bishop’s identification of the feeble-minded as a hazardous by-product of modern society. Indeed, for Barnes, perhaps “the most socially dangerous type of mutation which has arisen in humanity is that which produces feeble-mindedness.” As we have seen, in his 1926 Galton Lecture, Barnes

⁵⁹ Barnes, ‘Heredity and Predestination.’

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See: Thomas H. Morgan, *A Critique of the Theory of Evolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916).

⁶² Barnes, ‘Heredity and Predestination.’

⁶³ Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, 508.

had focussed on the possibility that the feeble-minded could be explained by a gradual process of germ-weakening, caused by poor living conditions. However, here to his 1930 audience at the Manchester Royal Infirmary, Barnes asserted that there was “no good ground for the opinion that slum conditions produce genetic mutations leading to mental defect. We might expect unfavourable conditions to produce degradation of the genes: yet evidence by analogy is lacking.” Instead, crediting the staunchly deterministic conclusions of Reginald Gates – as put forward his “valuable” book *Heredity in Man* (1929) – there was now little doubt for Barnes that “upon the individual, predestination lies heavy.” Contrasting with the words of the 19th century poet, Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892): “Man is man and master of his fate,” for Barnes, “The genes are genes and master of man’s fate.”⁶⁴ Moreover, alluding to his sympathy for eugenic ideology, Barnes thus declared that while “Destiny [...] rough hews our ends,” we may “shape them as we will.”⁶⁵

The Bishop also used the theory of evolution as a link between eugenics and religion. For Barnes, those that had emerged most successfully from the evolutionary struggle of man were clearly the more intelligent classes. In turn, they were also the best fitted to “lead the race on a little nearer [to the] perfect ideal of social organisation;” the “Kingdom of God.”⁶⁶ At the other end of the scale, those afflicted with dysgenic mutations were a “hindrance to the civilised progress of humanity” and “ought not to hand” their defects on “to posterity.” In the stage of civilized progress that man had now reached, “measures to

⁶⁴ Barnes, ‘Heredity and Predestination.’ See also A. Tennyson, ‘The Marriage of Geraint’ in: *Idylls of the King* (1859).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Hereditary and Predestination,’ *Nature* 126 (29 November 1930), 842.

improve the quality of the race” must be regarded as “a service to God” and thus to “eliminate mental defect” was “our duty as a race.”⁶⁷

Barnes also referenced A.H. Wood’s recent *Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee* (1929), which seemed to support his conclusions on the feeble-minded. The result of an official survey conducted in association with the Eugenics Society, like the 1927 Mental Deficiency Act, the Report stressed “the importance of differentiation between mentally defective children and those whose mental development was merely retarded.”⁶⁸ As Barnes recognized though, the Report also suggested that “if we could segregate as a social group all the families in England to which children are born with inherent incapacity for mental development, most of the families so collected would belong in the words of the Report to ‘the lowest ten per cent in the social scale’.”⁶⁹ While there was “no dearth of material for investigation,” until the various types of defect were classified and their modes of inheritance were known, “successful legislation [was] impossible.” Until then, so Barnes concluded, the safest strategy – both in the religious and scientific sense – was to “confess ignorance and escape condemnation.”⁷⁰

The Bishop’s insistence on the hereditary origins of mental defect during the lecture earned him praise from the prominent businessman, Laurence Cadbury (1889-1982), who was at the head of the confectionary company that bore his name. Cadbury was glad to see Barnes addressing this problem and wished there were more dignitaries of the Church who did so.⁷¹ However, parallel developments in the growing field of mental healthcare seemed

⁶⁷ Barnes, ‘Hereditary and Predestination,’ 842.

⁶⁸ Derek Gillard, ‘Education in England: a Brief History,’ *Education in England: The History of our Schools* (2011), [www.educationengland.org.uk/history/timeline, accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁶⁹ Barnes, ‘Hereditary and Predestination.’

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Laurence Cadbury, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Lloyd Roberts Lecture,’ (8 November 1930), EWB 9/19/22.

to question among other things the theory of biological determinism as an explanation for mental deficiency. Thus, Cadbury's main interest was the eminent physician, Sir Gilbert Barling's (1855-1940) wish to establish research laboratories at the University of Birmingham – to which Cadbury was a major benefactor – in order to assess the pathological, as opposed to hereditary, causes of mental deficiency.⁷² Organizations such as the aforementioned Central Association for Mental Welfare (CAMW) had adopted a rehabilitationist/segregationist approach to the problem of mental deficiency, as opposed to methods such as eugenic sterilization. Concerned that the eugenic implications of mental deficiency were being overlooked, Cadbury had suggested to Barling at a recent University meeting that “though this of course is a very valuable direction in which to carry out research, it does seem to me a thousand pities that we should confine our activities purely to the pathological aspect and do nothing worth regard to hereditary problems, connected of course particularly with ‘aments’.”⁷³

Barnes was in agreement with Cadbury. Soon after his ordainment as Bishop of Birmingham, he had visited some of the mental hospitals in his bishopric and discovered that “various men were proud of the way in which they supplied new sets of teeth, and so forth, and so got rid of toxic products consequent on morbid conditions in teeth and gums. But the more fundamental causes of mental defect were apparently ignored.”⁷⁴ In reply, then, Barnes confessed that his Lloyd Roberts Lecture had behind it the “hope of indirect pressure” to encourage figures such as Barling to focus more on “genetical and not

⁷² Arguably, since the First World War and subsequent investigation into the cause of shellshock – the effects of which appeared to be independent of social background – there had been much interest in the environmental causes of various debilitating mental conditions. In turn, this had questioned the eugenic argument that conditions associated with mental illness were caused solely by hereditary transmission.

⁷³ Cadbury, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Lloyd Roberts Lecture.’ ‘Ament’ – “A person with severely deficient intellectual capacity.” See: [www.thefreedictionary.com/Aments, accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁷⁴ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Cadbury RE: Lloyd Roberts Lecture,’ (10 November, 1930), EWB 9/19/23.

pathological” research.⁷⁵ At this time, for Barnes, Cadbury and many other eugenicists, it seemed that a number of the professionals conducting research at major institutions, backed by the Mental Deficiency Act, did nothing to address the problem. In short, rather than addressing the problem of mental deficiency, this approach served only to help increase its occurrence.⁷⁶

Notably, not all those who questioned the validity of eugenics were also opposed to research into the perceived hereditary nature of mental deficiency. One example was Barnes’ acquaintance, the physiologist, Nobel prize-winner and one of the founders of biophysics, A.V. Hill (1886-1977). After reading a newspaper report on ‘Heredity and Predestination,’ Hill wrote to Barnes expressing his concerns. For Hill, though the matter was “probably not as simple as any of us pretend,” it was clear that “unfit characters” – inherited in a Mendelian fashion – appeared to have “a good deal to do with it.” The main point of contention for Hill was that the apparent ‘gene’ for mental deficiency was recessive and thus often entirely undetectable.⁷⁷ In reply, Barnes suggested that even ‘carriers’ of the recessive gene were noticeably lower in intelligence than the average.⁷⁸ For this reason, Hill assured Barnes that he would not like to dispute that “the parents of feeble-minded people are not in general below the usual level of intellectual quality.”⁷⁹ On this note, the two agreed that more research was necessary before a definitive solution could be put forward to solve the problem of feeble-mindedness.

⁷⁵ Barnes, ‘Reply to Cadbury RE: Lloyd Roberts Lecture.’

⁷⁶ Ibid. The difference of opinion among specialists on the subject would be brought up by Barnes at the ‘Conference on Eugenics’ held at Winchester in the following year.

⁷⁷ Archibald V. Hill, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Henry Sidgwick Lecture,’ (7 January 1931), EWB 9/19/24. See also, idem ‘Biology in Education and Human Life,’ *Nature* 127 (3 January 1931), 22.

⁷⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Hill RE: Henry Sidgwick Lecture,’ (10 January 1931), EWB 9/19/25.

⁷⁹ Archibald V. Hill, ‘Reply to Barnes RE: Henry Sidgwick Lecture,’ (13 January 1931), EWB 9/19/26.

Casti Connubii

Despite the efforts of Barnes and others to draw attention to the problem of mental deficiency, it appeared that some opponents would never be converted to the eugenic cause. In 1930, Inge had declared that eugenicists had in front of them a hard battle to fight against “the determined hostility of the Roman Catholic Church.”⁸⁰ Sharing this view, Eldon Moore, then editor of *The Eugenics Review* described the difficult relationship between Catholicism and eugenics thus: while “the Holy See has never yet issued any pronouncement on the subject,” Catholics in Britain “had strenuously opposed sterilization, the mainspring of their opposition being that it is contrary to religious principles.”⁸¹ Hill had also warned Barnes that he it would be a difficult task to persuade his fellow-bishops to take any interest in biology, considering they had “not been taught the subject at school.”⁸² While this may have been a valid assessment, it is notable that not all bishops were opposed to sterilization, let alone eugenics considered more broadly. For instance, as Jones noted, in 1929 the signatories of the “Grand National Council of Citizens’ Unions’ petition in favour of sterilisation” had included “the Bishops of Exeter, Kingston and Durham.”⁸³

Likewise, at the 1930 Conference of Modern Churchmen, both C.J. Bond and Rev. C.P. Russell argued in favour of sterilization for some of the “less well-endowed portions of the population.”⁸⁴ While Bond – another important figure at the 1931 Winchester Conference – believed that “sterilization as a method of mechanical conception control,

⁸⁰ William R. Inge, *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 286.

⁸¹ Eldon Moore, ‘St. Thomas Aquinas and Sterilization,’ *The Eugenics Review* 21, 4 (January 1930), 279.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, 47.

⁸⁴ ‘Modern Churchmen’s Conference: Changing Views on Birth Control,’ *The Times* (August 22, 1930), 7.

should be applied to cases of irresponsible persons of low intelligence and weak will,” Russell took this further. As reported in *The Times*, Bond argued that if the implication of pre-nuptial marriage licencing “to show that [applicants] were physically fit to produce children and economically capable of supporting them” failed, then “Sterilization might then be the punishment for those who bore children without having been granted a licence.”⁸⁵ In fact, during the early 1930s, several opinions were voiced from churchmen, such as William Geikie-Cobb, and scientists such as A.D. Buchanan Smith, that shared a common portrayal of eugenics and religion as complementary. As was the case with Barnes, the reforming character of Protestant ideology allowed for the propagation of radical perspectives. If for these Christian eugenicists, the Protestant church represented the ethical and spiritual backbone of Britain and an intrinsic, sobering link to the past, then eugenics was a vitalistic modernizing vehicle that would drive the future of mankind’s evolution and bring humanity closer to God.

It was hoped by some eugenicists that – as was beginning to happen in Germany and the United States where the Catholic movements were “altogether less decided, and many of them are keenly alive to the need for eugenic measures” – Catholics in Britain would begin to argue “in favour of sterilization for the common weal.” Taking this further, Eldon Moore felt that eugenicists had perhaps misjudged the situation entirely: “as has been pointed out to us, we have hitherto too readily assumed our experience in this country to be a fair sample of the general Roman Catholic attitude.”⁸⁶ This newfound optimism would soon be dashed and in its place would emerge a heightened sense of disparagement. On 31 December 1930, Pope Pius XI (1857-1939) delivered his 16,000 word Encyclical, *Casti*

⁸⁵ ‘Modern Churchmen’s Conference: Changing Views on Birth Control,’ 7.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Connubii (On Christian Marriage). Arguably, the primary intention of the Encyclical was to provide a strong, adverse response to the conclusions drawn at the 1930 Lambeth Conference.⁸⁷ *The Times* interpreted it as, “a long and powerful restatement of the Roman Catholic doctrine upon the indissolubility of Christian wedlock as being Divine sacrament.” Meanwhile, the *Catholic Times* described *Casti Connubii* as an attempt to influence “the whole human race,”⁸⁸ an assertion evidenced by the encyclical’s simultaneous release in six languages: the original Latin, Italian, English, French, German and Spanish.⁸⁹ It was later assumed in *The Eugenics Review*, among other things, that the Pope wished for “the Catholic view of right and wrong [to] be legally enforced upon us who do not share that faith.”⁹⁰

Casti Connubii discussed a wide range of themes related to the sanctity of marriage in the modern world, from birth control and abortion to the limits of “wifely obedience.”⁹¹ Arguably, the general attitudes adopted were not only at variance with the Lambeth bishops, but also expressed dissatisfaction with “any of the modern theories of marriage,” in which family life became “a human instead of a Divine institution.”⁹² Notably, several incorrigible arguments were tailored specifically against eugenics. While *Casti Connubii* attacked birth control for “frustrating the procreative act,” sterilization was discredited as

⁸⁷ James T. Bretzke, *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 221.

⁸⁸ ‘Casti Connubii,’ *Catholic Times* (January 6, 1931), 7.

⁸⁹ ‘Vatican and Marriage,’ *The Times* (9 January 1931), 12. See also Etienne Lepicard, ‘Eugenics and Roman Catholicism: An Encyclical Letter in Context: *Casti connubii*, December 31, 1930,’ *Science in Context* 3-4 (1988): 527-544.

⁹⁰ ‘On Catholicism,’ 45.

⁹¹ ‘Pope’s Ban on Birth Control,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (January 9, 1931), 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*

an act of sacrilegious self-mutilation.⁹³ In further opposition to proposed eugenic practice, it was proposed that public magistrates should under no circumstances “directly harm, or tamper with the integrity of the body, either for the reasons of eugenics or any other reason.”⁹⁴ From a Papal perspective, the eugenics movement advocated for civil authority to place eugenics before aims of a higher order and thus arrogate to itself a power over a faculty that it could never legitimately possess:

[B]y public authority [eugenicists] wish to prevent from marrying all those who, even though naturally fit for marriage, they consider according to the norms and conjectures of their investigations, would, through hereditary transmission, bring forth defective offspring. [...] [I]t is wrong to brand men with the stigma of crime because they contract marriage, on the ground that, despite the fact that they are in every respect capable of matrimony, they will give birth only to defective children, even though they use all care and diligence.⁹⁵

In contrast to many prevailing eugenic attitudes – certainly in the British context – towards the lower classes at the time, the Pope also placed emphasis on “the duty of the well-to-do classes and of the State to aid the poorer and more numerous families.” Above all, it was emphasized that the family was “more sacred than the State” and that “men [were] begotten not for the earth and for time, but for Heaven and eternity.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Eugenio Pacelli, ‘Casti Connubii: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Christian Marriage,’ (31 December 1930), [http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121930_casti-connubii_en.html], accessed on 14 January 2014].

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Pacelli, ‘Casti Connubii: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Christian Marriage.’

⁹⁶ Ibid.

In the pages of *The Eugenics Review*, Moore described the Vatican's "crusade against freedom of thought and action in the modern State" as a "defiant return to medievalism."⁹⁷ The birth control movement was no less perturbed by the Pope's comments. This was especially so in America with former judge, Benjamin B. Lindsey, asserting that, in reality, "the rule proposed by the Pope is respected only by domestic animals"⁹⁸ and Bishop Ivins that "either birth control is generally practised in America or most women are incapable of motherhood."⁹⁹ Likewise, Margaret Sanger, head of the Planned Parenthood organization, declared Catholic doctrine to be "illogical, not in accord with science, and definitely against social welfare and race improvement."¹⁰⁰ Likewise, eugenicists in Britain tended to share Moore's belief that, on behalf of the Catholic community, the Pope had dealt the "final blow to our hopes of coming to an agreement with them."¹⁰¹ It was summarized in *The Eugenics Review* that, "though a few eminent theologians had hitherto strongly supported sterilization, though others had theoretically admitted its moral justification, and though many had long been opposed to the marriage of mental defectives, the Pope here issues an unqualified condemnation of both sterilization and the prohibition of marriage."¹⁰² With this in mind, Moore concluded that the public must "henceforth wonder whether all Catholic attacks, however well argued, upon eugenics and upon other things more old and dear to our hearts, are not veiled efforts to resume the world-supremacy of the Pope."¹⁰³ It

⁹⁷ Eldon Moore, 'On Catholicism, As Revealed in the latest Encyclical of His Holiness Pope Pius XI,' *The Eugenics Review* 23, 1 (April 1931), 41, 44.

⁹⁸ 'Pope's Encyclical in America,' *The Manchester Guardian* (January 10, 1931), 11.

⁹⁹ 'Pope's Encyclical in America,' 11.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Sanger, 'The Pope's Position on Birth Control,' *The Nation* 135, 3437 (27 January 1932), 104.

¹⁰¹ Moore, 'On Catholicism,' 42.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 45.

appeared that Inge's prophecy that reconciliation could never occur between the eugenic and Catholic communities had been all but confirmed by *Casti Connubii*.¹⁰⁴

The 'Conference on Eugenics' at Wolvesey Castle

In February 1931 Barnes attended the 'Conference on Eugenics,' convened at Wolvesey Castle, the official residence of the Bishop of Winchester. This was perhaps one of the more significant events in the history of British eugenics – not to mention greatly influential to Barnes' developing ideology – yet has never been examined in detail by the historiography on the subject. The main contributors to the Conference were the eugenicists R.A. Fisher, Julian Huxley and Reginald Ruggles Gates, physician, C.J. Bond, in the chair, the Bishop of Winchester, Frank Woods (1874-1932), and now a notable member of the Eugenics Society, Bishop Barnes. The conference explored a number of issues related to the social practicalities of eugenics, with reference to both positive and negative methods and the need for society-wide education in the laws of Mendelian inheritance.¹⁰⁵

Opening the Conference, Fisher described the purpose of eugenics thus: "We can do nothing for the dead, little for the aged, much for the children, most of all for those not yet conceived. For children we can improve environment, enabling them to make the best of their innate qualities, for the unborn we can improve the innate qualities."¹⁰⁶ One of the central themes explored was the need to popularise the eugenic cause, in the face of a

¹⁰⁴ William R. Inge, 'Eugenics and Religion,' *The Eugenics Review* 12, 4 (January 1921), 257-265.

¹⁰⁵ McDowall, 'Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.'

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

perceived, imminent decline in the population of Britain.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Fisher argued that “the highest census in England would be that of 1941 or 1951, the maximum probably falling between those dates. English birth-rate has already fallen 20% short of that necessary to give a stationary population.” Several of the attendees agreed that it was imperative for the British population to be converted to “our views before the climax of 1951, when the issues would be very clearly forced upon the country owing to the diminishing population.”¹⁰⁸

The proceedings can be divided into three main sections: positive eugenics; negative eugenics; and propaganda. An underlying goal of the British eugenics movement at the time was to correct the differential birth rate, something essential to the improvement of humankind. In this respect, at the conference positive and negative eugenics were put forward as complementary approaches.

Positive Eugenics

The importance of positive eugenics to biological improvement was evident in the minutes from the first evening:

[N]atural selection has only been negative to any large extent during the last 100 years. How could the relative fertility of the lowest types be reduced? No hope of doing so voluntarily in the bottom layer, owing to lack of intelligence and self-

¹⁰⁷ As Chapter IV details, the issue of population received increasing attention as the decade progressed, by individual ideologues like Richard Titmuss and organisations such as C.P. Blacker’s Population Investigation Committee.

¹⁰⁸ McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

control. It was urged that the best method was the positive – to get the best stocks to reproduce more.¹⁰⁹

Supporting the notion that biological determinism was central to much of inter-war eugenic ideology, Fisher's subsequent scheme of positive eugenics rested on the premise that society had a fairly rigid scale of eugenic desirability, inherently connected to social class. He was thus able to divide 'working' society into five groups of decreasing intelligence:

1. Professional and clerical down to Railway Booking clerk.
2. Commercial, including shop assistants and some travellers.
3. Skilled labourers.
4. Semi-skilled labourers.
5. Unskilled labourers.¹¹⁰

For Fisher, like many eugenic ideologues at the time, the main problem was that the most intelligent of the abovementioned classes – which he suggested constituted about 10% of the population – was reproducing at a rate “less than half that required for a stationary population.” Bond too agreed that although considered the most eugenically desirable, “this was the particular class which was dying out” and therefore “we must aim at a greater fertility of the upper classes.”¹¹¹ These notions were supported by a number of publications at the time by eugenicists and population experts alike. For instance, Moore published the

¹⁰⁹ McDowall, 'Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.'

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

following table in *The Eugenics Review*, based on data from several London boroughs, which suggested the middle classes were in numerical decline:

| Class of Population | Births per 1000 | Deaths per 1000 | Natural Increase (%) |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Lower | 19.2 | 14.1 | 5.1 |
| Middle | 14.4 | 13.2 | 1.2 |
| Upper Middle | 12.1 | 14.6 | -2.5 |
| All Classes: England and Wales | 16.3 | 13.4 | 2.9 |

(From Eldon Moore, 'The Present State of the Nation, As Deduced from Vital Statistics,' *The Eugenics Review* 22, 4 (January 1931), 267.)

Arguably, this table provided as clear an indication of the differential birth rate as was available at the time. While the lower classes showed a natural increase of 5.1% and the general population of 2.9%, the most intelligent class, the upper middle, was showing a natural decrease of 2.5%. While this may not have produced noticeable effects in the next 10 years, it was believed that in the next 100, the population would become generally less intelligent. This seemed to suggest, distressingly, that humankind as a species had already reached its pinnacle and – if present trends continued – that the human race would fall into a period of degeneration.

To help to reverse this trend, Fisher suggested the introduction of a system of family allowances which would be tied to the individual's income, with a view to providing those with a higher salary larger sums per child. In short, what made the scheme eugenic was its proportional nature: it looked to remove the well-documented economic side of the popular trend of family limitation. Barnes later emphasized the contrast between Fisher's eugenic, proportional allowances and a "flat-rate scheme," like that proposed by the influential MP

Eleanor Rathbone (1872-1946) to support young mothers, regardless of class. Barnes described this approach as social reform “of the most dysgenic type.”¹¹² In practice, Fisher’s scheme looked to involve a 10% reduction in all salaries with a 12% increase for each child. This would also serve to “keep the family in the same financial position irrespective of the number of children.” In other words, with the allowance proportional to income, “highly paid men with high expenditure per child” would not be “cramped by additions to family, any more than men with low pay and low expenditure per child.” The system, then, would do much to reinforce Fisher’s division of society into five, easily identifiable classes. As opposed to the problematic process of legislating for negative eugenics, Fisher felt that each profession was “capable of the requisite organisation, and [thus] no state support or legislative action was needed, except perhaps some minor legislation of an enabling type.”¹¹³ With an outline of the scheme in place, Fisher wished to emphasise two points which he felt had not been sufficiently stressed:

1. The family allowance is not a charity. Charity is non-economic relief of poverty: this is economic. It amounts to saying that industries can choose on which of two bases payment should be made:
 - a. Cash payment for work done.
 - b. Standard-of-living payment for work done.
2. The family allowance is not a reward of eugenic merit. Eugenic merit is a hereditary endowment, and should not be rewarded any more than other forms of hereditary

¹¹² McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics’.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

wealth. In order to counterpoise the present premium on childlessness payment on standard-of-living basis is equally necessary on the eugenically-inferior high-pay grade. It is the eugenically-desirable class, not the eugenically-desirable individual that must be encouraged.¹¹⁴

Despite the proposition being for a programme of *positive* eugenics, there were some clear *negative* implications. According to Fisher, proportional family allowances would be favourable over the present “preposterous system” of benefits for the poor, whereby in the “lower grades” it was advantageous to be out of work if a man had a large family. Moreover, Fisher had chosen to purposefully omit the question of whether “family allowance was desirable at all in the lower census grades,” with the more desirable professional class the only in consideration at this time.¹¹⁵

Negative Eugenics

The conversation soon turned to an assessment of the available options to limit the fertility of the unfit, with the apparent prevalence of mental deficiency once again the focus. The approach taken to deal with this problem seemed to depend on one’s understanding of heredity. Huxley had thus declared early on, “We must aim at a minimum programme based on scientific agreement.” Indeed, as Barnes argued, “[U]nless ill-effects [are] likely in the offspring no one would accept the idea of sterilisation of the parents. We must have definite

¹¹⁴ McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

proof, or be up against an inalienable right to parenthood.” With this in mind, Bond outlined the differing opinions on the origin of mental deficiency, which was apparently fairly polarized between environmentalism and hereditarianism. It was regrettable that some – like MacBride and A.F. Tredgold for instance – still believed that mental deficiency arose from a “general vital deficiency affecting the germ cells (the Lamarckian factor).”¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, “Mendelians” insisted that “mutants” arose entirely from the inheritance of defective genes.¹¹⁷ While Barnes had flirted with some of the implications of Lamarckism, by this stage he was all but converted to the brand of eugenics based on Mendelian inheritance. The Conference sided too with the latter theory and it was agreed that in at least 80% of cases, the origin of mental deficiency was hereditary transmission of defective genes.¹¹⁸

It was agreed at the conference that whilst negative eugenics was generally not considered “the most important in the long run,” it was seen as the “most immediately practicable.” Thus, the Conference allowed sufficient discussion time to negative eugenics, with three apparently complementary methods discussed: segregation, socialisation and voluntary sterilisation. *Segregation* referred to the on-going accommodation of mentally defective individuals facilitated under the Mental Deficiency Act. While full accommodation for the “300,000 mental defectives (exhibitors)” would have been very expensive, it was near impossible to segregate recessive “carriers,” since for the most part they appeared “apparently normal.” The Bishop of Winchester, thus concluded that in general any

¹¹⁶ McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

¹¹⁷ If Mendelism gained a heightened prominence from the 1930s onwards in British eugenic discourse, it is perhaps fitting that E.W. MacBride, one of the last Lamarckian eugenicists in Britain, had chosen to resign from the society also in early 1931, officially “on a matter of office duty.” Eldon Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 23, 1 (April 1931), 5.

¹¹⁸ McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

segregation or sterilisation of “carriers” was out of the question, owing to the “lack of such a recognisable correlated factor.”

However, as Barnes had expressed in the past, it was agreed that even the apparently normal carriers had some noticeable characteristics. Interestingly, female “high grade” mental defectives were considered the most dangerous “as their control [was] lessened and they [were] liable to ready yielding.” According to Huxley, the females were more “sexually attractive” than their male counterparts, who on the contrary, were “unattractive” and “less dangerous, being rather lethargic.” All that considered, it was agreed that the only true indication that someone was a “carrier” of the mental deficiency gene, seemed to be when “seemingly-normal parents” produced mentally defective children.¹¹⁹

The second option, *socialisation*, was the idea that through education some of those exhibiting mental deficiency may eventually be returned to ordinary life. However, as one prominent health official and author, E.S. Littlejohn, had reported, “though successful and self-supporting under care, the stress of unsheltered life is liable to produce a complete upset and degradation; and girls especially lack self-control, and become pregnant.”¹²⁰ This reinforced the notion that eugenically speaking, the mental defective returned to “ordinary social life” after rehabilitation would be “as bad as before.”¹²¹

Finally, the *voluntary sterilization* of “the mentally defective and [the] Social Problem Groups” received much endorsement from those in attendance. The official view of the Eugenics Society, as expressed by Bond, was that there was already “sufficient knowledge in

¹¹⁹ McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

¹²⁰ Ibid. See also: E.S. Littlejohn, ‘Review: S.P. Davies, *Social Control of the Mentally Deficient* (London: Constable, 1930),’ *The Eugenics Review* 22, 4 (January 1931), 277-8.

¹²¹ Ibid.

regard to certain groups” for sterilization to be deemed acceptable. Furthermore, while the Society would of course welcome further research, intelligible ‘data’ would emerge from the results of these initial operations alone. As Blacker had emphasized the previous month, it was through direct experience that British society could learn how far sterilization could be employed to eradicate mental deficiency.¹²²

Notably, in an early draft, the Society’s sterilization bill was phrased as a means by which to prevent abuses of the practice: “An Act to prevent the practice of Sterilization when morally or socially objectionable, thus safeguarding its use for the preservation of the race, and to make provisions as to the marriage of mentally defective or insane persons.”¹²³ Significantly, one of the most important aspects of eugenic sterilization, as proposed by the Eugenics Society, appeared to be that the practice should never be used as punishment for dysgenic defect.¹²⁴ Arguably, though, the Society’s official Bill – presented later that year by A.G. Church to the House of Lords – was not entirely voluntary. The act would “enable mental defectives to undergo sterilizing operations or sterilizing treatment upon their own application or that of their spouses or parents or guardians.”¹²⁵ If an individual was severely afflicted with such a condition – to the point that a guardian would be required to make important decisions on their behalf – such applications could hardly be regarded as voluntary, or meeting even rudimentary requirements of informed consent. This concern was not ignored by the Society, as Moore later asserted:

¹²² Carlos P. Blacker, ‘The Sterilization Proposals: A History of their Development,’ *The Eugenics Review* 22, 4 (January 1931), 247.

¹²³ Eldon Moore, ‘The Sterilization Bill: The Eugenics Society’s First Draft,’ *The Eugenics Review* 20, 3 (October 1928), 166.

¹²⁴ As detailed later in ‘Part II,’ this approach led many eugenicists in Britain to heavily criticise the compulsory nature of the 1934 Nazi Sterilization Law.

¹²⁵ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Sterilization Bill,’ *The Eugenics Review* 23, 2 (July 1931), 153.

For persons who are *compos mentis* it is, on the contrary, probably perfectly legal; and the only reasonable doubt which can arise is whether the operation can be performed, for other than strictly medical reasons, upon an *ament* who is not legally capable of giving consent. It was purely this doubt, and its effect upon the minds of surgeons in public hospitals, which the Bill was designed to remove, while at the same time it gave sanction for the operation to be performed at the State's expense.¹²⁶

While voluntary sterilization never received legislative backing,¹²⁷ at the conference Bond listed several cases in private institutions where the operation had taken place for eugenic purposes. The first example was of a man who had “defective feet” and an “absent tibia.” After his third child was born with a “physical defect” the man had “requested himself to be sterilized.” In this case, so Bond reported, the “operation was performed and gave full satisfaction,” preventing the man from ever passing on a “defect” again. Bond also quoted two other cases that had occurred in an unnamed “Blind Institution,” which was summarized in the Conference minutes thus:

two pairs of inmates wished to marry, in one case the male in the other the females were genetically bad. The rule was that in such marriages of two blind inmates the Committee would no longer employ them, and they would go on the rates. Dr. Bond

¹²⁶ Eldon Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 23, 3 (October 1931), 199.

¹²⁷ The contemporary legal position on sterilization, which depended on “the fact that castration was equivalent to maiming because it rendered feudatories useless in war,” was described in the Conference minutes as “chaotic and out of date.” See: McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

advised sterilization of male in one case, female in the other. The operation gave complete satisfaction: the couples are happy and not on the rates.¹²⁸

As well as protecting individual rights, the safeguarding of sterilization was also connected to the idea of creating a eugenic conscience within the British population. If biological improvement could become central to the “collective experience of the race,” so McDowall noted in the minutes of the conference, then the moral aspects of eugenic proposals – whether positive or negative – would be opened up to debate. It is notable that in the two cases of sterilization, eugenic ideology had to some extent influenced the decisions of both the recipients and those responsible for the operation. In the first case, the subject’s request for sterilization was prompted by a desire not to pass on his condition to the next generation. In the second, however, sterilization seems to have been largely imposed from above, as the inmates were pressurized into undergoing the operation. The casual nature of Bond’s reference to these cases suggests that eugenic sterilization was not as uncommon in Britain – at least in private institutions – as one may assume. However, if people from poorer communities wished to be sterilized, there was a significant obstacle confronting them: “the operation cannot be done in rate-aided institutions; but there is less obstacle for the rich who can go to private hospitals.”¹²⁹ If sterilization were to be made available to the poor, the introduction of some form of legislation was imperative.

¹²⁸ McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Propaganda

The third section of the conference was concerned with propaganda and the dissemination of eugenic 'knowledge.' Three target audiences were identified: the medical profession, the general population and the Church. The Conference attendees had agreed that there seemed to exist in society a collective ignorance regarding the nature of heredity. Woods thus raised the "question of Propaganda" and inquired as to the attitude of the press, to which Gates and Huxley replied that it had "grown far more intelligent in the last ten years; and that considerable willingness to assist might be expected."¹³⁰ The secretary of the Conference, S.A. McDowall pointed out that "emphasis on the rate of increase of carriers would be valuable for propaganda purposes" and could be "inferred from the increase of actual defect (exhibitors)." Furthermore, it was hoped that the dissemination of eugenic ideas would eventually become part of the school curriculum. Thus, education and "eugenic control" would largely come through "general Biological Instruction in the schools, in which sexual and genetic phenomena should be naturally introduced, and eugenic responsibility made clear."¹³¹

The attendees were equally optimistic of some support from the medical profession, which Barnes hoped would at least favour making "the trade in contraceptives and information respectable by giving it official sanction and getting the trade into the hands of normal respectable chemists." Taking this idea further, Huxley agreed "on the eugenic side the regularisation of the trade was most necessary" and even suggested that "birth-control and eugenics should be a department of public health." However, it was concluded that the

¹³⁰ McDowall, 'Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.'

¹³¹ Ibid.

medical profession provided “a great obstacle in the way of achieving eugenic results.” The first question for Barnes was “What does the Doctor think about it?”¹³² Accordingly, it was also hoped that the British Medical Association – who were currently conducting research on the practice – would support sterilization. This was however something it would officially reject a year later owing to a lack of evidentiary support.

Those in attendance agreed that the Church was an invaluable asset to the eugenic cause, something Fisher had conveyed to Barnes the previous year. With regard to proportional family allowances, it was hoped that – as a substantial part of the intelligent classes – the “clergy might give a lead by introducing this system in their own profession.”¹³³ After the Pope’s disparaging comments on the improvement of hereditary endowment, which had effectively denied the right to interfere at all in the process of reproduction, it was important to explore how the Church of England could play a positive role in the eugenics movement. In contrast to avowed opposition of the Vatican, Fisher opined that “the genetic endowments of the unborn [should] become an acute moral concern of the church.” Woods admitted with some regret that an authoritative answer to the Papal Encyclical would be difficult to provide as “the Bishops as a body had no means of expressing an authoritative opinion.”¹³⁴ Though Barnes’ proposed resolution to address the issue of mental deficiency had failed, he believed that some progress had been made at the 1930 Lambeth Conference. Considering Lambeth was a decennial affair though, it seemed that Convocation was the most feasible solution for further debates to occur. This, however,

¹³² McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

first required the other bishops to be suitably educated in genetics, which it seemed, was no easy task.

The attendees of the conference were in general agreement that the clergy were not simply part of the more intelligent classes and eugenically desirable types, but also a useful tool to help popularise the importance of eugenics. As McDowall noted in the minutes, it was hoped the clergy would be used in, as he put it, “practical measures of raising public opinion.” If a clear lead could be given by the experts – such as geneticists like Gates, Fisher and medical authorities like Bond – then “a body of opinion within the church could readily be enlisted for propaganda.”¹³⁵ With the perceived, imminent population decline in mind, then, it was imperative to “spread knowledge of what must come in the course of the next generation or two, namely a considered eugenic control.”

Barnes Supports Sterilization

On the topic of sterilization, for those appearing to exhibit mental deficiency, it was agreed at the conference that there was no need to wait before legislative action was taken. As McDowall summarized, the time had come to “get on with it,” as there was already ample data in regard of “certain groups” and “action on those groups would provide material of other research.”¹³⁶ Though hesitant on the matter in the past, this conclusion certainly seems to have influenced Barnes. Later that year he supported A.G. ‘Major’ Church’s push for sterilisation in the House of Commons, a precursor to the 1934 Brock report based on the Eugenics Society’s aforementioned Bill. This was following a letter requesting so from

¹³⁵ McDowall, ‘Minutes of the Conference on Eugenics.’

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Blacker, who had recently been made secretary of the Eugenics Society. If the parliamentary proposal had been accepted, and provided consent had been given by the “defectives themselves or their spouses, parents or guardians,”¹³⁷ then sterilization would have become a legal practice in Britain. Barnes replied to Blacker the following day announcing his endorsement of the bill:

[W]e know enough at present of the extent to which it is inherited to say that mental defectives ought not to have children. In view of this fact, it is well that provision should be made for their sterilisation when application is made either by the defectives themselves or by those closely associated with, or responsible for, them. For such reasons I am in favour of the bill to be introduced by Major Church.¹³⁸

In fact, Barnes reiterated this position later that year at the Birmingham Diocesan Conference, arguing that “From the Christian standpoint it was surely right to prevent the birth of children who would or might be cursed by feeble-mindedness.”¹³⁹

In the face of what Moore described in *The Eugenics Review* as “a body of mental inertia, political timidity, traditional prejudice, and religious and sentimental opposition,” Church’s proposal was defeated by 167 votes to 89.¹⁴⁰ Church had told his fellow MPs in a fairly measured manner that “it has been shown that anything from 45 to 80 per cent of the mentally defective” were afflicted due to their inheritance and thus suggested that “it would

¹³⁷ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Major A.G. Church’s Bill’ (16 June, 1931), EWB 9/19/36.

¹³⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Blacker RE: Major A.G. Church’s Bill’ (20 June, 1931), EWB 9/19/38.

¹³⁹ ‘Taint of Feeble-mindedness: Sterilisation Urged by Dr. Barnes,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (4 December 1931), 10.

¹⁴⁰ Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ (October 1931), 199.

be advisable to take the risk and sterilise all mental defectives in the hope that you will in a generation or so reduce mental defectives to measurable quantities.”¹⁴¹ Notably, despite its failure, Church’s proposal had received the support from over a third of MPs in the House of Commons at the time. Although legislatively the proposal was unsuccessful, it had certainly drawn attention to what in eugenic circles was one of the most important issues of the day. On behalf of the Eugenics Society, Moore appeared satisfied with this outcome: “It seems certain that public opinion outside purely political circles is quite ripe for a step of this kind, nor do we agree with Major Church that the proposed measure should be looked upon as a preliminary step in the direction of compulsory sterilization, but rather as an assertion of the principle of voluntary sterilization.”¹⁴²

The main opposition voiced in the Commons and reported in the press, came from Hyacinth Morgan (1885-1956), a Labour MP and once active member of the Fabian Society. Morgan believed the Bill displayed neither “sanity” nor “common sense,” and was “anti-democratic, pagan, and un-Christian.”¹⁴³ Scientifically, Morgan’s opposition seems to have stemmed from his sympathy with Lamarckism, a school of thought that was beginning to gain significant state backing in the Soviet Union, while having been largely dismissed by British scientists and eugenicists alike. According to Morgan, the source of “low-grade” mental deficiency – i.e. “exhibitors” – was not to be found in dysgenic gene mutations, but rather in “the conditions under which the poor lived,” which resulted in “defective germ-plasms.”¹⁴⁴ The commentary provided by *The Eugenics Review* on Morgan’s opposition indicate that the debate for legislation was informed just as much by political bias as it was

¹⁴¹ A.G. Church quoted in: ‘Sterilization of Defectives,’ 4.

¹⁴² Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ (October 1931), 199.

¹⁴³ Hyacinth Morgan quoted in: ‘Sterilization of Defectives,’ 4.

¹⁴⁴ Morgan quoted in: ‘Sterilization of Defectives,’ 4.

by issues of scientific credibility: “In opposing the Bill for the sterilization of aments, Dr. Morgan (Socialist) described it as ‘anti-working class legislation.’ This deserves a place in *Punch’s* ‘Admissions We Should Never Have Dared to Make’.”¹⁴⁵ In contrast with deterministic forms of biological improvement, based in part on social elitism, Morgan wished for gradual reform in line with socialist principles, which emphasized the biological value of environmental improvement. Although, as Bowler has suggested, it may be too one-dimensional to claim that scientific views are socially constructed, one must bear in mind that the contemporary discourse surrounding eugenic proposals often influenced or was influenced by political ideology.¹⁴⁶

Eugenics at the BBC

Although at the governmental level Britain was not necessarily ready for the political application of eugenics, it appeared that some outside of the Eugenics Society were gradually converting to a eugenic view of social progress. For instance, in the 1931 BBC series, ‘What I Would Do with the World,’ several eminent public figures articulated their own independent eugenic theories. Although the speakers did not provide meticulous scientific explanations of their views, as had become a customary magniloquence of many inter-war eugenicists, their arguments provide a useful insight into the eugenic sympathies of medical officials, politicians and civil servants outside of the Eugenics Society. Equally,

¹⁴⁵ Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ (October 1931), 199

¹⁴⁶ The term ‘biopolitics’ was first popularised in a series of lectures entitled, ‘Society Must Be Defended’ by French philosopher Michel Foucault, from 1975-6. See: Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (London: Penguin, 2003). More recently Marius Turda has discussed the role of ‘biopolitics’ in various eugenics movements. See his, *Modernism and Eugenics*.

while the three figures held comparatively diverse – though all prominent – positions in society, they also held strikingly similar opinions with regard to eugenics. Thus Lord D’Aberdon gave the following overview of the disastrous scenario that had been instigated by present social legislation:

By excessive latitude given to the weak-minded, by imposing burdens in the shape of taxation on the hard-working to help out the improvidence of the inefficient and less capable, we are doing for the human race exactly what every intelligent breeder avoids in the animal world; we are stimulating breeding from the weak, the inefficient, and the unsound.¹⁴⁷

Likewise, Leopold Amery agreed that the entire trend of recent legislation and taxation was based on “a short-sighted sentimentalism,” which seemed to “discourage thrift and self-reliance” and encourage “the actual multiplication of the improvident and incompetent.”¹⁴⁸

Basil Blackett too focussed on the value of negative eugenic practices, bemoaning the fact that by “false sentimentality,” Britain’s social services had effectively doubled the number of individuals assumed to be feeble-minded in “less than a generation.”¹⁴⁹ Considering that in biology there lay “a potential instrument for improving the human race,” according to D’Abernon, society could no longer afford to follow “the aggressively dysgenic course of breeding mainly from the unfit.” Moreover, bearing in mind “the appalling dangers which lie before us today,” D’Abernon thus declared that “the human race itself” must be improved

¹⁴⁷ Vincent D’Albernon quoted in: Eldon Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 23, 4 (January 1932), 295.

¹⁴⁸ Leopold S. Amery quoted in: Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 295.

¹⁴⁹ Basil Blackett quoted in: *Ibid.*

and developed before “wiser conduct” could ever be expected from it.¹⁵⁰ In this respect, Amery provided a fitting conclusion for all three, when he stressed the importance of biological progress – “not only in the narrower medical sense, but even more in shaping our whole outlook upon social legislation” – to the future of Britain.¹⁵¹

Writing in *The Eugenics Review*, Moore received these pronouncements with much elation; it was becoming apparent that eugenic principles were exercising unprecedented influence on the minds of some of the most important men in the country. For many eugenicists, then, this “emphatic unanimity from such different men” was evidence of the “changed status of eugenics” in society. The now “remarkable prominence” of eugenics was further verified when similar opinions were expressed by physicist James Jeans. At the centenary meeting of the British Association, Jeans along with five fellows of the Eugenics Society all read papers on eugenics, which resulted in “prolonged scientific discussions.”¹⁵² Owing to the Society’s policy of refusing “either to outpace the growth of educated opinion or to make a move or statement that was not fully supported by the balance of scientific evidence,” it had, according to Moore, successfully exercised an influence “out of all proportion to its numbers.”¹⁵³

Although eugenics may have gained interest among several British academics, members of the medical profession and political elites, to be truly effective – as the 1931 Conference in Winchester had concluded – it required the population to live according to a eugenic conscience. In 1932, the need to publicise this eugenic morality prompted the Eugenics Society to distribute a handbook entitled, *How to Prepare a Family Pedigree*. Sent

¹⁵⁰ D’Albernon quoted in: Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 295.

¹⁵¹ Amery: *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 295

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

to every subscriber to *The Eugenics Review*, the pamphlet offered advice on constructing what was essentially a family tree that also took into consideration eugenically desirable and undesirable traits. Curiously, once completed, the Pedigree Schedule was intended to “take the place of the spare leaves in the old Family Bible.” According to Moore, the Bible was only “slightly less useful than the domestic animal herd-books in the amount of really useful information it gave.” However, the Schedule would provide “the material for a scientific analysis of the family's qualities, as well as a particularly interesting tabloid history.” In this respect, it seems apt to quote the contemporary author, G.K. Chesterton's (1874-1936) satire of the eugenics movement's religious aspirations: “All other Churches have been based on somebody having found the truth. This is the first Church that was ever based on not having found it.”¹⁵⁴ Only once completed it was hoped the Pedigree Schedule would become Britain's sole guidance to life: “If only those many people who ask whether they should risk having children, could provide some such schedule for both husband and wife it would more often be possible to give them enlightened and satisfactory advice.”¹⁵⁵

Many eugenicists, it seems, had a somewhat irreverent attitude towards organised religion and particularly Christian scripture. The idea that eugenics could become the new religion, replacing Christianity was not uncommon in eugenic discourse, as illustrated by Julian Huxley's *Religion Without Revelation* (1928).¹⁵⁶ In this book, Huxley argued that once the new morality of humanist eugenics was made commonplace, Christianity would no longer dictate family life and thus be made redundant. Likewise, with *How to Prepare a Family Pedigree*, though it was accepted that the Bible was present in many people's lives,

¹⁵⁴ Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* (London: Cassell and Co., 1922), 4.

¹⁵⁵ Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 298.

¹⁵⁶ Julian Huxley, *Religion Without Revelation* (London: Ernest Benn, 1928).

the Eugenics Society hoped the Pedigree Schedule would effectively take its place. The Bible would still be present but – in the new eugenic society – its value would be merely symbolic.

In contrast, in June 1932, Barnes felt it necessary to answer the question “why should we be theists rather than atheists?” The Bishop impressed on his University of Leeds audience the increased weight of this problem bearing in mind that “the Soviet Government includes atheism among the set of ideas, religious, political, social, moral, which it seeks to spread throughout the world.” Indeed, as Barnes recounted disappointedly, in a “skilful” use of “propaganda” earlier that year, the Soviet Union had celebrated the work of Darwin – commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of his death – and emphasized that his theories formed “a natural basis for atheism,” which in turn reinforced communism as the definitive form of social organisation.¹⁵⁷ While the increasingly environmentalist, state-endorsed, scientific model in communist Russia was distressing for British biologists and eugenicists, by also representing the first nation to celebrate atheism as one of its founding principles, the Soviet Union was highly problematic in the minds of modernist theologians such as Barnes. Even so, the Bishop was relatively pragmatic in his explanation of this development:

[W]e have no right to reject atheism because we dislike Soviet communism. [...] [A] religious orthodoxy, based nominally on belief in God, was integral to the Czarist regime and that it did little or nothing for social righteousness. In part Soviet atheism is a recoil from beliefs bound up with the Czarist system. But in part it is due to a

¹⁵⁷ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘At the Heart of the Universe; Mechanism or Mind,’ (12 June 1932), EWB 12/1/480.

conviction that the discoveries of modern science accord with the view that the Universe is a blind mechanism.¹⁵⁸

Barnes consigned a measure of culpability for the rise of this outlook to late 19th century promoters of evolution, such as T.H. Huxley, who it seemed had – although often unwittingly – helped to facilitate the spread of agnosticism and atheism in the western world. According to Barnes, “Huxley not only championed Darwin’s biological teaching against hostile, and often ignorant and prejudiced, critics; but he was also a philosopher who maintained a mechanical theory of the Universe and held that mind is, as it were, but a by-product of material changes.” As a luminary of the Christian Modernist movement since the early 1920s, Barnes had argued that despite the on-going animosity between the religious and scientific communities, Darwin’s conclusions did not necessarily lead to atheism. Reiterating this position here Barnes declared that “the complete and final answer to the view that mind is a mere epiphenomenon of material change lies in the fact that, if this view be correct, all human purpose must be dismissed as vain.” As Barnes had attempted to make clear throughout his theological career, the “divine process of evolution” was the result of “the continuous operation of Creative Mind.” Such growth, “in accordance with the Divine design,” was intended so that man would continue to “progress nearer to God.”¹⁵⁹

With regard to the existence of God, however, existential uncertainty was not constrained to the academic community. One letter to Barnes from Hilda Coverdale, a mother of eight and homemaker from the religious community of Loftus, Yorkshire, reveals

¹⁵⁸ Barnes, ‘At the Heart of the Universe; Mechanism or Mind.’

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

how the atheist viewpoint could even emerge from what many perceived as the most humble of origins: the working class. The letter regarded Coverdale's "loss of faith," which she put down to a combination of the assumed Christian opposition to birth control and the problem of evil. It appears that – at least in this north Yorkshire town – Lambeth's 'Resolution 15,' passed two years prior, had not yet influenced popular opinion. This candid letter, it seems, provided the only means for Coverdale to vent her ambivalence toward religion, referring to Barnes early on as "my Confessor." She expressed to Barnes a level of remorse for the size of her own family. Having "bred like a rabbit," Coverdale felt "utterly ashamed" for giving way to "control." This had even led her for several reasons to question the existence of God: "Why send so many babies to one woman and let another wear her heart out in secret because there's none for her." Further, it appeared illogical to Coverdale that through "the thinnest sheath of rubber," man could stop "the work of God" and take control of creation" himself. In turn, it seemed unlikely that God would "allow people to have babies if they are mentally deficient [...] [as] they cannot possibly know all they are doing if the brain power is not there." Even under these assumptions though, Coverdale was afraid to "admit to real atheism" and face losing "a lot of friends" and not to mention the financial support that the Church offered such large families. Instead, as Coverdale concluded, though her soul rebelled at her "hypocrisy," she would continue "trying to find God in spite of all loss of faith."¹⁶⁰ Perhaps frustrated by what he saw as the 'backwardness' of lay opinion on birth control, Barnes told Coverdale that "as I see things, your point of view is wrong." Attempting to provide enlightenment for Coverdale, he presented a succinct explanation of his viewpoint, largely in line with the conclusions drawn at Lambeth:

¹⁶⁰ Hilda M. Coverdale, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Loss of Faith,' (18 June 1932), EWB 9/20/29.

God has made us by the process of evolution: we have evolved out of lower animals. But in making us human God has given us intelligence which we must use in building up civilization. God does not Himself make human civilization but gives us the understanding by which it can be made. [...] Equally, I think, that husband and wife are right to control and space the number of children which they will have. That is why I desire to see birth control information given to all married women who desire it. To use such information for the well-being of one's family is in no sense disloyal to God.¹⁶¹

While the letter from Coverdale may have been an isolated case, it did nothing to deter Barnes' belief that popular religious opinion was light-years behind his 'enlightened,' Modernist interpretation. This also underscored the need to broadcast information on birth control across the nation, particularly in working class communities like Loftus. In his renowned study on the working-class, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Richard Hoggart noted that contraception – though by the post-war years accepted – was still not widely used by the married couples he had observed. Although religion was no longer presented as an obstacle, in cases where birth control was practiced, responsibility would fall chiefly – as the bearer and raiser of children – on the woman, which to an extent provides a useful frame for Coverdale's guilt and desperation that perhaps would not have been shared by her husband. Hoggart's comments this way suggest that that, even twenty-five years later, little

¹⁶¹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Coverdale RE: Loss of Faith,' (25 June 1932), EWB 9/20/30.

faith could be placed in the working class to make effective use of birth control for family planning:

Most non-Catholic working-class families accept contraception as an obvious convenience, but both husbands and wives are shy of clinics where advice is given, unless they are driven there by near-desperation. [...] [K]nowledge of the possibilities is likely to be limited to coitus interruptus, the best-known type of pessary, and the sheath. [...] But to use any of these methods requires a rigid discipline, a degree of sustained competence many wives are hardly capable of.¹⁶²

Even after the war, then, especially if one considers the popularity of Hoggart's book – which achieved multiple editions throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s – it seems that many still believed that there was a significant section of the working class that could not be trusted with responsible parenthood, at least in the numerical sense. Though many within this demographic, like Coverdale, “only led a normal married life,” “cohabiting” only when it was “necessary to the relief of each other,” as she expected “married life was intended for,” from the perspective of the eugenicist, they still contributed disastrously to society's inevitable production of dysgenically large families.¹⁶³

If the ideas held by Barnes and many of his contemporaries during the inter-war period remained influential after the war, it was evident in the rise of the term ‘problem families,’ first used in 1943. The ‘problem family,’ considered extensively in the post-war eugenic discourse, can be identified in many respects as a continuation of the inter-war

¹⁶² Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1957), 45.

¹⁶³ Coverdale, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Loss of Faith.’

‘social problem group.’ This is particularly evident, if one examines the Eugenics Society’s five-year investigation conducted by its Problem Families Committee (1947-1952). Notably, as detailed in Chapter VI, Barnes was part of a small minority who suggested that sterilization was the most effective means to solve the ‘problem family.’ During the 1930s however, as we shall see, though Barnes often came to the defence of birth control and supported parliamentary proposals for sterilization, he did not directly express the need for sterilization.

The Church Convocation on Marriage and Divorce

In the 1930s, the move for divorce reform also proved contextually significant to Barnes’ eugenic pronouncements. As it stood, a private members bill in 1923 had made it an easier process for women to be granted divorce for adultery, provided sufficient evidence was presented. The 1930s saw a lobbying process led by A.P. Herbert (1890-1971), which looked to provide additional grounds that could warrant a divorce, including drunkenness, insanity and desertion. This was eventually passed in 1937. Lawrence Stone has noted that while in the 1920s “all but a handful of churchmen were still strongly opposed to any extension of the causes for divorce beyond adultery,” by the 1930s the Church of England was more evenly divided on the subject, with the majority of clergyman, including Archbishop Lang, abstaining and the rest evenly divided between vehement opposition and measured support.¹⁶⁴ The latter included Barnes.

¹⁶⁴ Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce: England 1530-1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 399.

During the first half of the decade, in an attempt at uniformity on the subject, the Church Convocation convened a Joint Committee on Marriage and Divorce, to which Barnes was appointed. As his biographer has noted, Barnes “made it his special task to ensure that the Committee was provided with expert advice on the eugenic aspects, as they affected not only the merits of a marriage before it took place but also on the grounds on which it might eventually be dissolved.”¹⁶⁵ The Bishop described divorce as an “unhappy necessity” that was not necessarily acting against Christian sentiment. In the eugenic sense, it seemed divorce would be necessary, when considering the “inheritability of mental defect” if one partner was found to be “feeble-minded.”¹⁶⁶ In a 1932 private letter to the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell (1883-1958), he confessed that such guidance could only be provided “from a family physician acquainted through his private practice with the physical grounds which normally lead to unhappiness in marriage; and also the technical knowledge as to the inheritance of dysgenic qualities which only an expert on human heredity can give.” For Barnes, as we have seen, Mendel’s theories were in many respects now central to his eugenic ideology. It was now clear, so the Bishop impressed, that in any family in which there were “dangerous recessives” or “where one of the parties [was] feeble-minded,” marriage should be prohibited.¹⁶⁷ According to Barnes though, unless the Committee were “well-informed” on such matters, the conclusions drawn would be clouded by ignorance and unlikely to increase “the esteem in which the Church is held by the English people.”¹⁶⁸

During this time, Barnes was also in contact with some of the key members of the Marriage Reform League, including its President, Lord Buckmaster and its Chairman, William

¹⁶⁵ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 326-7.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Letter to Bell RE: Divorce,’ (1 January 1932), EWB 9/17/16.

¹⁶⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Bell RE: Divorce,’ (7 January 1932), EWB 9/17/20.

Geikie-Cobb. The latter declared to Barnes that no progress would be possible until “the vulgar superstition that every marriage is indissoluble by consummation,” something often derived from the “strict interpretation of New Testament texts,” was abandoned. Barnes’ influence on the Committee was evident at one Committee meeting in May 1932. This was chaired by Lord Dawson under the title, ‘Marriage from the Standpoint of Biological Science,’ focussing on several possible grounds for nullity and debate on subjects, including “Adequate Parenthood” and “The Question of Sterilization.” Reinforcing Barnes’ prior statements concerning mental deficiency, the eugenic aspects were presented by Cambridge geneticist, Michael Pease (1890-1966), and leader of the Eugenics Society’s Pauper Families Project, E.J Lidbetter, the latter focussing on ‘Heredity and Pauperism in East London.’¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Barnes’ suggestion for the approval of eugenic divorces was not included in the final report of the Convocation (1935). Instead, it was decided that while the Church could not oppose any extension to the divorce law, neither could it overtly endorse Herbert’s bill or for that matter the marriage of anyone who had been divorced.¹⁷⁰

Barnes’ endorsement of birth control also coincided with his pacifism, earning him the attention of some notable figures, including the Premier of Western Australia, James Mitchell (1866-1951). In June 1932, the Bishop despairingly told Mitchell in a private letter that birth control was now imperative, not only on eugenic grounds but also in order to prevent war. In the 1920s, he had identified over-population as a chief cause of the First World War and here he reiterated this stance: “were the population of Europe to grow at the rate at which it increased during the Nineteenth Century, war would be the inevitable

¹⁶⁹ ‘Marriage Committee,’ (6 May 1932), EWB 9/17/39.

¹⁷⁰ Stone, *Road to Divorce*, 399.

outcome.”¹⁷¹ In this respect, then, Barnes was not entirely in line with his colleagues at the 1931 Winchester Conference, who shared an underlying fear of depopulation. In any case, Mitchell had contacted Barnes regarding “the view taken by a big body of public opinion in this remote part of the Empire, and as one who has for many years been urging the better distribution of the British population throughout the Empire.”¹⁷² Feeling that he could provide a fair representation of this viewpoint, Mitchell asserted that rather than discussing birth control, the most important issue was the creation of a “white Australia.” This perspective held that the promotion of birth control would both weaken the Empire and Australia itself, both in terms of the quality and quantity of the population:

[T]his country could not long expect to continue a British possession, particularly as other countries near to us are overpopulated. I apologise for writing, but I do feel the weakness of our position and I am satisfied that birth control will not remedy the weakness and make the Empire the strong and potent factory it might be amongst the great powers of the world.¹⁷³

Mitchell was largely interested in the quantity of population, regardless of the eugenic arguments for quality of population that had become so popular in inter-war Britain. In this respect, the Premier’s main concern was that Britain had a population of 45 million, while the rest of the Empire contained just 20 million British people as well as a disquieting

¹⁷¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Mitchell RE: Emigration,’ (2 July 1932), EWB 9/20/31.

¹⁷² James Mitchell, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Emigration,’ (9 May 1932), EWB 9/20/28.

¹⁷³ Mitchell, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Emigration.’

number people from “other races.”¹⁷⁴ While in the past Barnes had assumed that British dominions, such as Australia, would reject ‘dysgenic’ British emigrants, one could conclude that Mitchell’s main concern here was predominantly informed by some of the more racist imperial assumptions. For Barnes, to whom overpopulation represented civilization’s greatest threat, emigration seemed to provide a tempting solution: “our numbers in Great Britain could safely increase were the surplus population to emigrate to the Dominions and, in particular, to Australia. Probably most of us who pay any attention to Empire problems are eagerly desirous that from the better stocks at home emigrants shall go to such lands as Western Australia.”¹⁷⁵ If Britain were to remain a major colonial power, it was important — Barnes argued — that the dominions contained eugenically desirable types. He therefore proposed that although “the stream of emigration” had now “almost entirely dried up,” if Mitchell and his compatriots could offer British citizens “better opportunities for success in life than are available at home,” then not only would emigration increase but it would be possible “for our birth-rate to remain at a comparatively high level.”¹⁷⁶

Having delivered countless lectures on the application of modern science to society, in October 1932 Barnes was elected President of the Birmingham and Midlands Institute (1932-1933). During his inaugural address, he expressed concern for the future of mankind, beginning by asking, “Is His earthly race nearly run or only just begun?”¹⁷⁷ According to Barnes, man was in many respects still in a child-like state, “overwhelmed by the discovery of what is still to be learned,” and civilization was still largely dominated by his irrational instincts. This was particularly evident when he considered the interrelated problems of war

¹⁷⁴ Mitchell, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Emigration.’

¹⁷⁵ Barnes, ‘Reply to Mitchell RE: Emigration.’

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Man’ (13 October 1932), EWB 12/1/491.

and overpopulation. While Barnes believed war was simply a throwback to barbarism, in which other human groups were natural enemies, similarly, unregulated propagation was in many spheres still understood to be a woman's primary duty.¹⁷⁸ As a result, until "the race consciously subordinates its primal instincts and desires" for "knowledge and understanding," the modern development of overpopulation would always lead to war and decay. According to Barnes, after subsequent wars, if mankind was not destroyed, each post-war recovery would be on a lower level: "medicine will be a little less rational: religion a little more barbarised: amusements more vulgar and inane: the intellectually weaker strains in the community somewhat more numerous. So the decline to the Dark Ages will take place." While the prevention of war was an important aspect, if man were to evolve, for Barnes, it depended above all on the intelligent use of selective breeding and on ensuring that every child was able to reach its full potential. The latter, Barnes continued, could be achieved by gradually adapting education to cater for varying levels of varying types of ability and natural capacities, so that "the able child, whatever its parentage, will not be wasted." On the negative side, Barnes expected that in the near future "it should be possible, by preventing the reproduction of the less satisfactory human stocks, considerably to improve the quality of any selected population."¹⁷⁹

Though Barnes began publically sympathizing with eugenics in the mid-1920s, even by the early 1930s his ideology had developed significantly. While in 1926 he considered the Lamarckian views of his friend E.W. MacBride, by this time – having read the work of eugenicists such as Gates and Fisher – Barnes had all but adopted Mendelian theory as a definitive proof that mental deficiency was entirely down to recessive gene mutations.

¹⁷⁸ Barnes, 'Man.'

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Furthermore, although in 1929 Barnes was hesitant to recommend sterilization, by 1931 he confidently supported Major Church's eugenic proposal.

Despite the increasing support of prominent academics and churchmen like Barnes, during the 1930s, eugenics – in both theory and practice – was increasingly questioned in Britain. The 1934 Brock Report was the Eugenics Society's most concerted effort at achieving political success. By this time though, as discussed in Part II, a number of political, moral and scientific issues undermined many of the assumptions that were key to British eugenic ideology. In 1933, the National Socialist Party came to power in Germany and a year later it had established a compulsory sterilization law for what it considered to be undesirable citizens, which was widely deplored in Britain. While the Catholic Church was naturally opposed to sterilization, much of the Anglican community – who had barely accepted the widespread use of birth control – was also generally opposed to eugenics. Further, it is arguable that the assumption of many eugenicists that mental deficiency flourished largely among poorer communities led the labour movement to perceive the campaign for sterilization as anti-working class, which, in a sense, it was. This latter problem stemmed from the belief of many eugenicists in biological determinism, which itself had earned criticism from the scientific and medical communities. This theory remained central to the proposals of many eugenicists. Indeed, biological determinism, had allowed eugenicists, such as Fisher at the 1931 Conference, to draw direct correlations between intelligence and social class, which to them could be neatly explained by heredity causation. These were just some of the debates experienced by the eugenics movement in Britain as the 1930s progressed and to which, as we saw in this chapter, Barnes was an active contributor.

CHAPTER IV:

‘GOD AND THE GENE’ PART II, c.1933-1935

*Feeble-mindedness is disastrously widespread and Governments tend to be apathetic.*¹

- EWB, 1935

Since joining the Eugenics Society in 1924, Barnes’ understanding of eugenics had been in a period of transition, as he sought to refine his understanding of, among other things, evolutionary biology. By 1933, he heavily sympathized with negative eugenics, for instance. Indeed, in 1931 he had supported A.G. Church’s proposal for voluntary sterilization. Likewise, Barnes would later support the Brock Committee’s 1934 sterilization bill. However, in his sermons and lectures, he still seemed only prepared to allude to his more radical beliefs. Despite such lectures as the 1932’s ‘Man,’ – which suggested the use of eugenics to further human evolution – Barnes did not *directly* advocate negative eugenics in public until after 1945. Instead, he focussed on broader issues, in papers such as ‘Modernism and Prayer’ (1930) and ‘Our Extended Knowledge of the Universe and its Influence on Religious Ideas’ (1937).²

Underlining this assumption, in January 1933 he declined the opportunity to speak at a public debate on sterilization. The object of the discussion, organized by the National Council of Women (NCW), was to outline the medical, religious and ethical arguments for

¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘What of the Future?’ (12 May 1935), EWB 12/1/511.

² See: Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Modernism and Prayer,’ (2 March 1930), EWB 12/1/448; and idem, ‘Our Extended Knowledge of the Universe and its Influence on Religious Ideas,’ (March 7 1937), EWB 12/1/541.

and against the practice. Barnes did not think it “a proper subject for debate” and was reluctant to discharge any personal proclamations on the question.³ Providing a précis of his position, he suggested: “The public need to be taught the facts already ascertained and then there will be no question as to what ought to be done. If you doubt my statement, will you please read the article ‘Mental Deficiency,’ by Professor R.J.A. Berry, in *The Eugenics Review* for January 1933.”⁴ This referred to a study conducted by Berry on families with an apparent history of mental deficiency, which concluded, “[T]hough not certified, the parents themselves are feeble-minded, or suffer from a grossly enfeebled nervous system. [...] [I]t is the non-certified parents, rather than their segregated and defective offspring, whose sexual instincts require some form of public control.”⁵

Sterilization remained a key topic for many organizations, including the NCW. One example was a 1933 conference, which focussed on the problem of mental deficiency, held in Newcastle Town Hall and organised by the Northumberland, Newcastle and Tyneside branches of the NCW. Here Sir Thomas Oliver (1853-1942), a distinguished figure in the field of occupational medicine, and Lady Ellen Askwith, the wife of prominent lawyer and civil servant, George Askwith (1861-1942), gave lectures arguing in favour of sterilization as a means to counter the growing “army” of “tainted children which the defectives are bringing into the world.”⁶ It was agreed that while the greatest care had to be exercised to assure the public “that nothing would be done rashly, [...] the health and progressiveness of the race must stand higher than the liberty of the mental defective.”⁷ Barnes too felt assured that

³ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Southern RE: Sterilization,’ (20 January 1933), EWB 9/19/43.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Richard J.A. Berry, ‘Mental Deficiency I: Some Family Histories,’ *The Eugenics Review* 24, 4 (January 1933), 288.

⁶ “‘Menace to the Race:’ Lady Askwith and Sterilization,’ *The Chronicle* (30 October, 1933), 10.

⁷ Ibid.

the ultimate solution to the hereditary transmission of mental deficiency was eugenic sterilization. All the same, until the public had been sufficiently educated in the science of heredity, he had no desire to participate in what he thought was destined to become a fruitless public debate.

In May 1933, he once again refused to sign a letter to the editor of *The Times*, which urged that “the time has now come when the vital topic of birth control could and should be discussed frankly and openly in this country as a very important relief to present distresses.”⁸ The letter, whose signatories included R.A. Gregory, E.W. MacBride and H.G. Wells, continued thus, offering a vision of what could be achieved through the widespread use of birth control:

Contraception should, under enlightened, courageous and progressive administration, be recognized as a constructive factor in present day economic and social welfare. It should be recognized as a means to radiant motherhood, a healthy and happy race and an end to squalor and poverty. With this aim in view we would respectfully urge the dire necessity of taking immediate steps to increase the number of birth control clinics and to encourage the abandonment of the prejudices which have played fast and loose with the lives of men and women.⁹

Barnes too believed that if the less desirable strains could be taught to make effective use of contraception, then progress could certainly be made. However, he did not believe letters to the press to be an effective means of spreading the message. In July of that year, the

⁸ Quoted in Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Kennedy RE: Birth Control,’ (20 July 1933), EWB 9/19/52.

⁹ Ibid.

Bishop had a similar discussion with Lord Angus Kennedy (1882–1957), a Scottish peer and spirited eugenicist, on “limiting the unduly high birth-rate among the social problem class.”¹⁰ Kennedy had told Barnes – following a meeting he, along with Marie Stopes had attended with the editor of *The Times* – that rather than indifferent to birth control it seemed the “leading newspapers of London” were “sympathetic in the extreme.”¹¹ While Barnes again agreed with the problem, and even suggested the need for “sterilizing mental defectives,” he did not trust the press to spread this eugenic message: “with regard to such a subject as birth control, *The Times* is not helpful.”¹² During the 1930s, though he may have agreed to the benefits of eugenic legislation, publically at least Barnes was only prepared to identify apparently ‘racial’ problems like mental deficiency, maintaining that it was not for him to devise a solution.

Scientific Theory and Religion

Public involvement aside, in his writings Barnes engaged with the topic of mental deficiency. In the 1933 book, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, for instance, he attempted to provide a definitive explanation for the existence of the ‘feeble-minded.’ This publication was in fact a duplication of Barnes’ Gifford Lectures delivered from 1927-1929 in Aberdeen. As well as discussing the specific relationship between science, religion and eugenics, the lectures covered a wide range of subjects, from mathematics and physics, where Barnes demonstrated his knowledge of Riemannian geometry, Einstein’s Theory of Relativity,

¹⁰ Barnes, ‘Reply to Kennedy RE: Birth Control.’

¹¹ Angus Kennedy, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Birth Control,’ (19 July 1933), EWB 9/20/33.

¹² Barnes, ‘Reply to Kennedy RE: Birth Control.’

electro-magnetism, genetics and theology, in which discussion included the machinery of evolution, metaphysics and the existence of God. Bowler has noted that Barnes' Christian brand of eugenics was based on the fact that "he was more willing than most religious thinkers to come to terms with the prospect that progress was not inevitable in the short term, and in particular with the view that the human species was not necessarily the final goal of the process."¹³

The scientific implications of Mendelism were now central to Barnes' eugenic ideology, something particularly evident in the sub-section, 'Mental Mutations in Humanity.' Although the lectures were finished in 1929, it is apparent that during the writing up stage Barnes read much of Mendelian theory, something he had made clear in sermons delivered from 1930 onwards. As his biographer explained, Barnes "did his best to keep abreast of more recent knowledge in the fields which they covered, so that he might deliver an up-to-date and comprehensive survey to his publishers."¹⁴ The Bishop now believed that there was no evidence that gene-altering mutations could be induced by the environment from "any but the most exceptional circumstances in the life-history of the individual" and thus could "confidently reject Lamarckism."¹⁵ Moreover, he cited several examples of how geneticists had repudiated Lamarckism, particularly the experiments of Paul Kammerer.¹⁶ Instead, central to his understanding of evolution, was the idea of random gene mutations. Though most mutations seemed to produce weaker individuals, "quickly eliminated under wild conditions," according to Barnes, some "mutant characters" had a greater "survival-value" than the "old types," and thus this variety of organism would flourish and a new

¹³ Bowler, 'Evolution and the Eucharist,' 465.

¹⁴ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 309.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 515.

¹⁶ For more on Kammerer see 'Chapter III.'

species would be created.¹⁷ Recognizing the importance of research in eugenics, he acknowledged the work of one of the movement's founders, Karl Pearson. In his 1904 *Mathematical Contributions to the Theory of Evolution* Pearson had shown that "the resemblance between parents and offspring is as marked for mental as for physical traits."¹⁸ This seemed to support Barnes' belief that mental deficiency was an inherited phenomenon. Many eugenicists during the inter-war period agreed with Barnes that "Heredity and not environment will determine in great measure both the physical and the mental nature of an individual. [...] No training will develop beyond a definite limit the intelligence of a mentally defective child."¹⁹ For this reason, the present laws on marriage, particularly that parish churches were not allowed to refuse the marriage of a feeble-minded woman, frustrated the Bishop. According to Barnes, if the parish priest were to protest to her parents or intended husband, or "refuse to call the banns on the ground of the woman's defect," he could "expose himself to the risk of a lawsuit alleging libel. [...] Our civilization is still imperfect."²⁰

Barnes spent some time putting forward his theory that certain types of feeble-mindedness in humanity – described here as "a condition of arrested or primitive mental development" – were due to a "simple Mendelian recessive."²¹ Rather than admit that the condition could arise through inheritance regardless of social background, Barnes was more comfortable in suggesting that any instance of mental deficiency in the middle-classes would have been caused by an "accidental" gene mutation. With reference to data

¹⁷ Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, 485.

¹⁸ Ibid, 491. See also: Karl Pearson, *Mathematical Contributions to the Theory of Evolution* (London: Dulau, 1904).

¹⁹ Ibid, 485.

²⁰ Ibid, 494.

²¹ Ibid, 492.

presented by the aforementioned *Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee* (1929), Barnes suggested that if society were to “segregate as a social group all the families in England” to which children had been born with “an inherent incapacity for mental development,” most of those collected would belong to the lowest 10 per cent of the social scale. Having considered that “mental defectives” were both “genetically unsound” and “breeding much faster than the valuable stocks,” – something “disastrous to the mental soundness of the race” – Barnes underscored their elimination as “the most fundamental, urgent and perplexing of our social problems.”²²

For Barnes and many other eugenicists at this time, it was assumed that there were two types of feeble-minded individuals. Barnes explained this notion thus: “Suppose that F denotes a chromosome carrying the gene for feeble-mindedness and that N represents the associated normal chromosome. Then, if N be dominant to F , NF (♀) may be taken to represent an apparently normal woman in which feeble-mindedness is recessive. FF (♂) will represent a feeble-minded man.”²³ If one were to assume that the offspring of such a pairing would be either NF or FF , it could be expected that an equal number of feeble-minded and apparently ‘normal’ children would be produced. Here Barnes referred to the 1914 study *Feeble-mindedness: Its Causes and Consequences*, conducted over five years at the Vineland Research Laboratory by the American psychologist and eugenicist, Henry Herbert Goddard (1866-1957).²⁴ Goddard had observed that “42 matings of this character produced 144 children, of whom 71 were feeble-minded and 73 apparently normal.” Curiously, though, “the mating of a feeble-minded woman FF (♀) with NF , (♂) an apparently

²² Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, 492

²³ Ibid, 493.

²⁴ See Henry H. Goddard, *Feeble-mindedness: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Macmillan, 1914).

normal man in whom feeble-mindedness is recessive," had produced a larger proportion of feeble-minded children: of 193 children produced, 122 were feeble-minded and 71 normal. Barnes recognized that until further research had "supplied a reason for this fact, it must remain as a warning against over-confident statement." This nonetheless appeared to reinforced the conclusion drawn at Winchester that feeble-minded women were generally more dangerous than the men.²⁵ Either way, the notion that feeble-mindedness could be explained through Mendelian inheritance was supported by Goddard's observance that when both parents had been feeble-minded, "practically all the children" had shown the "defect:" out of 476 children, only 6 were normal, the latter assumed to be "children of other than the normal father."²⁶

Barnes reiterated specific concerns about 'high-grade' mental defectives, something Leonard Darwin referred to as "The 'Carrier' Problem."²⁷ For Barnes, the existence of high-grade mental defectives meant that Goddard's conclusions, published some two decades prior, did not provide the whole picture. Goddard's work was thus understood simply as a good, early guide to what could be achieved by systematic research in mental institutions. In 1934, Darwin looked to overcome some of the apparent complexities involved with 'carriers' of mental deficiency, who may have appeared "perfectly normal."²⁸ In such cases, the decision as to "whether sterilization is to be permitted or not," so Darwin contended, would have to depend on statistical research regarding the "estimated probability of the offspring or later descendants of the individual in question being defective." This, so Darwin

²⁵ See Chapter II.

²⁶ Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, 493.

²⁷ Leonard Darwin, 'Analysis of the Brock Report,' *The Eugenics Review* 26, 1 (April 1934), 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

concluded, “[would] in itself constitute a great step in advance.”²⁹ Some groups, such as the Central Association for Mental Welfare, had used the ‘normal’ appearance of ‘high-grade’ mental defectives as an argument against eugenic sterilization.³⁰ For Barnes, this “lamentable ignorance” on the part of ‘medical men’ had done much to impede eugenic progress:³¹ “[E]ven today doctors in important administrative positions will state that mental defectives should not be segregated or sterilized because some children of such defectives may appear normal.”³² According to Barnes, then, whether recessive or dominant, mental deficiency was dysgenic and must be eradicated:

The man or woman in whom a markedly dysgenic mutation is dominant is, without exaggeration, a hopeless problem. Even the one in whom such a mutation is recessive is a menace to humanity, for in half his descendants it will persist; and, whenever the opportunity for the recessive mutation to become homozygous may occur, there will be produced a faulty human being who had better never have been born.³³

In the book’s later chapters, Barnes spent some time discussing God’s apparent role in the development of life and the universe. Here Barnes reiterated his belief that God “had fashioned the entire development of life upon earth,” by allowing random genetic mutations to occur. One example was the aforementioned “evil mutations” that led to

²⁹ Darwin, ‘Analysis of the Brock Report,’ 11-12.

³⁰ See ‘Chapter III.’

³¹ Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, 494.

³² Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Evil and Progress,’ (23 October 1933), EWB 12/1/499.

³³ Ibid.

“certain forms of feeble-mindedness and also horrible physical defects.” As we have seen, for Barnes, modern civilization had removed God’s intended method to deal with such mutations: “elimination by an environment, which automatically tests and destroys.”³⁴ From both a Christian and biological perspective, Barnes was concerned for the future: “When men generally awake to this knowledge, what action will they take with regard to such wretched beings? Will the Christ-Spirit within us forbid their destruction? Will the same Spirit compel us to foster them and to allow them to reproduce their kind?”³⁵

With regards to the reconciliation of science and religion, Bowler respectfully referred to *Scientific Theory and Religion* as “one of the most extensive treatments of the theme published during the inter-war years.”³⁶ While at the time there were “the expected criticisms from the Catholic, fundamentalist and nationalist press,” both *The Times* and *The Guardian* endorsed the book, as did Dean Inge in the *Church of England Newspaper* and J.B.S. Haldane in *The Listener*.³⁷ Indeed, the review published in *The Times* affirmed that “this work has something of the solidity and majesty of St Peter’s Dome, and pilgrims through the enchanting realm of science, whose staff is the tensor calculus, their scallop-shell the higher algebra, will in years come to stand in admiration before it.”³⁸ Meanwhile, in *The Guardian* it was declared that “even those who most violently disagree with Dr Barnes’s theology will scarce forbear to cheer that an Anglican bishop should have produced what is probably the best outline of science in the English language.” *British Weekly* was also complimentary, describing “a book which is essentially one for today, yet whose positive

³⁴ Barnes, *Scientific Theory and Religion*, 520-3.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist,’ 463.

³⁷ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 310.

³⁸ Ibid.

contribution will form the stock in trade of many theological tomorrows.”³⁹ However, while it remained in print until after the Second World War, the book sold just 1100 copies and was not reissued. In *Scientific Theory and Religion*, Barnes had attempted to give his eugenic position both scientific credibility and religious justification. In this respect, as we shall see, he was not alone.

God and *The Eugenics Review*

Earlier that year, Norman A. Thompson, recommended in a letter to *The Eugenics Review* that “the existing disharmonies between the teachings of Eugenics and Christianity be frankly and formally recognized.”⁴⁰ For Thompson the inherent differences were palpable: while eugenic doctrine was based upon the acceptance of “natural inherited inequalities,” Christian morality emphasized the “equality of treatment both from heavenly and earthly powers.” Another apparent contrast was concerned with political ideology. For Thompson, by “promulgating the conception of a general equality of value between individuals,” Christianity seemed to directly support “the teaching of Bolshevism and Marx.” In contrast, eugenic ideology, in natural opposition to the ‘universalist’ implications of communism, was “consistent and well founded” and taught “real values.” With this in mind, Thompson argued that eugenics could be considered “a religion in itself,” suggesting the following as guiding principles:

³⁹ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 310.

⁴⁰ Norman A. Thompson, ‘Eugenics and Christianity,’ *The Eugenics Review* 24, 4 (January 1933), 346.

- Eugenics demands self-control by the maintenance of the body and the mind at a high level of health and vigour. Excesses of all kinds are taboo.
- It demands unselfishness, for the interests of the family and nation come before those of the individual, and of future generations before those of the present.
- It cements individuals, families, and classes in healthy co-operation according to their natural capacities.
- Its sole object is the welfare of humanity.⁴¹

Although Thompson saw eugenics more as a secular religion, he still believed that it could work alongside Christianity. However, only if the Church underwent an “uncompromising purging and disentanglement of ideas” and accepted “the seven paragraphs above as entirely in accordance with their own beliefs,” could the eugenics movement and the Church unite.⁴²

In July 1933, the Eugenics Society hosted a debate on the apparent mutual exclusivity of ‘Eugenics and Religion.’ Beginning the debate was the anthropologist and grandson of famed archaeologist Augustus Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900), G.H. Pitt-Rivers (1890-1966). According to Pitt-Rivers, three possible conclusions could be drawn from the problem:

- 1) That the Christian religion was compatible with eugenic ideals.

⁴¹ Thompson, ‘Eugenics and Christianity,’ 346.

⁴² Ibid.

- 2) That it was incompatible, as expounded by Roman Catholic spokesmen, who had stigmatized eugenics as ‘pagan principles and immoral proposals’.
- 3) That while there was no necessary connection between religion and eugenics, Christianity might be increasingly converted by eugenics, though eugenic ideals could not be changed by Christianity.⁴³

In general, for those who saw reconciliation as a distinct possibility, it appears that Christianity had to be adapted to fit in with eugenic ideals. Pitt-Rivers argued that although ‘traditional’ Christian teaching was “incompatible with eugenic ideals,” there was “no necessary antagonism” between eugenics and religion per se. If eugenics could be defined as “ethics based on biological study,” then the teachings of St. Paul, for instance, appeared to Pitt-Rivers, “fiercely inconsistent with any eugenic ideal of morality.” St. Paul, he continued, was in fact against marriage and had declared: “And I wish all men were even as I am – unmarried.”⁴⁴ Therefore, if organized religion were to survive in the modern world it must first “retire and cede her territory in the concrete world of the surely known” and then retreat to “the impregnable citadel of eschatology, the world of death and the unknown hereafter, which was surely hers.”⁴⁵

In contrast, some believed that there was doctrinal justification for eugenics. As the geneticist and politician, Alick Buchanan-Smith, pointed out, in another instance St. Paul

⁴³ George H. Pitt-Rivers referenced in: ‘Eugenics and Religion,’ *The Eugenics Review* 25, 2 (July 1933), 101.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Pitt-Rivers here uses a paraphrase; one of the more recent translations reads:

“I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say; It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” See: ‘Corinthians 7:7-8,’ *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Colorado: Biblica, 2011), 1200.

⁴⁵ Pitt-Rivers, ‘Eugenics and Religion,’ 102.

could also be quoted thus: “I *will* therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. [...] I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe these things.”⁴⁶ The Bible, so it appeared, also considered the “eugenic aspect of a wise selection of one’s parents,” with the passage, ‘Ecclesiasticus, 44:1-15,’ opening with the words, “Let us now praise famous men and our father that begat us. [...] With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance.”⁴⁷ Likewise, American orientalist, Herbert Gray (1875-1955) contended that since Jesus regarded marriage as a “sacred institution” and held the rights of children to be divine, he would have been naturally concerned with “any indifference to the biological quality of men and women.”⁴⁸ If one considered that the aim of eugenics was to increase “the fertility of naturally well-endowed stocks,” while restricting “the fertility of inferior stocks,” there was nothing with which religion need quarrel.⁴⁹ Gray also discussed some of the problems associated with the differential birth rate. In terms of the middle class birth rate, both from the Christian and eugenic point of view, he argued that the “cessation of the intimate marriage relationship” when husbands and wives are still in their early thirties should be considered “both physically and morally” reprehensible. He also believed that with correct eugenic marriage education on “plain biological and psychological facts,” many unsuccessful marriages could be avoided. Gray believed that –

⁴⁶ Alick D. Buchanan-Smith, ‘Eugenics and Religion,’ *The Eugenics Review* 25, 3 (October 1933), 207-8. This passage seems in actual fact to refer specifically to young widows, although the effect is the same. The quote as written in the *New International Version* of the *Holy Bible* reads thus: “So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned to follow Satan.” See ‘Timothy, 5:14-15,’ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, 1245.

⁴⁷ Buchanan-Smith paraphrased here too from ‘Ecclesiasticus, 44:1-15,’ a book commonly omitted from Protestant Bibles.

⁴⁸ Herbert Gray referenced in: ‘Eugenics and Religion,’ 102.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

particularly after the progress made at the 1930 Lambeth Conference – the Churches were “slowly but definitely awakening to the duty of providing such education for marriage.” He also shared his opinions on the poorer sections of society, arguing that it was “in the highest degree un-Christian” that a child be born “condemned to insufficient nourishment, impaired health, and poor education. [...] Eugenicists could not possibly insist on this point more firmly than Christians ought to do.” Where environmental improvement failed though, “sterilization of the feeble-minded” was seen as the “best and most useful” method for the “prevention of parentage of the feebleminded,” something Gray believed should not only have been made “legal” in the voluntary sense but “compulsory, in the name of mercy.”⁵⁰

The final contributor, William Geikie-Cobb (1900-1941), who was both an Anglican Modernist and chairman of the Marriage Reform League, also perceived the differential birth rate as both a Christian and eugenic problem.⁵¹ Like many eugenicists at the time, Geikie-Cobb was concerned about the overbearing fecundity of those purported to be ‘unfit,’ arguing that coupled with family limitation among the “cultured stocks,” this trend weighted the balance “heavily in favour of racial deterioration.”⁵² As well as the need for eugenic reform, Geikie-Cobb, like Barnes, also emphasized the moral necessity of Christianity in modern society. According to Geikie-Cobb, “The fully instructed Christian has a right to claim that his religion will be found to supply the only permanent ground for adding eugenics to the many other movements which have for their end the development of a sound humanity.”⁵³ It was the responsibility of the clergy, who were “being led in

⁵⁰ Gray referenced in: ‘Eugenics and Religion,’ 102.

⁵¹ Geikie-Cobb had earned particular notoriety for marrying divorced persons in the Church of St. Ethelburga, London. See also: William F. Geikie-Cobb, *The New Testament and Divorce* (London: Marriage Law Reform League, 1924).

⁵² William F. Geikie-Cobb, ‘Eugenics and Religion,’ *The Eugenics Review* 25, 3 (October 1933), 208-9.

⁵³ Ibid.

growing numbers to recognize eugenics as an aid to a higher standard of life and morals,” to help extended the “salutary practice” of birth control of which “95 per cent of educated people already practice,” to “other classes whose need for it is [...] urgent.” For Geikie-Cobb, then, while “nobody of intelligence would attempt to dictate to others the use of any single method of birth control,” the practice of eugenics should nonetheless be in the hands of “the man of religion,” who is guided benevolently by the “Spirit of Christ.”⁵⁴ It seems clear from this debate that within the British movement, although eugenics was often understood as a ‘secular religion,’ this was by no means always the case.

Nazi Rule and British Eugenics

In January 1933, the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers’ Party) came to power in Germany. It was not immediately clear how far the new government would go in imposing its own eugenic ideology. From 1933 to 1945, however, Nazi racial hygiene would prove nothing less than disastrous. Barnes declared distressingly to one audience as early as 1935 that “Within the last three years, despair and embitterment in Germany have brought Nazism into power. Types of political brutality and injustice which one thought that Germany had left behind with the Thirty Years’ War have emerged to shock the civilized world.”⁵⁵ By 1950, due to “Nazi practices” – as Cedric Carter, a leading post-war member of the British Eugenics Society mournfully acknowledged –

⁵⁴ Geikie-Cobb, ‘Eugenics and Religion,’ 208-9.

⁵⁵ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘What of the Future?’ (12 May 1935), EWB 12/1/511.

eugenics had come to be associated with “mass extermination,” bringing the subject into “such malodour as to make it almost unmentionable.”⁵⁶

In July 1933 though, Moore, then editor of *The Eugenics Review*, applauded the Nazi Party, particularly for its anti-Catholic position. Furthermore, with the Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses (Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring) now in its preliminary stages, Moore also considered several aspects of the German medical counsellor, Dr. Herman Vellguth’s, original draft.⁵⁷ This was published in German as an article in *Aerztliche Mitteilungen* (Medical Releases) and its abstract in English in the weekly medical journal, *The Lancet*. As Vellguth summarized, “Our people has lost its pride in health. [...] You who carry healthy germplasm in you, you know that it belongs not to you, but to the German people! Make no mistake about that!”⁵⁸ For Moore this showed the “typical German preoccupation with the positive side of eugenics, and the recognition in that country of the need for a widespread eugenic conscience.” The proposed legislation was in many respects in line with arguments being composed contemporaneously by the Brock Committee in Britain, with focus on the “voluntary” sterilization of “the insane, epileptics, the unsocial (criminals), deaf-mutes, and physical weaklings (tubercular).”⁵⁹ *The Observer* – eventually banned in the Third Reich – reported optimistically that in Germany sterilization would only be carried out “at the wish of the individual or his family.”⁶⁰ As a safeguard, Vellguth even recommended that if three “eugenically minded” doctors recognized the danger of severe harm to the potential offspring, only then could a

⁵⁶ Cedric O. Carter, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 42, 2 (July 1950), 70.

⁵⁷ Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 77. For more on Vellguth see Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 201.

⁵⁸ ‘Eugenics in Germany,’ *The Lancet*, 1203.

⁵⁹ Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 77.

⁶⁰ ‘Social Hygiene in Germany: Propaganda Bureau Set Up,’ *The Observer* (June 11, 1933), 12.

sterilisation be performed.⁶¹ Moreover, it seemed that “race mixtures” were of minor importance compared with the need to “impress upon the masses” that not only were they “expected to breed, but to breed wisely.”⁶²

Though at first the Nazi government’s preoccupation with the quality and quantity of its population was admired by some British eugenicists, many disagreed on an ideological level over what constituted a healthy ‘germplasm.’ In Germany this became readily associated with one’s ethnicity, to the immediate concern of many in the British eugenics movement. The position taken by the Nazi government on issues of race, even at this embryonic stage, was alarming. Indeed, later in the article, Vellguth make statements such as, “We wish as far as possible to hinder the infiltration of foreign blood into the organism of our nation; Jews, Negroes, Mongols, and similar peoples could therefore with their consent be legally sterilized whether they are healthy or ill.”⁶³ While Moore agreed that there may have been something to be said for avoiding “risky racial experiments as colour hybrids,” – something in line with Barnes’ own conclusions on race – on Nazi attitudes towards the Third Reich’s Jewish population, he reported in a manner of irreverent disbelief: “We have not for many years had so disturbing an example of a great nation making itself ridiculous as the whole German campaign against the Jews.”⁶⁴

For Moore, the Jewish ‘race’ had always shown “a peculiar aptitude for the arts of peace and civilization.” With this in mind, it was expected that contrary to Nazi ideology, “most serious students” would agree that “their small numbers are a valuable addition,

⁶¹ ‘Eugenics in Germany,’ *The Lancet* 221, 5727 (June 3, 1933), 1203.

⁶² ‘Social Hygiene in Germany,’ 12.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 77.

both racially and culturally, to the make-up of any nation.”⁶⁵ R.B. Kerr wrote to *The Eugenics Review* criticizing Moore for his “fallacious” reasoning regarding Nazi anti-Semitic policy. Kerr argued that Hitler’s main charge against the Jews was that, unlike Moore’s portrayal, “in literature and the arts they succeed by superficial and meretricious qualities, and not by first-rate work.”⁶⁶ As Kerr admitted, he was unsure as to “whether Hitler [was] correct in his remarks about the Jews.” However, he believed it should be recognized that Hitler did make “a distinction between value and success which would have the unanimous support of intelligent critics.”⁶⁷ In reply, Moore suggested that “in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and medicine, for example, judgment can rest on a solid basis of ascertained and verifiable fact; and in these realms the supreme achievement of such men as Einstein, Bohr, Michelson, Ehrlich, Hertz, Willstatter, Haber, and Carrel, is hardly a subject for dispute.”⁶⁸ Significantly, then, while Moore had identified such Jewish luminaries using typological racism, he perceived their presence in society as racially and culturally beneficial for any population. One could conclude that despite opposing Nazi racism, Moore did not dispute the idea that the Jewish people – whether eugenically desirable or undesirable – were a biologically distinct entity.

Some assumed optimistically that Hitler could not be successful in his two-pronged attack on both the Jewish and Catholic communities and would give up on his crusade against the Jews. *The Manchester Guardian*, for instance, wrote that “If the Reich Government continues in its present path of drift, allowing prominent Ministers to denounce and prominent officials to put pressure on the Catholic laity and priesthood it

⁶⁵ Moore, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ 77.

⁶⁶ R.B. Kerr, ‘Nazi Anti-Jewish Policy,’ *The Eugenics Review* 25, 3 (October 1933), 207.

⁶⁷ Kerr, ‘Nazi Anti-Jewish Policy,’ 207.

⁶⁸ Moore, ‘Reply to Kerr RE: Nazi Anti-Jewish Policy,’ 207.

may discover that it has a 'culture-war' upon its hands without desiring it. It should remember Bismarck's fate when he set out to fight the Catholic Church."⁶⁹ It was hoped that "he will drop the race warfare against the Jews – for it is a racial, not a religious war, and one without a shadow of scientific backing – and set an example by reducing the Catholic Church to a fitting subordination to the State."⁷⁰ Moore concluded that the German government would with any luck turn its attention away from the "Jewish question" and instead "give a lead to the world by rigidly restricting the power of the Catholic Church."⁷¹

Though Hitler had even threatened to dissolve all Roman Catholic organisations in Germany, in July 1933, as *The Chronicle* reported, he chose instead to establish a "concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich." Hitler thus declared triumphantly, "the treaty and the disappearance of the Catholic party signifie[s] the end of the fight for political power."⁷² After pacifying Catholic hostility, the German government wasted little time in making sure Jewish people were banned from marrying those considered ethnically German. After the passing of the Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre (The Laws for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor), promulgated during the Nuremberg rallies in 1935, the Jewish population were officially understood as "'Untermenschen' (sub-humans)" and never treated as "equals."⁷³

What also soon became clear was that the German sterilization law – which came into effect on 1 January 1934 – would be compulsory. As *The Chronicle* reported, the sterilizations of "imperfect Germans" – such as those suffering from "blindness, deafness,

⁶⁹ 'Church and State in Germany,' *The Manchester Guardian* (January 25, 1934), 8.

⁷⁰ Moore, 'Notes of the Quarter,' 78.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² 'Hitler signs a pact with the Vatican,' *The Chronicle* (July 9, 1933). Available in: C. Daniel ed., *Chronicle of the Twentieth Century* (London: Chronicle Pubns, 1987), 430.

⁷³ 'Hitler bans German-Jewish marriages,' *The Chronicle* (August 15, 1935). Available in: Ibid, 455.

physical deformity, hereditary imbecility, epilepsy and St Vitus' dance [Sydenhams Chorea]" – would be carried out “without consent of the victims” with “force” used “if necessary.”⁷⁴ This was representative of part of a bigger eugenic picture that looked “to increase the size of German families and to recommend ways of putting an end to the ‘mixtures of races and degeneration of German families’” and existed in “the wake of a stream of official decrees directed at strengthening and purifying the German race.”⁷⁵ Alarming, for the Eugenics Society in Britain, this went much further than their official position, which proposed sterilization of a voluntary nature. The fine line between voluntary and compulsory would prove to be one of the most contentious issues in popular discussions on the German law, both in British newspapers and debates in *The Eugenics Review*.

The imminent legalization of compulsory sterilization in Germany was particularly bad timing for the eugenic cause in Britain. With the help of leading eugenicists like R.A. Fisher, the Brock committee was presently drawing up its voluntary Sterilization Act to present to Parliament the following year. C.P. Blacker, General Secretary of the Eugenics Society, was one of those more distressed by the implications of the German Act. Little did he know, this ‘guilty by association’ complex would plague Blacker’s attempts to popularize eugenics throughout his tenure, which ran well into the post-war period. Significantly, for Blacker, it would likely be overlooked by the public that “the German Act contains none of the provisions which the Society has been at pains to elaborate in its Bills to safeguard the individual against abuses of his liberty.”⁷⁶ Indeed, newspaper reports in Britain had apparently “failed” to grasp the essential differences between “the aims of the eugenic

⁷⁴ ‘Nazis to sterilise ‘imperfect’ Germans,’ *The Chronicle* (July 26, 1933). Available in: *Ibid*, 430.

⁷⁵ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Eugenics in Germany,’ *The Eugenics Review* 25, 3 (October 1933), 57.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

movements of Germany and of this country,” instead assuming that if sterilization was legalized in Britain it would also be made compulsory.⁷⁷ Blacker had written to *The Lancet* medical journal in June, in an attempt to rectify the situation:

No biological innovation of social significance is free from possibilities of abuse. [...] If the principle of sterilization is, with appropriate safeguards, adopted in this country, it can be taken as certain that it will be applied in a way that expresses the social consciousness which prevails in England rather than that which is now sweeping through Germany.⁷⁸

As we have seen, the need to safeguard sterilization was a pressing issue for British eugenicists that Barnes and his fellow attendees had taken into consideration during the 1931 conference at Winchester. Leonard Darwin also made similar recommendations. For instance, he believed it would be advantageous to make it a crime for “anyone not a medical practitioner to sterilize anyone at any time. This would be a valuable safeguard both as to the conduct of the actual operation and as to the nature of the advice given beforehand as to its desirability.”⁷⁹ Despite such sentiments, Blacker still believed that those who “on religious or other grounds, hated eugenics,” would see the Nazi interpretation as the logical fulfilment of the main tenets of the British Eugenics Society.⁸⁰ That many felt the Brock report, like Church’s proposal before it, was destined to fail is demonstrated by Blacker’s strikingly accurate prediction: whether from “pulpit” or “platform, in the Press and

⁷⁷ Blacker, ‘Eugenics in Germany,’ 57.

⁷⁸ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Nazi Eugenics,’ *The Lancet* (June 10th, 1933), 355.

⁷⁹ Leonard Darwin, ‘Analysis of the Brock Report,’ *The Eugenics Review*, 26, 1 (April 1934), 10.

⁸⁰ Blacker, ‘Eugenics in Germany,’ 58-9.

doubtless also in Parliament,” those opposing eugenic sterilization in Britain would warn the “trustful British public” not to support the Society's policy. Rather than the key to biological rejuvenation and true social progress, the public would more likely view sterilization as “the first step down the slippery declivity that leads to compulsion, bureaucracy and the tyranny of racial or social majorities.” Until then, it was the duty of the *Eugenics Society* to pre-empt this conclusion and “seize all available opportunities of pointing out what this Society does, in fact, stand for.”⁸¹

The 1934 Brock Report

Although the Nazification of German racial hygiene affected the progress of the British Eugenics Society, for the most part, eugenicists in Britain remained focussed on the task at hand: to counter the prevalence of mental deficiency. Programmes of voluntary sterilization in other countries such as Denmark and the USA received coverage in the pages of *The Eugenics Review*.⁸² It was by following such examples that eugenicists in Britain hoped they could establish sterilization as an accepted practice. However, as the 1930s progressed, strict hereditarianism, commonly used by eugenicists to explain the existence of mental deficiency – and something Barnes had recently adopted himself – came under increasing scrutiny. This was particularly apparent when E.J. Lidbetter published his findings from the Pauper Pedigree Project. Under the title, *Heredity and the Social Problem Group* (1933), Lidbetter contended that most of those claiming long-term welfare suffered from an

⁸¹ Blacker, ‘Eugenics in Germany,’ 59.

⁸² See for example, Hans O. Wildenskov, ‘Eugenic Legislation in Denmark,’ *The Eugenics Review* 26, 4 (January 1935), 281-282 and Norman E. Himes, ‘News from the U.S.A.,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 1 (April 1935), 21-24.

inherited incapability for self-support.⁸³ Though perhaps acceptable in 1910 when the project began, it appears that such conclusions were no longer acceptable over twenty years later. Lidbetter noted that the social problem group “exhibited a surprising degree of latent ‘mental defectiveness’ which appeared frequently to be transmitted from one generation to another, through apparently normal members.”⁸⁴ For Lidbetter, ultimately, some form of negative eugenics was required to address the hereditary threat posed by the so-called “social problem group,” in other words “to prevent undue propagation of the unfit.”⁸⁵

As was the case with Wood’s aforementioned 1929 Report on mental deficiency, Lidbetter also believed that his survey had proven biology was the ultimate determinant of human behaviour. Many, however, saw the results as inconclusive. Indeed, in the introduction to the book, Leonard Darwin warned that while the pedigree charts presented by Lidbetter asserted that “every present-day defective” had undoubtedly descended from several ancestors similarly afflicted, the evidence had by no means solved the nature-nurture debate.⁸⁶ Years later Blacker recalled how “Lidbetter’s genealogical surveys (1910-1923) reflected an interest in familial incidence of social dependency,” and that “they were planned and executed during [...] a time when the social aspects of genealogy were prominent both in the United States and in this country.”⁸⁷ Pauline Mazumdar has argued that, from the 1930s, “this problematic, whose diverse features were united by a concern with social class biologically defined, disintegrated as a movement with the diminution of

⁸³ Lidbetter, *Heredity and the Social Problem Group*.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 47.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

⁸⁶ Leonard Darwin quoted in: *Ibid*, i.

⁸⁷ Carlos P. Blacker, *Problem Families: Five Inquiries* (London: Eugenics Society, 1952), 9.

class feeling that followed the end of the Second World War.”⁸⁸ The importance of environmental factors on the development of individuals became progressively more established by eugenicists as complementary to prior arguments based exclusively on genealogy.

Nonetheless, Blacker also claimed that many of the determinist conclusions of Wood’s Mental Deficiency Committee were “confirmed and extended by those of a detailed and comprehensive Survey of Merseyside which was carried out between the mid-summertime of 1929 and 1932 by Mr. D. Caradog-Jones and nine collaborators.”⁸⁹ Many of the opinions presented by Caradog-Jones – who along with Blacker would become a leading member of the Eugenics Society’s Problem Families Committee (1947-1952) in the post-war period – can be seen as a good representation of the new ideological synthesis between nature and nurture that was emerging within the eugenics movement. Nevertheless, Caradog-Jones’ study shows it was often difficult to escape the assumption, common to British eugenic ideology, that inheritance played an overbearing role in society. His 1934, *The Social Survey of Merseyside* (1934) examined the lives of poor families in the four county boroughs of Liverpool, Bootle, Birkenhead, and Wallasey and gained considerable public attention, some even likening it to the great works of Booth and Rowntree.⁹⁰ What set this publication apart from Booth and Rowntree’s studies was the emphasis on the role mental deficiency played in social life, with eight chapters from the third volume devoted to the subject. *The Eugenics Review* confidently placed the investigation among “the most important surveys made

⁸⁸ Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings*, 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Niles Carpenter, ‘The Social Survey of Merseyside,’ *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 49, 4 (August 1935), 680-693.

during the last half-century.”⁹¹ *The Manchester Guardian* reported, “Many striking facts emerge from the Survey – wide areas where only one house in ten (in the slums one in twenty-five) has a bath; a whole district in which not one house has a garden; two families out of every seven without ‘the bare essentials of civilised life’; every fourth child in an overcrowded home.”⁹² Niles Carpenter’s lengthy review of the book in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* concluded that, in terms of “the existence of a so-called ‘social problem’ population group,” this study constituted “one of the most striking expositions of the characteristics of this pathological population element that has yet become available.”⁹³

One of Caradog-Jones’ key assertions was the existence of a distinct ‘social problem group’ that bred at a higher rate than other sectors of society. It was argued that this group “tend[ed] to intermarry among themselves,” and from these “black spot,” as he put it, districts “the majority of [society’s] criminals and paupers, unemployables, and defectives of all kinds [were] recruited.”⁹⁴ He went as far as telling the Eugenics Society, in a supplementary paper, ‘Eugenic Aspects of the Merseyside Survey’ that the “more sub-normal district” had an “exceptionally high birth-rate coupled, perhaps fortunately, with high rates of mortality.”⁹⁵ Although Caradog-Jones did place more emphasis on the importance of environmental conditions than Lidbetter, his work did not deviate entirely from biological determinism. Thus, in Merseyside, while economic conditions seemed to largely determine whether a couple would have more than one child, it was “the inherent quality of the parental stock that determines the kind of children they have.” Moreover, in

⁹¹ ‘The Merseyside Survey,’ *The Eugenics Review* 23, 3 (October 1934), 204.

⁹² ‘The Social Survey of Merseyside,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (20 June 1934), 10.

⁹³ Carpenter, ‘The Social Survey of Merseyside,’ 691.

⁹⁴ David Caradog-Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1934), 229.

⁹⁵ David Caradog-Jones, ‘Eugenic Aspects of the Merseyside Survey,’ *The Eugenics Review* 28, 2 (July 1936), 112.

order to progress as a population, it would not do “to aim at improving only the framework of society: those who have a serious concern for the future must direct their attention also to the quality of the people from whom that society is increasingly recruited.”⁹⁶ If not providing distinct proof that biological determinism was the correct interpretation of human society, *The Social Survey of Merseyside* did appear to give some credence to the theory and moreover, remained influential long into the post-war period.

That same year, on behalf of Laurence Brock’s Departmental Committee on Sterilisation, the Minister of Health, Hilton Young (1879-1960) presented the 1934 Brock Report to Parliament.⁹⁷ In some respects, the Report reflected the need for clarity on the topic in the British medical community. Indeed, even organisations traditionally opposed to sterilization, such as the Central Association for Mental Welfare, had expressed the need for a Royal Commission on the subject. Reflecting the contemporary importance of the sterilization debate, among the key members of the Committee were Wilfred Trotter (1872-1939), who was at the time the King’s surgeon, A.F. Tredgold (1870-1952), a pioneer in studies on ‘high-grade’ mental defectives,⁹⁸ as well as the aforementioned R.A. Fisher.⁹⁹ Arguably, the Report represented the eugenics movement’s most public statement on sterilization yet. As Kevles has written, “in Britain, where still no law permitting sterilization existed, the Brock report was welcomed by eugenicists for its endorsement of voluntary sterilization in cases of indisputably hereditary disorders.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, as Barnes and others had argued at Winchester, the need for legislation was in part based around the fact that

⁹⁶ Caradog-Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, 229.

⁹⁷ M.J. Drake, I.W. Mills and D. Cranston, ‘On the Chequered History of the Vasectomy,’ *BJU International* 84, 4 (1999), 477. See also: Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*.

⁹⁸ See Alfred F. Tredgold, *Mental Deficiency (Amentia)* (London: Tindall and Cox, 1908).

⁹⁹ ‘Inheritance and Mental Defect,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (19 January 1934), 12.

¹⁰⁰ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 167.

while those that could afford it, if they so wished, could be sterilized in private institutions, generally speaking the working class could not. This was disastrous when one considered, among other factors, the apparent differential relationship between fertility and intelligence. If the poor had less means to control their own fertility than the rich – in this case access to contraceptives and sterilization – then there would be more unwanted pregnancies within this demographic and, as many eugenicists tended to assume, the offspring would be of a lower intelligence. Indeed, one of the Report's key suggestions was that – regardless of their financial situation – all should have the democratic choice to be sterilized if they wished. Lawyer and eugenicist Cecil Binney explained the need for legislation in these terms: "Eugenic sterilization is bound to be largely a poor-law matter since the most dysgenic elements tend to sink to the lowest ranks of society. Even, therefore, if there were no other difficulty it would be impossible to effect sterilization on a useful scale without legislative provision of the necessary funds."¹⁰¹

This draws clear parallels with the arguments of birth control enthusiasts like Stocks and Stopes in the late 1920s. In this respect, Kevles has described the democratic importance of sterilization to its advocates thus: "Legalizing voluntary sterilization was said to be a matter of social justice and – like birth control then, and abortion later – of a woman's right to control her own reproduction."¹⁰² Equally though, it was also considered that contraception, though now widely accepted, was no remedy for mental deficiency, "since we are dealing with people the majority of whom cannot be expected to exercise the care without which contraceptive measures are bound to fail."¹⁰³ As the influential

¹⁰¹ Cecil Binney, 'Legal Aspects of Sterilization,' *The Eugenics Review* 26, 1 (April 1934), 27.

¹⁰² Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 166.

¹⁰³ 'Inheritance and Mental Defect,' *The Manchester Guardian* (19 Jan 1934), 12.

psychiatrist, Edward Mapother (1881-1940) later explained in *The Eugenics Review*, “Contraception is useless in the case of irresponsible persons who can be got to see their duty sufficiently to accept voluntary sterilization, but cannot be trusted successfully to carry out contraceptive precautions.”¹⁰⁴ Though it by no means portrayed sterilization as a form of birth control in this sense, the Report did emphasise that the “parent should have the right to be sterilized” and thus “sterilization ought to be regarded as a right and not a punishment.”¹⁰⁵ This was something Darwin did not hesitate to emphasise in *The Eugenics Review*, prior to the Report’s presentation to parliament: “[T]he doctors are to regard themselves as merely judging whether the right has been acquired, not whether they themselves think the operation is advisable or inadvisable. And we may also hold that an obligation is thrown on the State to see that the individual can freely exercise his right when it has been thus established.”¹⁰⁶ After presenting a detailed examination of the scientific grounds for sterilization,¹⁰⁷ the Committee concluded that it should be legalized in the case of:

- Any person who is mentally defective or who has suffered from mental disorder.
- Any person who suffers from or is believed to be a carrier of a grave physical disability which has been shown to be transmissible.
- Any person who is believed to be likely to transmit mental disorder or defect.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Edward Mapother, ‘Safeguards in Eugenic Sterilization,’ *The Eugenics Review* 26, 1 (April 1934), 16.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in: Darwin, ‘Analysis of the Brock Report,’ 11-14.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ See also: Mapother, ‘Safeguards in Eugenic Sterilization,’ 16.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Voluntary Sterilization of the Unfit,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (19 January 1934), 9.

In suggesting the need to sterilize anyone who could pass on such a condition, it seems the Committee had wished to make possible the sterilization of both 'exhibitors' ('low-grade') and 'carriers' ('high-grade') of such inheritable conditions. In order to overcome the well-documented difficulties associated with identifying "persons who were suffering from, or were believed to be the carriers of, inherited diseases and disabilities," it was recommended that "a small advisory committee" be appointed, consisting "partly of doctors and partly of geneticists, to whom the Minister of Health may refer doubtful cases."¹⁰⁹ Further emphasizing the democratic element of the proposal, the Committee concluded that "In all cases in which the patient is capable of giving consent, it is proposed that he should sign a declaration of willingness to be sterilized" and "that sterilization should not be performed in any mental hospital" to avoid "the impression that sterilization is in any way connected with residence in an institution."¹¹⁰

Many sympathized with the cause. Curiously, on behalf of the CAMW, Leslie Scott praised the Committee for the "great thoroughness" of its work and for giving "careful consideration to every aspect of the subject." In fact, Scott felt it would therefore be "as unjust to criticize, as it would be impertinent to endorse, so important a report on what must necessarily be [...] a cursory survey."¹¹¹ However, the Brock Report ultimately failed to gain legislative backing after facing considerable opposition on several fronts. Firstly, for many it was difficult to get past the explicit associations with Germany's aforementioned compulsory law, which it seemed had already suffered abuses (e.g. the sterilization of children for cheating at school); secondly, the Labour Movement, with sterilization

¹⁰⁹ 'Voluntary Sterilization of the Unfit,' 9.

¹¹⁰ 'Sterilization: Voluntary Measure Recommended,' *The Times* (19 January 1934), 8.

¹¹¹ Leslie Scott, 'Mental Deficiency: The Sterilization Report,' *The Times* (19 January 1924), 10.

denounced in the House of Commons as anti-working class; and thirdly, the Catholic Church, with many of whom, as eugenicists had feared, using the Pope's *Casti Connubii* to justify their opposition.¹¹² However, one may argue that the underlying reason for the failure of the report, as Macnicol has suggested, was the Committee's inability to produce "convincing [scientific] proof that mental deficiency was primarily inherited, and thus enlist a powerful lobby of public and 'expert' support."¹¹³

This failure did not deter the eugenics movement from advocating for sterilization after 1934. With increasing debates taking place in both the House of Lords and Commons, it was apparent that – if not already – it was likely to become "a question of national importance."¹¹⁴ Under this assumption, the London based publisher, Pacific & Atlantic Press, sent a questionnaire on the subject to a number of "prominent people."¹¹⁵ One of these was Bishop Barnes. The questionnaire indicates the opinions on sterilization of some of those outside the eugenics movement at the time. In a seemingly rhetorical manner, the participants were asked questions such as, "Do you agree that sterilizing mental deficient will ultimately benefit the human race, both from a physical and mental standpoint?" It was also asked whether if the medical profession were given the power to decide when sterilization was necessary for an individual, if the public confidence in doctors would be shaken or if such powers would be abused. Some thought was also given to whether the practice should in fact be compulsory, with it suggested that if one's "body is likely to upset the order of society" it should be submitted "to science so that it may be rendered

¹¹² Scott, 'Mental Deficiency: The Sterilization Report,' 10.

¹¹³ Macnicol, 'Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization,' 159.

¹¹⁴ D. James, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Questionnaire on Sterilization,' (30 January 1934), EWB 9/19/51.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

harmless.”¹¹⁶ Rather than emphasis being placed on the right of the individual to be sterilized, here it was implied that it should not be their choice but that of society as a whole. The line between voluntary and compulsory was one many British eugenicists wished not to cross. Barnes’ thus replied that his sympathy for sterilization went only as far as the “arguments and conclusions” drawn by the “Departmental Committee on Sterilisation” and not to compulsory measures.¹¹⁷

By 1934, Barnes was entirely converted to the view that eugenic sterilization was imperative to social progress. That June he turned down an invitation to be “guest of honour” at the preliminary dinner of the National Conference on Maternity and Child Welfare. Considering the emphasis on pro-natalism that often characterized such events, Barnes believed his support for sterilization and birth control made him an unsuitable candidate for such a role, emphasizing his belief that “it is little short of a scandal that the municipal classes in Birmingham refuse to give birth control information to married women who desire to have it.”¹¹⁸ The objective way in which Barnes expressed the need for sterilization contrasted heavily with the uncertain nature of his statements during the late 1920s.

Curiously, later in the year *The Manchester Guardian* produced the headline, ‘Bishop Condemns Birth Control.’¹¹⁹ This was referring to a recent address on the declining middle class birth rate, which Barnes had chosen to deliver immediately after officiating a wedding.¹²⁰ He had not lost sight of the fact that mankind’s biological progress depended

¹¹⁶ H. Havord, ‘Questionnaire on Sterilization,’ (30 January, 1934), EWB 9/19/51.

¹¹⁷ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Pacific and Atlantic Press,’ (1 February, 1934), EWB 9/19/53.

¹¹⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Brodie RE: National Conference on Maternity and Child Welfare,’ (5 June 1934), EWB 9/20/40.

¹¹⁹ ‘Bishop Condemns Birth Control,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (8 October 1934), 2.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

equally on the 'better stocks' producing more children. After condemning the "deliberate prevention of children" exercised by many married couples, Barnes declared to his audience at All Souls' Church in London that the key to a happy marriage was a large family: a "childless marriage is a hopeless marriage." Barnes closed the speech, as reported in *The Manchester Guardian*, by declaring that the birth-rate was falling so rapidly that unless there was an average of four children per marriage the fall would continue and the population would suffer.¹²¹ After reading the article, Barnes wrote a letter of complaint to the editor of the newspaper for misrepresentation. According to the Bishop, he had in fact hoped to impress upon this group of "young people" – who "mainly belonged to the professional classes" – the "value to the nation of the stocks from which [they have] come."¹²² As opposed to condemning birth control, while warmly supporting the sterilization proposals of the Brock Report, so Barnes told the Editor, he had in fact repeatedly urged for increased birth control among the "tainted stocks."¹²³ Most notably, as we have seen, he had been at odds with Birmingham City Council for some time over the refusal to give "birth control information in the municipal clinics." To make clear his stance, Barnes concluded, "I would as soon condemn the use of soap as the practice of birth control."¹²⁴

Some months after the all but defeated Brock Report had been presented to parliament, Maurice Newfield, the new editor of *The Eugenics Review*, conceded that – whether successful or not – the proposal would only ever have been "a prelude to action"

¹²¹ 'Bishop Condemns Birth Control,' 2.

¹²² Ernest W. Barnes, 'Letter to *The Manchester Guardian* RE: Birth Control,' (9 October 1934), EWB 9/20/50.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

and “not action itself.”¹²⁵ From this perspective, it appears that the Committee had at the very least hoped to draw attention to the prevalence of mental deficiency and other dysgenic conditions with the hope that parliament would take steps to address the issue. However, the government subsequently chose a different approach to help deal with the county’s poor districts, hoping instead to establish a basic standard of living for every citizen. In 1935, for instance, the *Housing Act* was passed, in theory ensuring a minimum legal standard for all accommodation. As the eminent social welfare author, Theodore Sophian, commented at the time, “one of the most outstanding features of this Act is the establishment of a National Standard for determining whether a dwelling house is overcrowded or not.”¹²⁶ Despite the growing popularity of environmental improvement to help cure society’s ills, Barnes was one public figure who, like Newfield, viewed the Brock Report as only the beginning of Britain’s eugenic future and, as we shall see, advocated sterilization long into the post-war period, often using the Report to justify his own arguments.

Sterilization: A Christian Approach (1935)

Eugenic interest in sterilization had not ceased after the failure of the 1934 Brock Report. Equally, Barnes was by no means the only prelate to support the eugenic cause in Britain. In terms of the latter, other prominent members of the clergy who sympathized with eugenics included Dean Inge; the Baptist pastor, Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847-1929); the former chaplain to Queen Victoria, William Boyd Carpenter (1841-1918); the school master and

¹²⁵ Maurice Newfield, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 26, 2 (July 1934), 99.

¹²⁶ Theodore J. Sophian, ‘The Housing Act,’ *The Town Planning Review* 17, 2 (February 1937), 141.

cleric, Edward Lyttelton (1855-1942); J.E.C. Welldon (1854-1937), the Bishop of Calcutta and co-founder of the Eugenics Society;; Charles D'Arcy (1859-1938), the Church of Ireland clergyman; Leslie Weatherhead (1893-1976), a well-known Protestant theologian in the inter-war period; as well as J. P. Hinton, clergyman and co-author of *Sterilization: A Christian Approach* (1935). Of this prominent crowd, Barnes, Hinton, Inge and Weatherhead were some of the rare few churchmen who openly expressed support for negative eugenics in the 1930s, and, with Inge falling out of favour with the eugenics movement during the Second World War,¹²⁷ it was only the former two who really contributed to debates on eugenics after 1945.

In *Sterilization: A Christian Approach* (1935), Hinton and the Oxford graduate Josephine E. Calcutt presented an argument for the sterilization of the 'mentally deficient' largely in line with the Brock Report yet including, as was the case with Barnes, an underlying layer of religious justification. The main arguments were fairly typical of inter-war eugenic discourse in Britain, – especially in the chapters, 'Hereditary Physical Defects' and 'Mental Deficiency' – with much emphasis placed on the threat of mental deficiency to the health of the population. Although approaching the subject from a Christian perspective, the book looked to avoid relying on specific verses in the Bible, instead, like Barnes, approaching eugenics from a purely moral point of view. In the foreword to the book, Weatherhead,¹²⁸ confessed that it was "a pleasure to commend this able and thorough piece of work on a most difficult but very important subject" and agreed with its sentiment that the Church should not give those considered

¹²⁷ See: Chapter V. Distressed by the apparent changing ideology within the Eugenics Society, Inge resigned when social reformer William Beveridge was invited to give the 1943 Galton Lecture.

¹²⁸ Notably, Weatherhead had himself gained notoriety for preaching ministry at City Temple in London and writing books such as, *The Mastery of Sex* (1931) and *Psychology, Religion and Healing* (1951).

definitely defective mentally, [...] blessing to a union which [was] going to bring into existence other lives which [would] be damned at the outset to years of pain and misery, burden to themselves, a heartbreak to their parents, and possibly an economic responsibility which the state [would] be asked to bear both during school years and after.¹²⁹

For Hinton and Calcutt, the sterilization of both 'high' and 'low-grade' mental defectives presented the obvious solution to the "question of hereditary defects."¹³⁰ The authors looked to justify their argument on two fronts: economic and moral. First, it could not be considered economically just to allow the unchecked procreation of "persons of whom the majority will become dependent in some measure for their support on the earnings of the industrious and able-bodied members of the community."¹³¹ Moreover, while the work of those stationed in "the many institutions and welfare schemes for the care and training of mental defectives" was admirable, it would do "little or nothing to stop further cases arising in thousands; they deal with the tide as it rolls in but are powerless to control it."¹³² As well as writing from a religious standpoint, the book emphasized the importance of 'science,' which had "come to give assistance, to attempt to control in some measure the increasing number of mental defectives and others whose family history of health is such as to give quite reasonable doubt whether they can ever give birth to normal children."¹³³

¹²⁹ Leslie D. Weatherhead, 'Forward' in: J.P. Hinton and Josephine Calcutt, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1935), 6.

¹³⁰ Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach*, 22.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

From a religious perspective, it was argued that eugenics could “bring a little more order and perfection out of chaos and evil.”¹³⁴ According to the authors, it was wrong for mentally deficient individuals to raise children that had no hope of reaching full spiritual development on earth. In other words, it was not “in accordance with Christian conscience” to bring children into the world who could “never enjoy a happy and healthy home life;” “reach full development here on earth in every sphere of life, physically, mentally and spiritually;” and never have “that fullness of life which is surely God’s purpose for them,” something considered, “the right of all men and women made in the image of God.”¹³⁵

Hinton and Calcutt spent some time discussing the apparent clash between individual rights to parenthood – and marriage – and one’s “responsibilities to the rest of the community.”¹³⁶ The authors defined marriage as “the lifelong fellowship of two personalities realizing their own love in the greater love of God with the possibility of handing on this quality of life to their children.” However, this institution was only suitable for “those who [were] adequately prepared for it,” which meant “exclusion from marriage for many and certainly for those who are physically or mentally defective.”¹³⁷ A person “offering himself for sterilization,” could not be considered “counter to anything that the Christian conscience upholds.”¹³⁸ It was concluded that “the Christian conscience” could no longer tolerate “the unlimited creation of lives wrecked from their first day. Our duty is to use every faculty we possess and strain every nerve, in order that mankind may once again be recreated in the image of God.”¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach*, 153.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 153-7.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 155.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 159.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 186.

In response to the book's publication, one reviewer quipped: "Of the making of books on sterilization there would seem to be no end."¹⁴⁰ Perhaps owing to the number of books published on sterilization during this time, then, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach* has been scarcely mentioned by the historiography on British eugenics. Even so, at the time it gained significant support from *The Medical Times* and Glasgow minister Rev. Arthur Herbert Gray (1868-1956). *The Medical Times* commented that the sterilization of "the mental deficient" was a problem which is "very ably handled in this volume" and on behalf of the journal, wished to "recommend it to our readers as a sound expression of opinion on the subject."¹⁴¹ Gray, author of the marriage advice book *Men, Women and God* (1922),¹⁴² also gave a positive review of the book: "Deep conviction lies behind it, yet there is no exaggeration and no desire to claim more for sterilization than can be justly claimed. [...] I have no hesitation whatever in recommending the publication of the book. England needs it, and needs it immediately."¹⁴³

However, not all feedback was positive. For instance, the London based *Post-Graduate Medical Journal*, declared that from the moral point of view, "any scheme which has as one of its main objects the possibility of enjoying the pleasures [of sexual intercourse] without shouldering the responsibilities [of bearing children] can hardly claim support on Christian grounds."¹⁴⁴ Moreover, using an argument "based on the belief in the hereditary nature of mental deficiency," Hinton and Calcutt were criticized for confusing "high grade and low grade mental deficiency." Firstly, with 'high-grade' mental deficiency – which it

¹⁴⁰ 'Review: Sterilization: A Christian Approach,' *Post-Graduate Medical Journal* (December 1935), 483.

¹⁴¹ 'Advertisement: *Sterilization: A Christian Approach*,' *The Eugenics Review* 27, 3 (October 1935), 197.

¹⁴² Arthur H. Gray, *Men, Women and God* (Glasgow: George Allen & Unwin, 1922).

¹⁴³ 'Advertisement: Sterilization: A Christian Approach,' 197.

¹⁴⁴ 'Review: Sterilization: A Christian Approach,' 483.

seemed was easily confused with types of “subnormal intelligence” not caused by hereditary transmission – sterilization could not be justified. Secondly, in the opinion of this reviewer, ‘low-grade’ mental deficiency – or those exhibiting mental illness – was “certainly not hereditary in the majority of instances” but caused by dire living and thus “in great part unaffected by any such measure as sterilization.”¹⁴⁵ The review concluded thus: “If these propagandists would restrict their attention to such definitely hereditary diseases as deaf mutism, hemophilia and pseudo-hypertrophic muscular paralysis, they would be justified in claiming support, but then the comparatively low incidence of these conditions would preclude the promise of any spectacular results.”¹⁴⁶

In any case, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach* seems to provide further evidence that – in some cases – religion was used not as a barrier against but as a justification for the introduction of eugenic measures. Curiously, the book achieved notoriety some ten years later at the 1948 Nuremberg trials. Hinton and Calcutt received perhaps unfavourable attention from Nazi scholar Wolfgang Stroothernke (1913-1945), who referenced the book in his 1940 *Erbpflege und Christentum: Fragen der Sterilisation, Aufnordung, Euthanasie, Ehe (Eugenics and Christianity: Questions of Sterilization, Northernization, Euthanasia, Marriage)*. It was used as evidence in the trial against Karl Brandt, Hitler’s personal physician and head of the Nazi euthanasia programme from 1939, who had Stroothernke’s book in his possession, and contributed to the evidence that led to his execution. Curiously, Stroothernke had made reference to both Hinton and Barnes on page 47:

¹⁴⁵ ‘Review: Sterilization: A Christian Approach,’ 483.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

In England too, eugenics have already been recognized by a part of the Church. A comprehensive work has been published by Hinton. We consider it a sin against the idea of personality and conscience 'to insist upon the propagation of degenerate and sick life, if means are available to oppose such a calamity. It seems blasphemy to imagine that the birth of sick children could be at all God's will and Divine providence' (Hinton, J.P. and Calcutt, Josephine: *Sterilization, A Christian Approach*, London 1935).

The exercise of immediate pressure is naturally excluded. Thus the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham publicly defined his attitude in favour of sterilization, expressing his regret that the various proposals concerning voluntary sterilization had not been considered by the British Government.¹⁴⁷

After the Nuremberg Trials, Hinton and Calcutt would not emerge again in any debate on eugenics. Interestingly, it was at this point that Barnes became most extreme in his public pronouncements. There is nothing on record that shows Barnes was aware of the mentioning of his name at the trial of Nazi doctors.

Despite the efforts of Barnes and others, in the eyes of many of its British proponents eugenics remained a religion in itself, based on a new moral code. In this respect, it seemed reconciliation with 'organized' religion was unnecessary. If eugenics was concerned solely with the future of the race, was there any need to believe in the Christian God? In late 1935, at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association, Lord Horder addressed this issue: "Just as John the Baptist preached a gospel which was followed by an

¹⁴⁷ Wolfgang Stroothenke, *Erbpflege und Christentum: Fragen der Sterilisation, Aufnordung, Euthanasie, Ehe* (Gotha: L. Klotz, 1940), 47.

epoch of momentous consequences in the world's religious life, so will the gospel which we preach usher in an epoch in the physical and intellectual progress of the human race.”¹⁴⁸

The philosophy of Julian Huxley (1887-1975)¹⁴⁹ took Galton's idea of eugenics as a secular religion further.¹⁵⁰ In his 1928, *Religion Without Revelation* Huxley described the decline of religion as the “greatest defect” of the modern world and, perhaps contrary to many advocates of scientific progress, “complete scepticism” did not work.¹⁵¹ Rather than reforming the Church of England though, Huxley believed it was time for a new religion, completely accessible to the scientific, forward-looking minds of modern times.¹⁵² In his 1936 Galton Lecture, Huxley warned the Eugenics Society that even if the “dogmatic theological and moral [opposition]” from “certain schools of Christian thought” to birth-control and even the very notion of eugenics could be overcome, there would still exist “the prevailing individualist attitude to marriage, and the conception, based on this and on the long religious tradition of the West, of the subordination of personal love to procreation.”¹⁵³ According to Huxley, society needed “a new attitude to these problems, an attitude which for want of another term we may still call religious. We need to replace the present attitude fostered by established religions by a new but equally potent attitude.” To achieve this aim, “individual salvation” would be replaced by “social salvation” and “other-worldly

¹⁴⁸ Horder, ‘Eugenics,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 4 (January 1936), 277.

¹⁴⁹ Huxley was a renowned evolutionary biologist and eventual President of the Eugenics Society in the 1950s.

¹⁵⁰ Paul T. Phillips, ‘One World, One Faith: The Quest for Unity in Julian Huxley's Religion of Evolutionary Humanism,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, 4 (October 2007), 619-20.

¹⁵¹ Julian Huxley, *Religion Without Revelation*, 24.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 376.

¹⁵³ Huxley, ‘Eugenics and Society,’ 28-30.

phantasies” with “the real possibility of evolutionary progress.”¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Huxley saw eugenics as the “most sacred ideal of the human race” and the “religion of the future.”¹⁵⁵

Notably, in 1938, the American eugenicist, C.M. Goethe reported to *The Eugenics Review* that churchmen in America were “beginning to grasp that eugenics and religion [were] synonymous.”¹⁵⁶ It was hoped that the same may happen in Britain. However, with leading eugenicists such as Huxley moving towards secular alternatives to Christianity, the topic of ‘religion and eugenics’ would never inhabit as much space in the pages of *The Eugenics Review* as it had between 1930 and 1933. After the war, albeit from marginalized positions, Hinton, until 1948, and Barnes, into the 1950s, continued to portray eugenics as a means of bringing humanity closer to God. At the 1945 Conference of Modern Churchmen, for example, Hinton maintained the view that eugenic policies needed Christian guidance: “If a eugenic policy developed without the guidance of the Church the result was likely to be disastrous.”¹⁵⁷ Curiously, Hinton argued in the same paper against the use of artificial insemination on the grounds that “it was artificial and had no spiritual background or reality.”¹⁵⁸ Chapter VI examines Barnes’ post-war approach to negative eugenics and, in contrast to Hinton, eventual sympathy for AI. The former, as mentioned, sparked a fervent public debate on the subject, intensified by the Nazi experience and uncertainty of post-war reconstruction.

¹⁵⁴ Huxley, ‘Eugenics and Society,’ 28-30.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Charles M. Goethe, ‘Program of the Society,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 1 (April 1938), 78.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Christian Eugenics: Conference of Modern Churchmen,’ *The Times* (August 18, 1945), 2

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Another Great War?

During the mid-1930s, Barnes' sermons began to recall those of the mid-1920s, during which time pacifism and religious decline became central themes. In his 1935 paper on 'What of the Future?', he declared to his St Paul's Cathedral audience that "during the last quarter of a century the Christian faith in England has grown weaker."¹⁵⁹ Barnes had observed worse developments still in other European nations: "since the Great War Christianity has died out in Russia and that Christians today are a persecuted minority in Germany, while in France even the great Cathedrals are showing ominous signs of decay." According to Barnes, unless Christianity could recover its hold on the more "thoughtful and well-educated people," another Great War was inevitable, in which the "soil of Europe" would again be "deluged with blood" and "all the finer elements of Christian civilization" would be "smothered by the crop of fanaticisms and superstitions." In order to avoid the collapse of civilization, so Barnes contended, "the great races" had to "attain to a common intellectual and emotional outlook in which Christian standards are authoritative," both collectively embracing God's "good providence" and achieving "freedom from international anarchy." Only then could the theories of eugenics be applied to society:

There are more people in England now than there have ever been before and probably the peak will be reached this year or next. A slow decrease in our numbers will probably make life easier and it will be no bad thing provided the quality of our racial stocks does not deteriorate. But I fear that the worse stocks are more fertile

¹⁵⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'What of the Future?', (12 May 1935), EWB 12/1/571.

than the better. [...] And the proposals for voluntary sterilization, though unanimously recommended by the Bock Committee, still await the approval of the Government.¹⁶⁰

In the subsequent years, Barnes' rhetoric was coloured by references to the impending population decline, the ostensible decline of morality and the very real decline of peace in Europe. Sharing some of his concerns, Alexander Carr-Saunders helped set up the Committee for Positive Eugenics (CPE) in 1935. The first order of business was "to draw up 'a statement of a factual character' on the steps taken in other countries to promote fertility," of particular interest were the political measures taken by the Fascist governments in Germany and in Italy.¹⁶¹ Mazumdar has noted that generally speaking, as the 1930s progressed, the 'fascist' approach to eugenics seemed to view society "in racist rather than class terms" and "were interested in quantity rather than quality."¹⁶² In contrast, the Eugenics Society never moved towards an overtly racial concept of the state: "it continued to advocate both negative and positive eugenics, rather than to look for a way to increase the British birth rate as a whole. Its class emphasis was never lost."¹⁶³ The CPE, then, opted as its main policy to "provide the main financial support for a committee to investigate human fertility" and "conduct propaganda aimed at abolishing the unwanted and encouraging the wanted child and at educating those who might not be eugenically sound to think twice about having children."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Barnes, 'What of the Future?'

¹⁶¹ Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings*, 37.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ W.H.G. Armytage, 'Population, Politics and the Origins of the PIC,' *Galton Institute Home Page* (September 1996), [www.galtoninstitute.org.uk/Newsletters/GINL9609/social_context, accessed on 14 January 2014].

Barnes was by no means alone with his opinions on population, pacifism and eugenics. In the subsequent years, eugenicists such as C.P. Blacker and A.V. Glass, who created the Population Investigation Committee in 1936, appeared equally perturbed by the apparently imminent demographic decline. During the Second World War, several eugenicists, Barnes included, voiced their opinions on the negative biological implications of war. One notable example was the short-lived debate in *The Eugenics Review*, featuring Guy Porter and C. Usher, 'Is War Dysgenic?'.¹⁶⁵ The shocking implications of Nazi ideology became apparent as the Second World War progressed and increasing time was given in the pages of *The Eugenics Review* to alternate methods of social improvement. In 1943, William Beveridge – after proposing his flat-rate family benefit scheme to parliament – controversially presented his Galton paper on the 'Eugenic Aspects of Children's Allowances'.¹⁶⁶ Nonetheless, though the world was changing and with it people's opinions on eugenics, Barnes, as we shall see, maintained his core belief in negative eugenics.

¹⁶⁵ Guy Porter and C. Usher, 'Is War Dysgenic,' *The Eugenics Review* 32, 3 (October 1940), 105.

¹⁶⁶ William Beveridge, 'Eugenic Aspects of Children's Allowances.' *The Eugenics Review* 34, 4 (January 1943), 117-123.

CHAPTER V:

PACIFISM AND POPULATION, c.1936-1945

*The worst evil that can befall a nation is the destruction of its best stocks. [...] Total war gives a nation a 'scrub' population.*¹

- EWB, 1945

Between 1936 and 1945, many eugenicists in Britain made somewhat belated efforts to distance their movement from fascism and Nazism. As well as adopting aggressive expansionist political policies, the regimes in Italy and Germany continued to develop and enforce their own interpretations of eugenics, with an increasing emphasis on racial differences and compulsive measures. In 1936, British psychiatrist Elliot Slater (1904-1983) – who had studied under Bruno Schulz at the *Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie* (Psychiatric Research Institute) in Munich from 1934 to 1935 – reported to the Eugenics Society, soon after his return to Britain, that, even for the average ‘racially pure’ German citizen: “The atmosphere of compulsion pervades the whole of his life. The fact that he and his fellow men are now to be selected and bred like a herd of cattle seems to him hardly more distasteful than a hundred other interferences in his daily life.”² The same year it was reported in the press – no doubt reinforcing the reservations many held toward Nazi racial hygiene – that though “mental deficiency may result from cerebral injuries and be neither inherited nor transmissible,” in Germany “almost all mental defectives are compelled to

¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘University of Cambridge Sermon’ (22 April, 1945), EWB 12/1/649.

² Eliot Slater, ‘German Eugenics in Practice,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 4 (January 1936), 295.

undergo sterilization. As a rule, no attempt is made to discover whether the defect has been inherited or not.”³ In early 1936, Barnes too denounced the presence of such dictatorships in Europe: “Let us not flaunt our might in the eyes of the world, but leave bombast and cruelty to dictators, who have forced their might on less fortunate nations. Under a dictator a country loses more than its liberty. It loses its reputation.”⁴

Nonetheless, with the accelerated process of rearmament in the face of impending war as a distressing backdrop, the Eugenics Society attempted to gain public and political favour. There were already a growing number of eugenicists who wished to bring their ideas in line with both modern scientific knowledge and mainstream ideas of social reform. A large number of papers on biology and human genetics were published, using journals such as the Eugenics Society’s *Annals of Eugenics* (originally launched in 1925), in an attempt to gain scientific credibility for the movement. Kevles referred to this younger generation, which included figures such as Blacker and Huxley, among others, as “Reform eugenicists.”⁵

Some geneticists like L.S. Penrose also began to question the eugenic effectiveness of sterilization.⁶ One may argue that if eugenic discourse during the early 1930s was dominated by literature on sterilization, then for the second half of the decade it was the ‘population problem.’⁷ The editor of *The Eugenics Review*, Maurice Newfield, posed this

³ ‘Sterilisation in Germany: Remarkable Figures, 85,000 Orders Issued,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (30 May 1936), 11.

⁴ Barnes quoted in ‘A Bishop’s View on Dictators,’ *The Observer* (10 May 1936), 27.

⁵ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 192.

⁶ See for instance: Lionel S. Penrose, ‘Is Our National Intelligence Declining?’ *Opening Session of 5th Biennial Conference on Mental Health* (1/12/39), [www.dnalc.org/view/12138--Is-Our-National-Intelligence-Declining-L-S-Penrose-Opening-Session-of-5th-Biennial-Conference-on-Mental-Health-1-12-39-5-, accessed on 13 August 2013].

⁷ A number of books were published on the subject including, T.H. Marshall, Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, Hubert D. Henderson, Réne R. Kuczynski and Arnold Plant, *The Population Problem* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938); David V. Glass, *The Struggle for Population* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936); and Richard And Kathleen Titmuss, *Parents’ Revolt: A Study of the Declining Birth-Rate in Acquisitive Societies* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1942).

question in 1935: “How shall we combat our own imminent decline in population?”⁸ As we shall see, in contrast with the contentious subject of sterilization, the work of eugenicists like Blacker on population was often supported by a more general growing fear of imminent population decline in British society. This subject even received national attention, culminating later with work carried out by the Royal Commission on Population (1944-1949).

This is not to say that negative eugenics was any less appealing to eugenicists. The general understanding of eugenics put forward by the Society had in some respects changed very little. In the words of leading physician and President of the Eugenics Society during the Second World War, Lord Thomas Horder (1871-1955): “The aim of Eugenics is to study the laws of heredity as they apply to human beings, with the practical purpose of using this knowledge for improving the physical and mental quality of the race.”⁹ Eugenicists continued to ponder, along with Evelyn Fox, the Honorary Secretary for the Central Association for Mental Welfare (CAMW), whether – since the passing of the Mental Deficiency Acts (1913 and 1927) – they had in fact been successful in securing “care, supervision and control for their own protection or for the protection of others.”¹⁰ Fox – who a decade earlier, as we have seen, took a stance along with her CAMW colleagues against sterilization in the pages of *The Times* – here expressed some sympathy for the practice, particularly in the case of “stable high-grade defectives,” for whom there was little

⁸ Maurice Newfield, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 2 (July 1935), 92. This produced a prolonged debate in the ‘Correspondence’ section of *The Eugenics Review* from October 1935 through April 1936. See R.B. Kerr, ‘The Decline in Population,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 3 (October 1935), 259; B.A. Collins, Guy Porter and R.B. Kerr, ‘The Decline in Population,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 4 (January 1936), 350-1; and R.B. Kerr, ‘The Decline in Population,’ *The Eugenics Review* 28, 1 (April 1936), 83-4.

⁹ Thomas J. Horder, ‘Eugenics,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 4 (January 1936), 282.

¹⁰ Evelyn Fox, ‘Modern Developments in Mental Welfare Work,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 3 (October 1938), 165-173.

organisations like the CAMW could do. According to Fox, this elusive group was “unlikely to be certified or to remain under the Mental Deficiency Acts,” yet would “always constitute a danger to the community from the point of view of future generations.” While the Brock Report had ultimately failed, there was still hope, it seemed, for eugenic sterilization to gain new supporters. As Fox concluded: “What we can do is try to keep the group not only as small as possible, but in continuous touch with trained social workers. If voluntary sterilization were legalized its members might apply for the operation in youth.”¹¹

A number of fringe groups advocating social progress – though not necessarily affiliated with the Eugenics Society – still sympathized with the eugenic cause. In May 1936 for instance, the National Conference of Labour Women (NCLW) adopted a resolution in favour of voluntary sterilization. Under the assumption that sterilization was a “form of preventive medicine,” Dr. Edith Summerskill and her colleagues advocated the sterilisation of

- 1) Those persons who are mentally defective or who are suffering from mental disorder.
- 2) Those persons who suffer from or are believed to be carriers of a grave physical disability which has been shown to be transmissible.
- 3) Those persons who are believed to be likely to transmit mental disorder or defect.¹²

¹¹ Fox, ‘Modern Developments in Mental Welfare Work,’ 173.

¹² ‘Legalisation of Voluntary Sterilisation: Labour Women’s Support,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (22 May 1936), 12.

In anticipation of popular fears regarding the compulsive abuse of sterilization, it was argued here that examples such as the United States – where the practice had been legal since 1907 – showed that there could easily be ample and effective safeguards put in place. Thus, rather than just one physician deciding the fate of his patient, there would be “two or three doctors;” each case would be “discussed carefully;” and there would be “no question of compulsory sterilization.”¹³ Also advocating for sterilization at this time was T.R. Burnett, Director of Education for Dumfriesshire, Scotland. In June 1936, addressing the Cumberland, Westmorland, and Carlisle Voluntary Association for Mental Welfare, Burnett declared that a recent intelligence test conducted in some local schools had revealed that “over a quarter of the children were below normal and unsuited to the ordinary curriculum.”¹⁴ With compulsory sterilization not at present practicable, some form of voluntary sterilization was desirable to prevent further degeneration.¹⁵

Earlier that year R.B. Cattell, the director of the School Psychological Clinic at Leicester, had argued that unless sterilization and birth control were applied to the ‘slums,’ within two generations there would be a disastrous lowering of the national intelligence.¹⁶ However, Barnes, who had attended the lecture, was somewhat sceptical as to whether widespread support for eugenic measures could be garnered from the Church or elsewhere. As *The Manchester Guardian* reported: “If we had statesmen worthy of the name they would be thinking about the next generation, but posterity has no votes and the Church is not interested in the matters.”¹⁷ As discussed later in the chapter, in an attempt to

¹³ ‘Legalisation of Voluntary Sterilisation: Labour Women’s Support,’ 12.

¹⁴ ‘Mental Defectives,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (27 June 1936), 8.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ ‘Race Deterioration,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (2 January 1936), 12.

¹⁷ Ibid.

somewhat rectify this situation, the Bishop continued to advocate the reform of the Church: “Much that our fathers believed must perish. Let it perish. Look to the future. [...] Christ’s ethics give an edge to theism, which makes it [...] a spiritual sword.”¹⁸

The Population Problem

To many eugenicists, it had become clear that – in part due to the alarming reports of its abuse in Germany – eugenic sterilization was unlikely to ever be made a legal practice in Britain. This prompted an increased focus on population trends and positive eugenics. Anticipating this development, in 1935 Alexander Carr-Saunders had outlined some key issues pertaining to the way he saw the respective roles of positive and negative eugenics in future social policies. While in the past it may have been “more urgent and more practicable to restrain the unpromising than to encourage the promising,” Carr-Saunders now declared the need for “a complete reorientation of outlook, a thorough examination of all circumstances which bear upon parenthood and the formulation of carefully constructed proposals designed to assist parenthood.”¹⁹ When preaching positive eugenics, Carr-Saunders bemoaned the fact that “No institution has been so degraded and vulgarized as marriage. [...] Those who are concerned about the small family problem should address themselves earnestly to a reform of the outlook upon marriage.”²⁰ Other eugenicists also focussed on the falling middle-class birth rate and the need for positive eugenics. B. S. Bramwell, for instance, suggested the following year that the more, as he put it, “able”

¹⁸ Ernest W. Barnes quoted in ‘Modernism and the Church,’ *The Observer* (23 August 1936), 7.

¹⁹ Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, ‘Eugenics and the Declining Birth Rate,’ *Population and Development Review* 30, 1 (March 2004), 157.

²⁰ Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, *World Population* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 256.

members of the community ought to “marry at about the age of twenty-five” and have “four or five children by the time they reach thirty-five.”²¹ To Bramwell, eugenics was not an attempt to breed “a race of super-men,” but to “raise the fertility of those who are not definitely subnormal until at least they replace themselves.”²²

It was under such assumptions, along with the need to make eugenics more appealing to a mass audience, that the secretary of the Eugenics Society, C.P. Blacker, along with Carr-Saunders, founded the Population Investigation Committee (PIC) in 1936. Clare Hanson has recently described the PIC thus: “founded amid considerable controversy surrounding eugenics, birth control, and even the study of population itself.” Through studying population trends, Hanson continued, “Its founders, A.M. Carr-Saunders and C.P. Blacker, sought to realise a means of improving the human race that was more consistent with contemporary scientific, social and political values.”²³ The *British Medical Journal* appears to have appreciated this new project, admitting that “before useful suggestions can be made to avert a serious decline in numbers there must be a much fuller investigation of the position than has yet been undertaken.”²⁴ In line with this, the PIC’s first annual report declared that it had “been formed to examine 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. It is not a propagandist Committee and is not concerned with advocating any social measures with the object of influencing the movement of populations.”²⁵

²¹ B.S. Bramwell, ‘Falling Population and Positive Eugenics,’ *The Eugenics Review* 28, 4 (January 1937), 273.

²² Bramwell, ‘Falling Population and Positive Eugenics,’ 273.

²³ ‘The Population Investigation Committee: its history and influence over the last 75 years,’ *Centre for Population Change* [<http://www.cpc.ac.uk/events/?action=story&id=70>, accessed on 13 August 2013].

²⁴ ‘Population Investigation Committee,’ *British Medical Journal* 2, 3958 (14 November 1936), 989.

²⁵ Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, ‘Population Investigation Committee: First Annual Report,’ *The Eugenics Review*, 29, 4 (January 1938), 239.

One of the PIC's main ventures during this period was to send its research secretary, the eminent sociologist, D.V. Glass (1911-1978), to examine continental population policies in France, Belgium and Germany. Carr-Saunders described the study as significant because Glass was able "to collect information that is not otherwise available in this country, and also to interview some of those officials who [...] are closely concerned with the operation of the various foreign schemes."²⁶ The title given to the publication was *The Struggle for Population*. Many eugenicists, Barnes included,²⁷ agreed with Caradog-Jones' enthusiastic description of the book as "a most valuable piece of work."²⁸ Glass described his main concern as the threat of "declining numbers."²⁹ In almost every country in the western world, "the birth-rate has now fallen to such a point that, if it continues at the present level, populations will soon begin to decline and that, once decline has begun, its downward progress will be rapid. [Britain] is a striking example of the probability of future decline."³⁰

Later that year, Blacker and Glass produced a joint pamphlet on behalf of the PIC called *The Future of Our Population*. It was asserted that "unless drastic changes occur in family life, the population of this country is destined after some fifteen years or so to enter upon a period of increasingly rapid decline,"³¹ a prediction demonstrated in the following graph:

²⁶ Glass, *The Struggle for Population*, x.

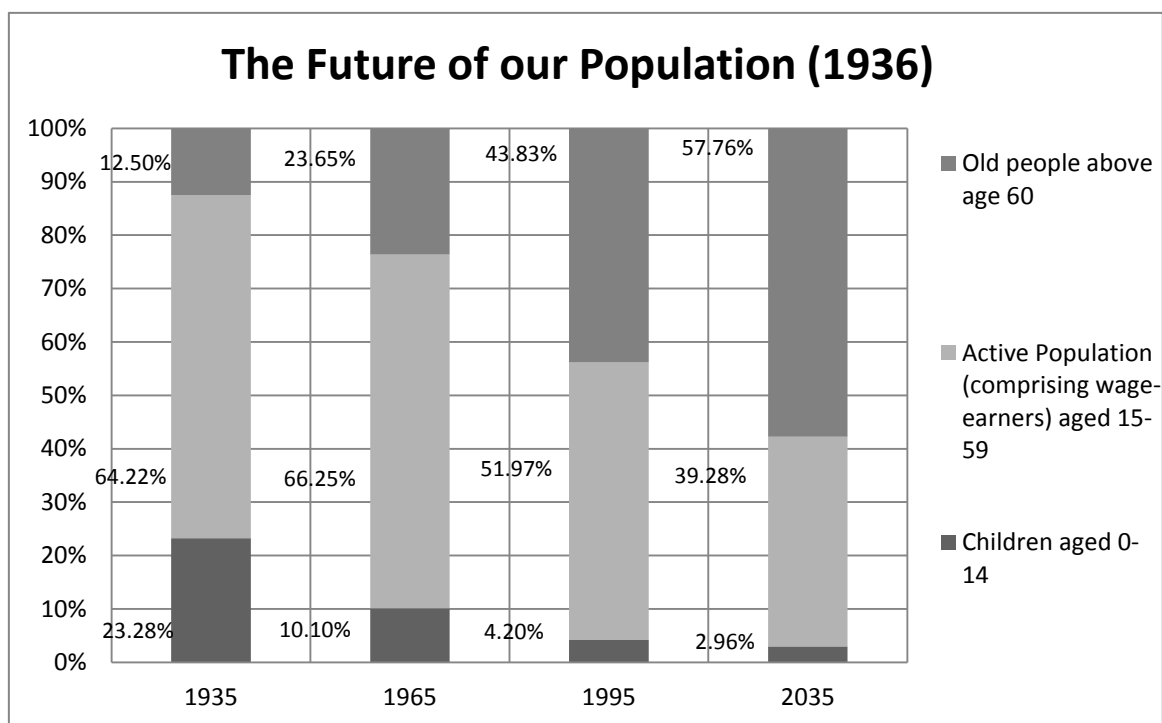
²⁷ Barnes too was impressed, as he told one correspondent regarding a recent speech he had delivered on the birth rate. See: Ernest W. Barnes, 'Reply to Percival RE: Birth Rate,' (18 October 1937), EWB 9/19/63.

²⁸ David Caradog-Jones, 'Eugenics and the Decline in Population,' *The Eugenics Review* 28, 3 (October 1936), 213.

²⁹ *Ibid*, v.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

³¹ Carlos P. Blacker and David V. Glass, *The Future of Our Population?* (London: Eugenics Society, 1936), 29.



(From Carlos P. Blacker and David V. Glass, *The Future of Our Population?* (London: Eugenics Society, 1936), 29.)

Assuming that present trends continued, most notably the authors believed that the proportion of people over 60 would increase over time while the proportion of children aged 0-14 would decrease.³²

There is evidence to suggest that the fear of de-population existed on a national scale. *The Times*, for instance, spoke favourably of the PIC: "If research should precede action, then the Population Investigation Committee, with its expert personnel, seems well fitted for the task. [...] [T]here should be no lack of support for a venture of such importance."³³ The PIC's initial 'Draft Research Programme,' for instance, examined factors effecting 'Fertility and Social Mobility' and 'Barriers to Marriage.'³⁴ In 1937, Glass also

³² Blacker and Glass, *The Future of Our Population?*, 29.

³³ 'A Royal Commission,' *The Times* (17 April 1937): 3.

³⁴ David V. Glass, 'Draft Research Programme' (1936), *Closed Stores Archive, Wellcome Trust*, SA/EUG/D.161:Box AMS/MF/114.

concluded, first: “that the problems of a stationary or a declining population will not be met adequately by an unplanned economic system such as we have today;” and second, “only under some form of rationally planned civilization are we likely to produce an environment in which high fertility and a high standard of life will both be possible.”³⁵

Feeding into this growing discourse on population, there was an increased interest from some eugenicists in the material influences on family life, as the PIC’s Annual Reports demonstrate. It was emphasized that increased consideration must be given to the economic implications of marriage, child-bearing and the raising of children. In particular, it was suggested that a study should be conducted on “the assistance given by the State to families of different sizes in different social classes.”³⁶ To some eugenicists, like Grace Leybourne, this meant reducing the cost of private education in the hope of maintaining a higher number of intelligent people in society.³⁷ Indeed, the PIC’s Second Annual Report declared that the cost of education formed “part of the complex of economic deterrents from parenthood.”³⁸ While concerns surrounding the relationship between birth rate and intelligence were no new thing, there was a somewhat heightened interest at this time, with the January 1939 issue of *The Eugenics Review*, for instance, publishing no less than three papers on intelligence tests and family size.³⁹

To help address some of the problems identified by its forerunner, the PIC, the Population Policies Committee (PPC) was formed, which also included as members Blacker,

³⁵ David V. Glass, ‘The Population Problem and the Future,’ *The Eugenics Review* 29, 1 (April 1937), 47.

³⁶ ‘Population Investigation Committee: First Annual Report,’ *The Eugenics Review* 29, 4 (January 1938), 242.

³⁷ Grace G. Leybourne, ‘A Declining Birth-Rate and the Cost of Education,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 1 (April 1938), 33-41 and ‘The growth of Education in England and its influence on the Size of the Family,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 3 (October 1938), 175-186.

³⁸ ‘Population Investigation Committee: Second Annual Report,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 4 (January 1939), 270.

³⁹ See: John A. Fraser Roberts, ‘Intelligence and Family Size;’ Charles Spearman ‘“Intelligence” Tests;’ and Cyril Burt, ‘The Latest Revision of the Binet Intelligence Tests,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 4 (January 1939), 237-260.

Glass and Carr-Saunders.⁴⁰ The apparently imminent, yet hidden, decline in population put the PPC in a unique position, as Carr-Saunders explained in his Galton Lecture: “Everyone will soon be asking what is to be done. A population policy will certainly be constructed: now is the time to ensure that it will be a policy in which eugenic considerations are not omitted.”⁴¹ Providing what one may assume to be a useful indication of some of the predominant concerns of eugenicists at the time, Francois Lafitte identified the PPC’s main topics of interest as follows: “1) The position of the family on unemployment pay 2) Family allowances 3) A diagnosis of the causes of the fall in fertility.”⁴²

In some respects, the PPC seemed to provide an appropriate framework for the Eugenics Society to work with existing social legislation. In fact, many of the suggested schemes would become important aspects of the post-war British welfare state. Thus, according to the analyst, Francois Lafitte (1913-2002), it was imperative first, to provide the family with “a source of income other than the earnings of its breadwinner,” which may include “rent rebates, school-feeding, improved maternity and medical services, differential pricing schemes, taxation, and so forth;” and second, “to ensure that every child that is brought into the world is guaranteed an adequate basic minimum of food, clothing, shelter and medical care.”⁴³ Although these ideas shared more than a passing resemblance to those advocated by William Beveridge and other more mainstream social reformers, discussed later in the chapter, the PPC remained fundamentally eugenic in its outlook. Thus, Lafitte did not hasten to add that there should be “a revision of the absurd social accountancy which

⁴⁰ ‘Population Investigation Committee: Second Annual Report,’ 271-2.

⁴¹ Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, ‘Eugenics in the Light of Population Trends,’ *The Eugenics Review* 27, 1 (April 1935), 11-20.

⁴² Francois Lafitte, ‘The Work of the Population Policies Committee,’ *The Eugenics Review* 31, 1 (April 1939), 48.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

provides that ten times as much money should be spent weekly on a mentally defective child as on the (potentially) healthy child of an unemployment worker.”⁴⁴

Religion, Divorce and Race

While sharing the general outlooks of the PIC and PPC, Barnes also campaigned for ‘religious revival,’ with the firm belief that God’s guidance was essential to the success of any future social policy, particularly those concerning population and those engaging with the threat of war. He thus declared in early 1937: “Without a progressive and essentially Christian reordering of society we should not escape an increasingly serious diminution in the number of our people.”⁴⁵ Despite his growing concerns regarding population decline, Barnes did not advocate eugenics from a pro-natal perspective, which from the 1920s had become the consensus in Fascist Italy, for instance.⁴⁶ Instead, following a 1937 speech at the University of Oxford, *The Times* reported that Barnes would “not have our numbers at home increase; but they would diminish unless the birth-rate rose.” If Britain could maintain the quantity while increasing the quality of the population, “we should do well. It would be satisfactory if other European nations could fare similarly. We might then avoid alike the pressure of population that led to war and the temptation of dictators to make war.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Lafitte, ‘The Work of the Population Policies Committee,’ 55.

⁴⁵ ‘Causes of Racial Decay,’ *The Times* (8 March 1937), 11.

⁴⁶ See Quine, *Population Politics in Twentieth Century Europe: Fascist Dictatorships and Liberal Democracies*; idem *Italy’s Social Revolution: Charity and Welfare from Liberalism to Fascism* (London: Palgrave, 2002); ‘Racial “Sterility” and “Hyperfecundity” in Fascist Italy: Biological Politics of Sex and Reproduction,’ *Fascism* 1 (2012), 92-144; and, Francesco Cassata, *Building the New Man. Eugenics, Racial Science and Genetics in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2011).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

During the late 1930s, on two occasions Barnes referred to the practices of sterilization and euthanasia as potential means to counter the differential birth rate and apparent racial decline of society. It appears that he was becoming less hesitant in impressing the need for negative eugenics. Indeed, at this time, as his biographer has suggested, Barnes:

not only spoke positively of the chances of breeding new types of human beings. He made clear in private that he now thought there were cases where the termination of pregnancy was justifiable and he stated publicly in an Oxford University Sermon that it was wrong 'to keep alive individuals whom doctors know to be doomed from birth to a sub-human existence'. [...] He appealed in effect for leadership from the Archbishop, who however declined further combat and brought the correspondence to a hasty close.⁴⁸

Likewise, in May 1936, at Temple Church, Barnes suggested that voluntary sterilization may be the only effective means to deal with mental deficiency. As *The Manchester Guardian* reported, for him, "Without further inquiry we knew that mental defect was inherited from mental defectives."⁴⁹ While eugenicists had not discovered the entire picture, particularly the origins of genetic mutations, for Barnes, as many had urged before him, enough was now known for the establishment of some legal safeguard for voluntary sterilization. It was with this in mind that after the war he would argue more directly for the introduction of negative eugenic measures.

⁴⁸ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 342-3.

⁴⁹ 'Dr. Barnes on Sterilization,' *The Manchester Guardian* (25 May 1936), 10.

In 1937, the Bishop identified the declining birth rate – along with the preservation of peace and the adjustment of personal relationships in industry – as one of the “three great perplexing difficulties confronting the present generation.”⁵⁰ Thus, for Barnes, assuming that “as one of the great nations,” Britain *could* avoid another war in Europe, it would still be faced with the question: “How are we to preserve our numbers and our qualities?”⁵¹ When delivering one sermon in the presence of newly elected Mayor of Birmingham, E.R. Canning, he later recognized that the city, “like modern England, owed its greatness to the fecundity of good stocks in the Victorian era.”⁵² Barnes was quick to point out here that while such families were not necessarily noble or rich, they did consist of “those honest, sound men and women, often of narrow means, whose lives were honourable, who eschewed vulgar pleasures and mean ambitions, who – in a word – were trustworthy.” Among such people “sound health,” as he put it, was usually the result of “clean living: wholesome vigour and sobriety went together. [...] We shall fail to preserve that greatness if the best stocks die out.”⁵³

In the lecture ‘God Speaks to this Generation,’ delivered to the Student Christian Movement in January 1937, Barnes declared that God had enabled man to possess “a marvellous control over nature,” which had been shamefully misused.⁵⁴ While it appeared that the ‘best stocks’ were gradually dying out, ‘rational’ Christianity, so Barnes preached, was being gradually undermined by “scepticism or superstition.” Meanwhile, in the age of the machine, “relatively few” were employed while “armies [were] growing ever more

⁵⁰ ‘The Birth Rate: Dr. Barnes’s Warning,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (14 February 1937), 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² ‘Danger of Falling Birth Rate: Dr. Barnes on Some of its Causes,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (15 November 1937), 10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘God Speaks to This Generation,’ (1 January 1937), EWB 12/1/539.

powerful.”⁵⁵ During this chaotic period of modern civilization, if God did speak to humanity, his message, so Barnes contended, was thus:

Use knowledge to end old and useless conventions, to destroy bad traditions. Eliminate the unfit. So order society so that the children of the future come plentifully from good stocks. Seek truth. No religious revival can possibly be wholesome or ultimately permanent unless it is free from superstition. Strive for peace. Take risks for peace. Trust in righteousness rather than in armaments. The wealth of the world is sufficient for all.⁵⁶

During the late 1930s, many members of the Eugenics Society, including Barnes, saw the need for negative eugenics in society as urgent and still hoped that measures such as sterilization could gain popular appeal. *The Eugenics Review* published several articles focussing on eugenic practice in Scandinavia and America, which painted sterilization and negative eugenics in a more positive light.⁵⁷ Again emphasizing the need to eliminate mental defect in society, Barnes lectured on so-called, “false humanitarianism” at Oxford University in 1937, this time revealing a sympathy for the killing of ‘defective’ infants. For Barnes, it seemed there was no reason to “keep alive individuals whom doctors [knew] to be doomed

⁵⁵ Barnes, ‘God Speaks to This Generation.’

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ See for instance ‘The Development of Eugenics Policies: A Memorandum by the American Eugenics Society,’ *The Eugenics Review* 29, 2 (July 1937), 117-123; Nils Von Hofsten, ‘Sterilization in Sweden,’ *The Eugenics Review* 29, 4 (January 1938), 257-260; idem ‘Danish Law on Abortion,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 1 (April 1938), 43-46; David V. Glass, ‘Population Policies in Scandinavia,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 2 (July 1938), 89-100; and ‘Practical Eugenics: Aims and Methods of the American Eugenics Society,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 3 (October 1938), 187-197.

from birth to a sub-human existence. A false humanitarianism is at the present time a drag on social progress."⁵⁸

Although a number of eugenicists tended to focus on issues related to social class, at this time Barnes often attempted to pre-empt charges of class-bias from his critics. Thus, he told an audience at the University of Oxford on one occasion that he was not concerned exclusively with the working class: "There is no such class bias. The worst stocks are those tainted by grave inherited defects, to whatever social class they may belong."⁵⁹ Rather than an exclusively economic problem, for Barnes there were clear moral and eugenic undertones too. In November 1937, he argued that:

The influences which determine birth-rate are fundamentally not material but – in the largest sense of the word – religious. Is life worth living? Are children a heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord? A deep-seated pessimism, in part bred of war, in part the result of decay of religious certainty, is one cause of the slow decay of our best stocks.⁶⁰

In any case, that Barnes was more interested in negative than positive eugenics is reinforced by his correspondence with a certain Gilbert P. Smith at the time. Smith had written to the Bishop regarding his recent lecture 'Best English Stocks Dying Out.'⁶¹ Smith firmly believed that "much could be done by way of arranged marriages with the valuable assistance of the

⁵⁸ 'The Feeble-Minded: Dr. Barnes on False Humanitarianism,' *The Manchester Guardian* (Mar 8, 1937), 11.

⁵⁹ 'Dr. Barnes and the Birth Rate: War and Industrial Tyranny as Forces Making for Small Families,' *The Manchester Guardian* (8 March 1937), 12.

⁶⁰ 'Danger of Falling Birth Rate: Dr. Barnes on Some of its Causes,' *The Manchester Guardian* (15 November 1937), 10.

⁶¹ Gilbert P. Smith, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Arranged Marriages,' (16 October 1937), EWB 9/19/61.

Medical Authorities.”⁶² In terms of striving toward eugenic utopia, selective breeding was for many essential. Arranged marriages were key, for instance, to Galton’s fictional utopia *Kantsaywhere* (1912). However, Barnes was apprehensive as to the practicalities of such a proposal. Thus, he replied to Smith that – both in terms of scientific knowledge and social acceptance of eugenics – Britain was not ready: arranged marriages were “unlikely to be acceptable to the English people with their strongly individualistic traditions. Medical advice might be helpful if more were known as to the laws of inheritance. Genetic research organized and subsidized by the Government is urgently needed.”⁶³

Elsewhere, in 1937, Barnes chose to support prominent author A.P. Herbert’s campaign to extend the law on divorce. As suggested in Chapter III, his opinions on divorce during the 1930s were somewhat informed by his eugenic beliefs. The importance of heredity to marriage was something he had been emphasizing to his colleagues throughout this period and naturally, this extended to divorce. Barnes was not the first eugenicist to support divorce reform, with the Social Hygiene Council (1910s-1950s), for instance, promoting the idea that for biological reasons, some couples should not marry and, in turn, procreate. During the inter-war period, although some eugenicists were unsure about divorce, with particular concern over birthrate, most still appreciated its benefit with regard to the genetically ‘unfit.’⁶⁴ As one reader of *The Eugenics Review* had put it in 1918: “We might get a few thousands more physically sound children perhaps, but would not such a wholesale slackening of the marriage tie, and all it involves, cause us to lose incalculably

⁶² Smith, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Arranged Marriages.’

⁶³ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Smith RE: Arranged Marriages,’ (18 October 1937), EWB 9/19/62.

⁶⁴ See for instance: W.G.H. Crook, ‘English and Foreign Divorce Law in Relation to Mental Disorder,’ *The Eugenics Review* 13, 2 (July 1921), 407-412; L. Salveson, ‘Divorce and Marriage Reform,’ *The Eugenics Review* 23, 2 (July 1931), 107-113; A. Fellows and J.F. Worsley-Boden, ‘Correspondence: The English Divorce Law,’ *The Eugenics Review* 24, 4 (January 1933), 342-3; and R.S. Pollard, ‘Correspondence: Divorce for Insanity,’ *The Eugenics Review* 25, 2 (July 1933), 131.

along the human and evolutionary side, by discounting and so tending to atrophy, some of the finest qualities of the soul?"⁶⁵ Leonard Darwin had also taken such arguments into consideration. Though not wholly in favour of divorce, particularly for the professional classes,⁶⁶ Darwin admitted that when hereditary disease was a factor, it was certainly desirable: "[Here] divorce is in fact eugenic; for it prevents further procreation on the part of the couple thus separated, and this without any corresponding disadvantages; that is if we may leave the doubtful effects of assertive mating out of account. The desire to be separated from such a markedly defective partner would generally be strong."⁶⁷ However, owing to the apparently fecundate nature possessed by groups such as the 'mentally deficient,' divorce may have in fact increased their fertility and prove to be a "futile racial safeguard."⁶⁸ Thus in 1933, representing the opinion of many eugenic ideologues, Darwin suggested that "Eugenic reformers should devote their main efforts towards facilitating voluntary sterilization in the case of those divorced on account of any sufficiently serious hereditary defect."⁶⁹

Barnes' opinions on divorce were not only expressed in terms of the apparent biological implications it had for society. As a prelate of the church, he also portrayed it as a necessary evil in an imperfect world. In June 1937, Barnes' told the Birmingham Diocesan Conference, as reported by *The Manchester Guardian*, that "any circumstance that endangered the stability of family life were the concern of the whole community. Christians would always desire to uphold, so far as was possible in a sadly imperfect world, Christ's

⁶⁵ 'Eugenist', 'Divorce and the Birth Rate,' *The Eugenics Review* 9, 4 (January 1918), 328.

⁶⁶ He made this clear in his book *The Need for Eugenic Reform*. See: Leonard Darwin, *The Need for Eugenic Reform* (New York: D. Appleton, 1926).

⁶⁷ Leonard Darwin, 'Divorce and Eugenics: Some Notes on their Relationship,' *The Eugenics Review* 25, 1 (April 1933), 16.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

ideal of the lifelong union of man and wife.”⁷⁰ Even so, the same year, in the House of Lords,⁷¹ Barnes once again argued that “the question of heredity must be considered in connection to this problem:”

Are you to allow the possibility that a man who carries such a taint in his make-up is, after he has been for five years in a mental home, to come back and produce more children? I can conceive nothing more awful than that a woman should be expected to bear children to a man whom she knows to have this taint. You may say that she should have discovered the taint before marriage, but nothing is more carefully concealed in all classes of the community than the existence in a family of this taint.⁷²

That year, the 1937 Matrimonial Causes Act was unanimously passed by both Houses. In some respects, this appeared to be a continuation of some of the arguments for women’s rights espoused by birth control and enfranchisement enthusiasts, certainly during the 1920s. Indeed, the bill indicated that either partner could now file for divorce in cases of adultery, if demonstrable; desertion after three years; or five years if the partner was afflicted with severe mental illness, or rather, as one reviewer commented in *The Modern Law Review*, “unsoundness of mind.”⁷³ As Nigel Lowe has summarized, “[t]his last provision introduced for the first time the possibility of obtaining a divorce even though the

⁷⁰ ‘Holy Communion for those Divorced: Bishop of Birmingham’s Defence,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (8 June 1937), 4.

⁷¹ Owing to his episcopal position, Barnes had been a member of the House of Lords since 1933.

⁷² Ernest W. Barnes quoted in: ‘Holy Communion for those Divorced,’ 4.

⁷³ Otto Kahn-Freund, ‘The Matrimonial Causes Act, 1937,’ *The Modern Law Review* 1, 3 (December 1937), 233.

respondent was in no way at fault. Such a possibility was further extended by a landmark ruling by the House of Lords that cruelty did not necessarily connote any intention on the respondent's part and that mental illness was therefore not necessarily a defence."⁷⁴ In general, this clause was well received by eugenicists. Later in the year, Barnes agreed, as *The Times* reported, that "If freedom had been obtained from a lunatic partner, that partner ought not to be remarried in church: they could not as Christians bless a union which would probably produce lunatics."⁷⁵ While there are no records of Barnes putting this into practice – not to mention the many churchmen under his command in the Birmingham area – it seems likely that the Bishop's understanding of heredity determined which marriages he chose to officiate.

As suggested in Chapters I and II, Barnes' opinions on race were a significant aspect of his worldview. One ideologue and friend of Barnes who also held strong racial convictions was the aforementioned geneticist, Reginald Gates (1882-1962). Barnes' correspondence with Gates at this time proved to be of great importance to the development of his eugenic ideas. Gates was born in Canada but much of his work as an anthropologist, botanist, and geneticist was conducted in the United States and Britain.⁷⁶ The publication of his *Heredity and Eugenics* (1923) made Gates a household name among eugenicists and as argued before was instrumental in Barnes' adoption of Mendelian inheritance into his own eugenic ideology.⁷⁷ As he made clear in this book, central to Gates' eugenic ideas was the perceived

⁷⁴ Nigel Lowe, 'Grounds for Divorce and Maintenance Between Former Spouses, England and Wales,' (October 2002), [<http://ceflonline.net/wp-content/uploads/England-Divorce.pdf>, accessed on 13 August 2013].

⁷⁵ 'Remarriage after Divorce: Dr. Barnes's Advice to Clergy,' *The Times* (10 December 1937), 9.

⁷⁶ Gavin Schaffer, "'Scientific' Racism Again?": Reginald Gates, the Mankind Quarterly and the Question of "Race",' *Journal of American Studies* 41, 2 (2007), 253-278.

⁷⁷ Reginald Ruggles Gates, *Heredity and Eugenics* (New York: Macmillan, 1923).

existence of 'superior' and 'inferior' races.⁷⁸ Well into the post-war period, Gates continued to state that African Americans were mentally inferior and in 1960, he was one of the founders of the racist eugenic journal *Mankind Quarterly*. Certainly, the influence of figures such as Gates helps to explain Barnes' well-established assumptions in the racial differences of man.⁷⁹ The idea that racial intermixture was socially dysgenic would become a major feature of Barnes' later rhetoric, particularly his 1949 Galton Lecture, 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay.'⁸⁰

Gates addressed the subject of race in a letter to Barnes from 1937, which reveals an interesting ideological discourse within the British eugenics movement more generally. In this instance, he referred specifically to Julian Huxley's "absurd book 'We Europeans', most of which is extreme propaganda and an attempt to deny that racial differences exist."⁸¹ The same year, Barnes had expressed his concerns about immigration thus: "[O]ur finer stocks are not maintaining their numbers, while stocks in which we can take no pride are increasing. Only too surely the population as a whole will soon begin to fall, and then we shall have the immigration of other races. One consequence will be such religious and racial strife as is unfortunately growing in Liverpool."⁸² The Bishop replied to Gates as follows: "I am glad to find that my unfavourable impression of *We Europeans* is shared by one who,

⁷⁸ For more on the concept of 'race' within the British eugenics movement see: Kevles, *In the name of Eugenics*; Geoffrey R Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900-1914* (Leyden: Springer, 1976); P. Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics and Human Failings*; Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*; Stone, *Breeding Superman*; and Thompson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*.

⁷⁹ See: Chapters I-III.

⁸⁰ See: Chapter VI. E.W. Barnes, 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,' *The Eugenics Review*, 41, 1 (April, 1949), 11-16.

⁸¹ Reginald Ruggles Gates, 'The Inheritance of Mental Defect' (Feb 25, 1937), EWB 9/19/57. See also: Julian Huxley, Alfred C. Haddon and Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, *We Europeans: A Survey of "Racial" Problems* (London: Penguin, 1935). For more on the importance of 'race' at this time see: Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing concepts of race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁸² 'Danger of Falling Birth Rate: Dr. Barnes on Some of its Causes,' *The Manchester Guardian* (15 November 1937), 10.

like yourself, is better qualified to assess its value.”⁸³ Notably, it appears that both Gates and Barnes were fearful of science becoming distorted by ideology. While Gates expressed his grievance that “such tendentious and propagandist statements under the cloak of science do a great deal of harm to the real scientific study of these subjects,”⁸⁴ Barnes solemnly agreed, “genetics will get a bad name if it is used as a cloak for political propaganda.”⁸⁵

The Dysgenics of War

During the late 1930s, the fear of war became a recurrent theme in eugenic discourse. Along with Barnes, many held the assumption that war tended to kill the best stocks and leave behind a ‘scrub’ population. For the Bishop, this also acted against the divinely designed process of evolution. Barnes also believed that pacifism and the differential birth-rate were directly related: “The strength of the pacifist movement shows how thoughtful people hate the waste of war, and a refusal to bear children who may be engulfed in some pitiless war is natural enough.”⁸⁶ Likewise, in *The Eugenics Review* Newfield argued that war would be disastrous for the British population: “those who refuse to reproduce are not the selfish or irresponsible whose fertility could perhaps be spared, but the sensitive and foresighted whose contribution to the generations of the future would be their greatest asset. War and the threat of war mean fewer children from the best stocks.”⁸⁷

⁸³ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Gates RE: We Europeans’ (Feb 26, 1937), *EWB* 9/19/58.

⁸⁴ Reginald Ruggles Gates, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: We Europeans’ (Feb 25, 1937), *EWB* 9/19/57.

⁸⁵ Barnes, ‘Reply to Gates RE: We Europeans’

⁸⁶ ‘Dr. Barnes and the Birth Rate: War and Industrial Tyranny as Forces Making for Small Families,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (8 March 1937), 12.

⁸⁷ Maurice Newfield, ‘Eugenics and War,’ *The Eugenics Review* 30, 3 (October 1938), 163.

At the time, Barnes was torn between his abhorrence for the Nazi regime in Germany and the desire to avoid armed conflict at all costs. When Germany reoccupied the Rhineland in 1936, he had commented in a private letter of:

the indignation which all of us must feel at the use of torture by the present Nazi Government; at the monstrous injustice of its treatment of the Jews. [...] The whole thing is horrible; and yet to speak of such matters is to increase national tension and to bring nearer the war, which would be the supreme evil. Under such circumstances, silence is the only possibility.⁸⁸

In 1938, Barnes stated that “I cannot believe that one who accepts the teaching of Christ ought to take part in or to approve of war.”⁸⁹ In this respect, the Bishop did what he could to “evoke understanding for Germany, even going so far as to say at one point that German legislation on ‘race hygiene’ was on the right lines, as it provided for voluntary sterilization.”⁹⁰ At this time, he was mostly found to be arguing, perhaps in vain, against war, while continuing to defend the pacifist position. As one scholar has documented: “While he repeated that war was incompatible with Christianity and deplored Christian ministers avowedly acting as recruiting officers, the sermon was mainly a call for generosity to conscientious objectors and for the objectors themselves not to stand aloof, but to show themselves good citizens and above all to help them protect women and children.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ Barnes quoted in: Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 349.

⁸⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Munich Agreement’ (Oct 3, 1938), EWB 12/1/563.

⁹⁰ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 351.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 352.

With the political stability of Europe close to collapse, in July 1939 Barnes spoke out at St Pauls Cathedral against ‘Ministers Who Act as Recruiting Officers,’ appealing to “conscientious objectors to be prepared to join in efforts to lessen the suffering war would bring. [...] Whole nations do not suddenly become evil [...] So it is for Christians everywhere to avoid denunciation and recrimination.”⁹² By September though, there was once again war in Europe and, as Bishop, Barnes had an important role to play in wartime Birmingham. During the war, he had much influence over the clergy. According to Stephen Parker, his advice won him “wide regard for its measured wisdom” and the “majority of clergy managed to maintain the even-handedness that Barnes recommended.”⁹³

During World War Two, several eugenicists in Britain articulated their opinions on the ‘dysgenics of war.’ Those concerned with the biological future of Britain tended to agree that: “It is the final indictment of war that both its direct and indirect casualties fall most heavily on the best people.”⁹⁴ In October 1939, Newfield made the following declaration: “The Eugenics Society continues to maintain the view [...] that war is dysgenic and that the eugenic grounds for opposing war are not less cogent than any others.”⁹⁵ The following year, he went on to explain that during the last war

groups of young men, above the average in physical fitness, courage and sense of responsibility, suffered a death rate far higher than that of the population in general, and the world was deprived of a vast reserve of valuable personal and social

⁹² ‘Christian's Duty in a Crisis: Dr. Barnes Criticises “Ministers Who Act as Recruiting Officers”,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (10 July 1939), 5.

⁹³ Stephen Parker, *Faith on the Home Front: Aspects of Church Life and Popular Religion in Birmingham, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), 162.

⁹⁴ Maurice Newfield, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review*, 32, 2 (July 1940), 45-6.

⁹⁵ Newfield, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 31, 3 (October 1939), 151.

qualities which might otherwise have been transmitted to future generations. The denial of these valuable births inflicted upon society a deep wound from which it will not recover for many decades.⁹⁶

As many eugenicists saw it, war also had a detrimental effect on birthrate. During the 1940 Galton Luncheon, the Eugenics Society President, Lord Horder argued that war tended to result in “a lowering of fertility in the very stocks that we eugenists want to encourage,” meanwhile leaving “the fertility in the less desirable stocks relatively untouched.”⁹⁷

Curiously, C. Usher, a squadron leader, suggested in a letter to *The Eugenics Review* that although one may object that modern weapons “enable the less fit to destroy the more fit,” it is still the nation equipped with “better brains that are able to construct and handle the modern weapons [and] will be the Nation to survive.”⁹⁸ If, so Usher continued, any war, “ancient or modern,” always called for “perfect physical fitness,” it appeared that only “the nation possessing the best brains and the best bodies” would survive.⁹⁹ However, as another subscriber to the journal, Guy Porter, pointed out, war was not simply natural selection in action, as Usher had implied. Usher’s argument, as Porter saw it, seemed to rest on the assumption that “the victor in war is necessarily superior mentally and (or) physically to the vanquished.” However, as Porter hoped to explain, often the victor was only numerically ‘superior,’ “as in the recent conflict between Russia and Finland.”¹⁰⁰ In response, Usher conceded, admitting that even natural selection was not necessarily

⁹⁶ Newfield, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ (July 1940), 45-6.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 6.

⁹⁸ Usher quoted in: C. Usher and Guy Porter, ‘Correspondence: Is War Dysgenic?’ *The Eugenics Review* 32, 2 (July 1940), 70.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Porter quoted in Ibid.

eugenic. Indeed, for Usher, this process appeared only to ensure “the survival of the organism or body of organisms most suited for a particular environment at any particular moment.”¹⁰¹ Either way, as the war waged on it was becoming clear to many eugenicists, at least in Britain, that, as Newfield put it in 1942, “modern warfare [was] becoming more and more harmful in its effects on the quality of the populations involved.”¹⁰²

Many had argued that the First World War was dysgenic for the disproportionate number of middle and professional class men killed in battle. The Second World War was problematic to many British eugenicists for two reasons: first, its direct effect on the birthrate at home; and second, the mass devastation caused by air raids. With this in mind, Margaret Spring Rice, who was both a eugenicist and women’s rights advocate, argued in July 1940 that: “The selection of the youngest and strongest for sacrifice is a first-class national tragedy.” Not only was the nation left “to carry on without these young men, the fathers of the next generation,” but also “efforts to provide decent conditions of life for that next generation [were] frustrated at the very outset.”¹⁰³ With this in mind, in 1941, Barnes was one of a number of signatories – including Churchmen like the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Francis Underhill (1878-1943), and politicians such as A.D. Belden – of a failed petition to end bombing raids at night by mutual agreement between the British and German governments.¹⁰⁴

On several occasions during the war, Barnes made statements that seemed to indicate the ideology behind his pacifism. In March 1943, at the ‘Friends’ Meeting House,’ he expressed the desire for “an era more sane and more happy than we have known.

¹⁰¹ Usher, ‘Correspondence: Is War Dysgenic?’, 70.

¹⁰² Newfield, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 33, 3 (October 1941), 64.

¹⁰³ Margaret Spring Rice, ‘The Health of Working Women,’ *The Eugenics Review* 32, 2 (July 1940), 53.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Abolish Night Bombing,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (1 November 1941), 9.

Justice, freedom and, above all, generosity are not only Christian ideals: they are the very substance of good statesmanship. [...] Not only pacifists but all Christians, all men who dream of Utopia, should with increasing vigour try to create this temper.”¹⁰⁵ Barnes was certainly concerned about the apparent detrimental effect of war on morality. On the one hand, during the Birmingham Diocesan conference in June 1942, he suggested that as the “tragedy of war [continued], one [could] observe a deterioration in the moral idealism of many taking part in the conflict.”¹⁰⁶ On the other, in Britain, Barnes believed that declining social conditions, had led to an increasing disregard of truth had led to an increase in theft and sexual violence. In 1943, sitting at the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury, he argued: “[A]ll these types of anti-social behaviour are signs of degeneration. [...] We must not be blind to the fact that racial deterioration was resulting from the two world wars, and for fifty years after the present war we should be struggling to retain the moral and social level which our people reached at the end of the Victorian era.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, in many respects Barnes’ conscientious objection during wartime was at once an expression of his dissatisfaction with the condition of British society and fear of moral and biological degeneration.

Throughout his professional life, Barnes had remained loosely affiliated with groups such as the National Peace Council (est. 1908) and the Peace Pledge Union. His philosophy was somewhat in line with such movements. In the broadest sense, he certainly lived according to the latter’s pledge: “I renounce war, and am therefore determined not to support any kind of war. I am also determined to work for the removal of all causes of

¹⁰⁵ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Pacifism and the Post-War World,’ (March 31, 1943), EWB 12/1/603.

¹⁰⁶ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Birmingham Diocesan Conference’ (June 10, 1942), EWB 12/1/603.

¹⁰⁷ ‘War-Time Morals: Bishops and Decline of Truth-Telling,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (May 27, 1943), 3.

war.”¹⁰⁸ While the membership of many pacifist movements somewhat diminished following the outbreak of war in 1939, Barnes would continue to preach against war.¹⁰⁹ In 1945, supported by the National Peace Council, he published the pamphlet, *A Christian Approach to Peace*.¹¹⁰ Barnes had also explained his pacifism in 1943 thus: “I myself am a Christian pacifist because I feel sure that such was the attitude towards war adopted by the Christian Church during practically the first three centuries of its existence, a practice adopted, as it believed, in consequence of the teachings of its Founder.”¹¹¹

As well as damaging to the biological health of the nation, then, Barnes also believed war was equally disastrous for religion and morality in society. Curiously, during the Second World War, he spent less time advocating eugenics and more preaching pacifism and the need for a national spiritual unity to overcome the present and future crises. Meanwhile, as well as suffering from illnesses such as rheumatic fever, the Bishop’s time was also taken up by a lengthy legal battle with cement manufacturers, in which he had accused one organisation of overcharging consumers building air raid shelters. Despite such distractions, throughout the war he kept one eye on the future. In 1943, he warned the City Council of Birmingham that there were “immense problems awaiting solution when the present conflict ends. There will be demoralisation [but] [...] [if] united, the Christian Churches in this country might once again become a great cleansing power.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Barry Miles, *Peace: 50 Years of Protest, 1958-2008* (London: Anova Books, 2008), 50.

¹⁰⁹ See: Parker, ‘Blessed are the Pacifists,’ 204-19.

¹¹⁰ Ernest W. Barnes, *A Christian Approach to Peace* (London: National Peace Council, 1945).

¹¹¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Pacifism in the Post-War World,’ (31 March 1943), EWB 12/1/629.

¹¹² ‘Church and Need of New World,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (13 July 1943), 3.

Deterrents to Parenthood

As Barnes stepped back from preaching eugenics during the war, the Eugenics Society was opening its doors to new methods of social reform. Two interesting examples are the philosophies of Richard Titmuss and William Beveridge, whose ideas were somewhat broader than many eugenicists in Britain. For example, neither Titmuss nor Beveridge focussed specifically on the prevalence of mental deficiency, but instead proposed far-reaching reforms intended to improve society as a whole. Accordingly, Greta Jones has described the cautious relationship that had existed between the eugenics movement and the British state in the inter-war period as “a number of frequently irreconcilable controversies about the role and aim of state intervention and social welfare, with the Eugenics Society playing a highly conservative role, one rather unsympathetic to the working class.”¹¹³ In some respects, one may view the Society’s actions at this time as an attempt to overcome some of these difficulties.

In 1942, Richard and Kathleen Titmuss published their book, *Parents’ Revolt: A Study of the Declining Birth-Rate in Acquisitive Societies*, which drew particular attention to the predominance of small middle class families.¹¹⁴ Richard Titmuss was an influential figure in post-war British social policy and attempted to facilitate a change in ideological focus within the eugenics movement to adopt a more sympathetic standpoint, particularly with regard to the poor. Like many eugenicists at this time, he was also concerned with the dysgenic effects of war. Authoring articles such as ‘The Effect of the War on the Birth Rate’ (1942), he believed there were “no grounds for optimism. In a demographic position

¹¹³ Greta Jones, ‘Eugenics and Social Policy Between the Wars,’ *The Historical Journal*, 25, 3 (1982), 717-728.

¹¹⁴ Richard and Kathleen Titmuss, *Parents’ Revolt*.

favourable to a higher birth rate we find, underneath the surface, a serious and continuous fall in reproduction. Moreover, the loss in unborn casualties to the end of 1941 exceeds by 100 per cent the number of civilians killed by enemy action from the air.”¹¹⁵ For Titmuss, one potential solution was to “reconcile the apparently contradictory principles of eugenics and social justice.”¹¹⁶ Titmuss appeared to offer an alternate type of social analysis that could enable the Eugenics Society to move to a more socially acceptable ideological position. Notably, Titmuss placed more emphasis on environmental rather than biological models of society.¹¹⁷ Even so, with respect to eugenic classification, Titmuss seems to have to some extent embraced the prevailing eugenic ethos that “a complex of social failures and psychological problems marked out in a distinctive way a subgroup of the population responsible for an overuse of health and social services,” as well as a “hard core of persistent and recurring lousiness.”¹¹⁸ Crucially, from his perspective, neither biological causation nor environmentalism were adequate *on their own* to, for example, explain the existence of the various conditions associated with feeble-mindedness.

A central theme of *Parents' Revolt*, as the title suggests, is birthrate. In her preface to the book, Fabian Socialist, Beatrice Webb (1858-1943), declared that using only a “short supply of paper,” as she put it, the authors had “proven” that “the fall in the birth-rate [w]as a public danger.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, from the outset, the authors accepted that: “if fertility continues to behave in the future as it has behaved in a practically unbroken fashion for close on seventy years, then everything will point to national suicide.” In *Parents' Revolt*, the

¹¹⁵ Richard Titmuss, ‘The Effects of War on the Birth Rate,’ *The Eugenics Review* 34, 1 (April 1942), 12.

¹¹⁶ Titmuss quoted in: Hanson, *Eugenics*, 9.

¹¹⁷ Ann Oakley, ‘Making Medicine Social: The Case of the Two Dogs with Bent Legs,’ in Dorothy Porter ed., *Social Medicine and Medical Sociology in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Rodopi, 1998), 93.

¹¹⁸ Titmuss quoted in: Ann Oakley, ‘Eugenics, social medicine and the career of Richard Titmuss in Britain 1935-50,’ *The British Journal of Sociology* 42, 2 (June 1991), 181.

¹¹⁹ Richard and Kathleen Titmuss, *Parents' Revolt*, 10.

authors suggested a number of reasons why couples were choosing to have smaller families, which largely rested on the premise that this was “an age in which people [were] forced more and more to regard money as the only means to security and the possession of material things.”¹²⁰

This work gained some attention from eugenicists in Britain. Lafitte, for instance, agreed that in an “acquisitive society” such as our own, “where political democracy is combined with economic oligarchy, legal equality with inequality of opportunity, where children are a financial burden,” and the system of values in place “drives people to struggle against one another for economic advancement,” the “nature of the social system inevitably compels family limitation.”¹²¹ Interestingly, Lafitte also framed some of the difficulties faced by Christian eugenicists such as Barnes. Despite progressive resolutions on the subject drawn at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, many eugenicists agreed with Lafitte that much of Church opinion still seemed to consider the increased use of birth control as something that would slacken the “moral fibre of the nation.” Accordingly, in *Parents’ Revolt*, the authors attributed the present birthrate trends to a clash between the increasing secularisation of society and traditional religious values.¹²²

The self-proclaimed left-wing leanings of the authors are evident throughout the book. This is particularly so in one of the proposed solutions to the apparently imminent population decline: “a real economic democracy based on co-operative values,” must be established in order to “offer something more compelling”¹²³ to potential parents than the empty goal of economic prosperity. In building a “new concept of social values” and in the

¹²⁰ Richard and Kathleen Titmuss, *Parents’ Revolt*, 13.

¹²¹ Francois Lafitte, ‘Population,’ *The Eugenics Review* 34, 2 (July 1942), 71.

¹²² Richard and Kathleen Titmuss, *Parents’ Revolt*, 13.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 123.

creating of “conditions in which people will desire children as an enhancement of individual dignity and communal happiness we must, in all things, extend liberty.”¹²⁴ These opinions were reflected, when Richard Titmuss was asked to justify the views expressed in *Parents’ Revolt* in an interview with the *Catholic Herald*. Here Titmuss opined that the freedom of birth control, like other democratic liberties, was open to abuse and if “exercised on the present scale” could only end in “population extinction.”¹²⁵ Neither family allowances nor birth control could “rid us of the evil,” as he put it. According to Titmuss, both measures represented “merely material factors in a great and necessary reformation that must be first of all spiritual in the broad sense of that term. [...] This is an issue of greatest importance, and one on which the churches can join in common action with responsible men and women who feel the problem in all its urgency.”¹²⁶ On being asked how he believed this spiritual reform could be realised, Titmuss proposed a society based on nationalisation in which “things [would] be held for the common good of everybody. Let us have the accent once again on family life and the decentralized region. For the family is the unit of the nation, and the safeguarding of the family is necessary if the nation is to survive.” Titmuss’ ‘positive’ approach to eugenics was arguably very different from that of Barnes, for example. Moreover, not only was Titmuss’ approach somewhat compatible with religion, but, in this instance so it seems, Catholicism. Thus, he received the following endorsement from the Catholic publication: “*Parents’ Revolt* is a book that deserves wider publicity than it

¹²⁴ Richard and Kathleen Titmuss, *Parents’ Revolt*, 123.

¹²⁵ Richard Titmuss quoted in: ‘Parents are in Revolt and Mr. Titmuss Knows Why,’ *Catholic Herald* (September 25, 1942), 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

has yet received. [...] The problems confronting the young married couple today are dealt with plainly and sympathetically.”¹²⁷

While the *Catholic Herald* supported Titmuss’ work, some eugenicists had their reservations. For instance, the London-based physician, A. Piney believed that “one of the most potent and intractable causes of a falling birth rate” was “the education of women,” a factor that *Parents’ Revolt* had overlooked.¹²⁸ Another reader, S.H. Halford, dismissed the idea that “an improvement in material conditions [would] ensure a corresponding advance in the average intelligence.”¹²⁹ Equally perturbed by the relationship between the higher education of women and the birthrate, Halford asserted that: “The student habit in women aborts the sexual instinct and consequently removes from the field of reproduction the very best type of mother.”¹³⁰ As Halford saw it, humanity was left in the unenviable position of choosing between a society “without intelligence” or marriages “without love.”¹³¹

To an extent, the discussion that ensued reflects a much wider debate concerning gender roles at the time.¹³² Thus, the psychologist Joan Hope and London homemaker Alice Jenkins disagreed with Halford’s suggestion that “the fall in the birth rate of intelligent children is due to apathy on the part of intelligent women.”¹³³ In many respects, the opinions of Jenkins and Hope, among others, represent a continuation of some of the ideas discussed in previous chapters. Indeed, equal access to higher education, along with the right to vote, the increased dissemination of birth control, and the extension of the divorce

¹²⁷ Titmuss quoted in: ‘Parents are in Revolt and Mr. Titmuss Knows Why,’ 4.

¹²⁸ A. Piney, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 34, 3 (October 1942), 115.

¹²⁹ S.H. Halford, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 34, 4 (January 1943), 141.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid, 142.

¹³² Several influential texts relating to this discourse were published, including Winefred Holtby’s *Women and a Changing Civilization* (1934), and also the work of the Women’s Freedom League and its *Fortnightly Publication* journal. See: Winefred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilization* (London: Longmans, Green, 1934).

¹³³ Joan Hope, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 2 (July 1943), 47.

law in 1937, can all be seen to share the overall goal of ‘female emancipation’ from ‘traditional’ gender roles. It is notable that, for various reasons, they were also concerns of the eugenics movement.

Hope argued that the majority of men tended to believe that women were “of inferior intelligence, and it may [have been] for this reason that they also [tended] to treat those intelligent women whom they [did] meet as if they had no sex instincts.”¹³⁴ According to Jenkins, “those who have gone through the years of disciplined study necessary to achieve a profession are in no hurry to be booted out of it through entering the bonds of holy matrimony.”¹³⁵ Jenkins continued that – unless given the respect and support they deserved – women would no doubt continue to avoid parenthood: “[T]o preserve for fatherhood the ‘1963 class’ now being born, not only should she be given equality of opportunity in education, but society must allow her, through the provision of crèches, nursery schools, etc.”¹³⁶

In response, P.D.H. Chapman quipped that, if the negative birth rate were to be reversed, and intelligent women were to “continue the profession for which they have been trained,” some form of domestic help would be essential to prevent their homes becoming “filthy” and their husbands from “dying of malnutrition.”¹³⁷ In a similar vein, on Hope, Halford suggested that “With a more open mind and acquaintance with the psychology of sex she would know that the maternal may be powerfully present in a woman in whom the sexual instinct is entirely absent” and that Jenkins was guilty of producing “question-begging

¹³⁴ Hope, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ 47.

¹³⁵ Alice Jenkins, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 2 (July 1943), 48.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ P.D.H. Chapman, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 3-4 (October 1943), 95.

statements [...] quite unworthy of so serious a subject as the future mental quality of the race.”¹³⁸

For Hope though, while education was something that one acquired, intelligence was inheritable. Although there may have been plenty of intelligent women who had “chosen other than university careers,” many graduates were not “of high intelligence, [...] [but] selected mainly because their parents [could] afford to give them higher education.”¹³⁹ Meanwhile, a more logical solution, so Jenkins concluded, was to remove the “legal and economic disabilities of wifhood and motherhood,” allowing women to have “that double benefit which men are able to give – a profession combined with parenthood.”¹⁴⁰

In contrast, Piney argued that Jenkins’ letter demonstrated that “educated women” tended to “discuss parenthood abstractly, and so attempt to evade the concrete differences between the role of the sexes in the family unit:” “An educated woman does not differ in her gestation, parturition and lactation from a half-wit; if her education is to be of any specific use to the State, it must be used to train the next generation; a job which the Alice Jenkinsees seem to think below their dignity.”¹⁴¹ However, firmly dismissing Piney, Jenkins contested that “‘the Alice Jenkinsees,’ whoever they may be,” do not necessarily consider “the training of the next generation below their dignity” with herself having “for over thirty years been engaged, among other unpaid work, in trying to do this very job.”¹⁴² Once hostilities in Europe had ceased these apparently deplorable women, would be “sorely needed to restore a shattered world.” Effectively closing the debate, Jenkins concluded that

¹³⁸ S.H. Halford, ‘Deterrent to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 3-4 (October 1943), 95.

¹³⁹ Joan Hope, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 3-4 (October 1943), 95.

¹⁴⁰ Alice Jenkins, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 3-4 (October 1943), 95.

¹⁴¹ A. Piney, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 36, 1 (April 1944), 95.

¹⁴² Alice Jenkins, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ *The Eugenics Review* 36, 1 (April 1944), 95.

“Educated women” were crucial to Britain’s future: “for their trained feminine intelligence is essential to establish a society which can maintain this revolutionary change; a society in which the birth-rate will take care of itself.”¹⁴³

The Eugenic Aspects of Children’s Allowances

The Second World War also witnessed the birth of the welfare state in Britain. This had direct implications for the development of post-war eugenics. In theory, the welfare state attempts to ensure the economic and social well-being of the entire population, rather than favouring one section of the community. Reinforcing this idea, Catterall and Obelkevich have summarized the key issues considered during the implementation of the modern welfare state:

First, there was a desire to endow people with rights. In social security, this meant that the major emphasis was to be on benefit rights purchased through contributions to a new National Insurance scheme, and the minimal use of testing. [...] [T]here were also to be rights to the best available medical care, regardless of means, through a new National Health Service; and a right to be educated according to ability, regardless of parental income, through the 1944 Education Act.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Jenkins, ‘Deterrents to Parenthood,’ 95.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Catterall and James Obelkevich, *Understanding Post-War British Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), 113.

This was quite distinct from the idea of biological elitism, in its various permutations, which had certainly characterised much of eugenic ideology in Britain to this point. Instead, the welfare state was based on principles common to liberal thought, such as equal opportunity, unbiased distribution of wealth and a general public responsibility for those incapable of independently obtaining the minimal standard of necessities for a good life.

To a large extent, the welfare state was developed in line with the philosophy of William Beveridge, as put forward in his *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (1942), commonly known as the Beveridge Report.¹⁴⁵ Beveridge's main impetus was to rid the nation of what he called the 'Five Giants': want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. To affect this he advocated far-reaching reforms that targeted income, health care, education, housing, unemployment and retirement benefits.¹⁴⁶ However, Beveridge's plan for universal family allowances – and his attempt to justify it on eugenic grounds in his 1943 Galton Lecture – proved controversial in eugenic circles. As we have seen, at the 1931 Winchester Conference the attendees agreed with Barnes' contention that flat-rate family allowance schemes were social welfare of the most dysgenic type.¹⁴⁷

Historians' opinions on the relationship between eugenics and the Beveridge report range from ambiguity to dismissal. For Soloway, when Beveridge formed an interdepartmental committee for the report in 1941, Titmuss had urged him to consider eugenic factors; yet, neither Beveridge nor his committee of "careful, neutral civil servants" wanted to include "eugenics or anything else that might [have inflamed] class feelings" in

¹⁴⁵ See: William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services: Report by Sir William Beveridge Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, November 1942* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1942). See also *The Papers of William Beveridge*, National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey.

¹⁴⁶ Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, 283.

¹⁴⁷ See: Chapter III.

case it “[enraged] Labour party interests.”¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Dorling argued that although Beveridge was in fact “drawn towards eugenic ideas in the 1920s and 30s: ideas of survival of the fittest, the efficiency of competition, allowing the hindmost to fall,” there is “not even the faintest hint of such thoughts in the report of 1942 which in popular British memory bares his name.”¹⁴⁹ In any case, for Harris, one of the most striking features of the evidence submitted to the Beveridge Committee was the “very widespread expectation among witnesses that the enquiry was going to lead to radical even ‘Utopian’ social change.”¹⁵⁰ Notably, it appears that Beveridge’s fear of de-population certainly informed the section of the Report concerned with children’s allowances. As Soloway has written, Beveridge “boldly played the depopulation card” when he proposed flat-rate children’s allowances of eight shillings per week.¹⁵¹

Although a minority viewpoint within the British eugenics movement, attempts had been made to reconcile universal social welfare with eugenics. In the 1910s, for example, Sidney Webb (1859-1947) as well as other members of the Fabian Society, had written explicitly about imposing a system of national minimums, several of whom also adopting a pro-natalist stance to accompany their call for widespread social reform.¹⁵² Another example was the ideology of American geneticist, H.J. Muller (1890-1967). Though like many eugenicists in Britain, Muller believed that someone’s potential was genetically determined, for Muller, the economic inequalities of society tended to mask genetic differences. In his 1935 book *Out of the Night: A Biologist’s View of the Future*, Muller argued that true genetic

¹⁴⁸ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 331.

¹⁴⁹ Danny Dorling, ‘Social Evils – From Unemployment to Idleness to Prejudice. Some Suggestions for Mapping the Modern Equivalents of These Old Evils onto New Injustices,’ *Review of Economic Analysis*, 2 (2010), 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ Jose Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 414

¹⁵¹ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 330.

¹⁵² Patricia Pugh, *Educate, Agitate, Organize: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism* (London: Methuen, 1984).

improvement of the population was only possible in an ideal socialist society, in which everyone had the same opportunities for success in life.¹⁵³ In fact, Muller even brought this idea to Stalin in the 1930s, in an attempted to establish eugenics in the Soviet Union. However, the Russian dictator soon rejected Muller's approach in favour of Lysenkoism.¹⁵⁴ In contrast to such 'utopian' examples, the development of the modern welfare state was in many respects a continuation of prior government legislation, which had attempted to establish, among other things, a minimum standard of housing in the 1930s. Many eugenicists, like Barnes, tended to favour biological determinism, had lamented the poor conditions in inner-city slums. However, the general idea of 'universal standards' was certainly contrary to their more 'traditional' ideas of biological elitism.

Beveridge is perhaps most famous for his work as a social reformer and economist. However, he was also a long-term member of the Eugenics Society. Indeed, in 1909, he made the following argument in favour of eugenics: "[T]hose men who through general defects are unable to fill such a whole place in industry are to be recognized as unemployable. They must become the acknowledged dependants of the State [...] but with complete and permanent loss of all citizen rights - including not only the franchise but civil freedom and fatherhood."¹⁵⁵ During the 1930s, as Director of the London School of Economics, Beveridge created the Department of Social Biology to support the study of eugenics and fertility. It has been argued that a schism between those in favour of and

¹⁵³ Herman J. Muller, *Out of the Night: A Biologists View of the Future* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1935).

¹⁵⁴ See: Diane B. Paul, 'Eugenics and the Left,' in idem, *The Politics of Heredity*, 19.

¹⁵⁵ Dennis Sewell, 'How Eugenics Poisoned the Welfare State', *The Spectator* (November 2009) [<http://www.spectator.co.uk/error?404;http://www.spectator.co.uk:80/essays/all/5571423/how-eugenics-poisoned-the-welfare-state.shtml>, accessed on 13 August 2013].

those opposed to serious study of the subject at the university was a key reason for Beveridge's departure in 1937.¹⁵⁶

As has been suggested, Beveridge shared the fear of a decline in Britain's population that was characteristic of eugenic discourse at the time.¹⁵⁷ In 1943, before his report was published, he was involved in an ongoing public debate on the topic of population. Sharing Beveridge's concerns, English physiologist, A. V. Hill (1886-1977), wrote in *The Times* that: "[T]he gravest problem of all which Britain has to face is that of an ageing and rapidly declining population."¹⁵⁸ Hill offered several suggestions to remedy the situation, including "a keener and more generous public recognition of motherhood;" "adequate children's allowances;" and the introduction in society of a "definite bias in favour of happier, healthier, and more efficient mothers and of more and better children."¹⁵⁹ In response, Beveridge agreed that unless the birthrate was increased, "in the near future a rapid and continuous decline of the population cannot be prevented."¹⁶⁰

Beveridge was equally concerned with the problem of infant mortality and drew attention to the "shocking discrepancy between different social and economic classes in Britain."¹⁶¹ As Soloway has noted, Beveridge wished both to send "a signal of national

¹⁵⁶ 'Five years of Darwin seminars: a paradigm shift?,' *The Times Higher Education* (March 12, 1999), [<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=145449§ioncode=26>, accessed on 14 January 2014].

¹⁵⁷ See for instance: E. Grebenik, 'Demographic Research in Britain 1936-1986,' *Population Studies* 45 (1991); and Michael Freeden, 'Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity,' *The Historical Journal* 22, 3 (1979).

¹⁵⁸ Archibald V. Hill, 'Future of the Population,' *The Times* (23 September 1943), 5.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, 9.

¹⁶¹ William Beveridge, 'Future of the Population,' *The Times* (24 September 1943), 5.

interest in larger families” and ensure that – regardless of class – families could have children “without damaging the chances of those already born.”¹⁶²

If the Eugenics Society wished to move toward a position more in line with ‘mainstream’ social reform, then inviting Beveridge to present the 1943 Galton Paper was an important step.¹⁶³ Beveridge told the Eugenics Society that his top priority was to raise the national birthrate: “the first step to neutralizing the premium on infertility was by a general scheme covering the whole population.”¹⁶⁴ He believed that the new welfare state would have a positive effect on “the quantity and quality of the population”¹⁶⁵ and prove an “important first step in bringing economic and biological tendencies into line with one another.”¹⁶⁶

None were perhaps more perplexed by Beveridge’s approach than Dean Inge. Indeed, as Soloway has noted, having already “for years complained about the council’s surrender to the environmentalists,” Inge resigned from the Society on hearing that Beveridge was to present.¹⁶⁷ Like Inge, many in attendance believed that such family allowances would benefit only the poor. As a possible remedy, Beveridge suggested the addition of “supplemental, contributory vocational and occupational programmes, particularly for the professions, in which the allowances would be proportionate to salary.”¹⁶⁸ In fact this, he revealed, was something he had encouraged during his time at LSE: “I did introduce a system of children’s allowances on a very much larger scale, namely,

¹⁶² Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 331.

¹⁶³ William Beveridge, ‘Eugenic Aspects of Children’s Allowances,’ *The Eugenics Review* 34, 4 (January 1943), 117-123.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Beveridge, ‘Eugenic Aspects of Children’s Allowances,’ 123.

¹⁶⁶ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 332.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

£30 a year for every child up to the age of 8, and £60 a year for every child from 8 to 21, for as long as the child was being educated; that was paid by the School as an addition to the standard salary.”¹⁶⁹ One may assume that private schemes of positive eugenics such as this were not uncommon, particularly within the professional classes. As Blacker later recalled, “it was in [Beveridge’s] view not only possible but desirable that graded family allowance schemes, applicable to families in the higher income groups, be administered concurrently with his flat-rate scheme.”¹⁷⁰

A number of questions were asked by the audience, covering issues such as the possible influence of National Insurance on fertility; how one could ensure the allowance was not abused by its recipients; and, above-all, the biological effects of the proposals on the population.¹⁷¹ One member stressed the importance of “the will to work” from the general population as well as “the need of compulsion for the work-shy, and the need of inspection in homes in order to discover whether this extra money was spent in the right way.”¹⁷² Beveridge, however, was not proposing any change in the present rules “regarding unemployment benefit.” Instead, of most importance was “the obligation of people not merely to accept the work they wanted but the kind of work which wanted doing.”¹⁷³

A prominent member of the Women’s Institute, Ursula Duff, was concerned that the scheme would have little immediate impact in terms of eugenics, explaining that she was “not content to wait 200 years before the effect was manifest” and wanted to see “a great improvement throughout the population at once.”¹⁷⁴ Also concerned with the biological

¹⁶⁹ Beveridge, ‘Eugenic Aspects of Children’s Allowances,’ 121.

¹⁷⁰ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Annual Report 1942-1943,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 1 (April 1943), 23.

¹⁷¹ Blacker, ‘The Galton Lecture,’ *The Eugenics Review* 34, 4 (January 1943), 124-128.

¹⁷² ‘Captain Olliver’ quoted in Blacker, ‘The Galton Lecture:’ 125.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 126.

¹⁷⁴ Ursula G. Duff quoted in Blacker, ‘The Galton Lecture:’ 126.

implications was long-time eugenicist, Charles Wicksteed-Armstrong (1871-1962),¹⁷⁵ who suggested that parents would be “no better off after receiving the allowances than if they had had no children, and therefore allowances can never be an incentive to breeding among less desirable classes.”¹⁷⁶ As a solution, the Scottish doctor, Binnie Dunlop (1874-1946) – who had been an influential member of the Malthusian League (1877-1927)¹⁷⁷ – suggested that allowance should only be provided for two children per family.¹⁷⁸

The idea of flat-rate family allowances was no doubt a contentious subject for eugenicists, especially considering it looked set to become a central aspect of post-war reconstruction. To address the issue, in 1944, the Eugenics Society held a members meeting, in order to decide if the Beveridge Report could be supported on eugenic grounds.¹⁷⁹ Some sympathized with Beveridge’s ideas. In the discussion, feminist reformer, Eva Marian Hubback (1886-1949) attributed the apparent “slow progress,” as she put it, of eugenics to the idea that “as long as there were great environmental inequalities between different sections of the community, it was not easy or even possible to disentangle differences in hereditary endowment.”¹⁸⁰ Fabian Socialist, G. R. Mitchison tended to agree with the main tenets of the Report. Relieved that the Society no longer described eugenics as, “the process of abolishing the poorer part of the population,” Mitchison asked: “How did any of us expect

¹⁷⁵ In his 1927 book, *Survival of the Unfittest*, Wicksteed-Armstrong covered a broad though interlinked range of subjects, including “concerns about human degeneration, advocacy of eugenics, and classical liberal views on state and political economy.” Aschwin De Wolf, ‘Survival of the Unfittest,’ *Against Politics: Anarchy Naturalized* (October 12, 2011), [<http://againstpolitics.com/2011/10/12/surival-of-the-unfittest>, accessed on 13 August 2013].

¹⁷⁶ De Wolf, ‘Survival of the Unfittest.’

¹⁷⁷ Madeleine Simms, ‘Review: A History of the Malthusian League 1877-1927,’ *New Scientist* (27 January, 1977), 221. The author of its 1913 publication, *Hygienic Methods of Birth Control* and editor of its journal *The Malthusian* from 1918-1921. See also: Rosanna Ledbetter, *History of the Malthusian League, 1877-1927* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986), 206-9.

¹⁷⁸ Binnie Dunlop, ‘Family Allowances,’ *The Eugenics Review* 35, 2 (July 1943), 47.

¹⁷⁹ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Eugenic Aspects of Social Security,’ *The Eugenics Review* 36, 1 (April 1944), 17-24.

¹⁸⁰ Eva M. Hubback quoted in: Blacker, ‘Eugenic Aspects of Social Security,’ 17.

those who were faced with starvation whenever they were out of work, or when ill health affected them, to provide a healthy and fine race?"¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, for Halford, there had regrettably been "a good deal of middle-class prejudice in the discussion; they must eliminate that and: look at things apart from their political and social prejudices."¹⁸²

However, many agreed with Binney that: "For a system of children's allowances to be eugenic it must not pay a flat rate but be worked out in each profession."¹⁸³ Binney went on to attack the Beveridge scheme thus: "those who were able to earn money to find the money to keep those who could not or did not work, and those persons whom one would on eugenic grounds encourage to have children were being taxed to pay for the others."¹⁸⁴ In turn, Lidbetter also put forward his interpretation of the Report, maintaining a position largely in line with his aforementioned 1933 publication, *Heredity and the Social Problem Group*. Lidbetter believed the 'social problem group' should not be amalgamated with all those under national insurance, as they were "uninsurable."¹⁸⁵ Elaborating on this point, Lidbetter argued that: "The families in this country containing mental defectives of the primary type, [...] include a much larger proportion of insane persons, epileptics, paupers, criminals, prostitutes, inebriates and other social unfortunates than [...] families not containing mental deficients."¹⁸⁶ For this reason, Lidbetter recommended that "we should not, as a Society, support the Beveridge Report."¹⁸⁷ Although there had been some effort to bring the Eugenics Society in line with modern welfare schemes, it was clear there were still some fundamental differences between the varied understandings of social progress. When

¹⁸¹ Hubback, 'Eugenic Aspects of Social Security,' 17.

¹⁸² 'Mr. Halford' quoted in: Blacker, 'Eugenic Aspects of Social Security,' 22-23.

¹⁸³ Binney quoted in: Blacker, 'Eugenic Aspects of Social Security,' 20.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 18.

¹⁸⁵ Ernest J. Lidbetter quoted in: Blacker, 'Eugenic Aspects of Social Security,' 21.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

one considers some of the contrasting interpretations of the Beveridge Report from eugenicists, it appears that at this stage, the Eugenics Society was by no means united under one ethos.

Peace in Europe

If the Nazi Sterilization Law curbed popular and academic enthusiasm for negative eugenics in Britain, then the Holocaust destroyed it entirely. From 1933 to 1945, Nazi *Rassenhygiene* proved nothing less than disastrous both from a humanitarian perspective and for the eugenic cause in Britain. Certainly, the Eugenics Society was forced to change its approach when dealing with the poorer sectors of society, which were nevertheless still assumed by many eugenicists to be breeding grounds for mental deficiency. As the war drew to a close, Barnes resurfaced with an ideology more in common with Lidbetter's determinism, for instance, than Titmuss or Beveridge's universalism. Summarising his views on war and society, Barnes gave the following warning in April 1945 at the University of Cambridge:

The worst evil that can befall a nation is the destruction of its best stocks, because families belonging to these stocks hand on, generation after generation, health character and ability. [...] The riff-raff of the community, the dull, dirty or feeble-minded are useless in the army. In war-time they are overpaid in safe jobs and their numbers increase disastrously. Let the whole process go on for several

generations and the whole quality of a nation declines. [...] Total war gives a nation a 'scrub' population.¹⁸⁸

On 8 May 1945, Barnes welcomed the end of the war in Europe whole-heartedly, greeting VE-Day with this statement: "Thank God, fighting in the West has ceased. We can go forward with hope. At home, we can now begin to rebuild our social life. Between the nations, reason can begin to prevail over passion. Stern and difficult times lie ahead. We grieve that bloodshed continues in the Far East, but now we have the first rays of dawn after the troubled night. Again I say: 'Thank God'"¹⁸⁹ Underneath strong religious overtones lay eugenic connotations. Barnes would soon make clear how he wished to "go forward with hope" and "rebuild our social life," by arguing for the introduction of negative eugenics into the new welfare state.

A precondition to the mainstream reception of Barnes' eugenic ideas was the overriding public hostility towards National Socialism. In February 1945 at a National Peace Council meeting, Barnes was surprisingly sympathetic towards Germany. As *The Times* reported, he suggested that to avoid past failures (i.e., the Treaty of Versailles), the West must establish a new 'friendliness' in political relations: "By generosity give opportunities for [Germany's] growth and trust would be possible."¹⁹⁰ This for some may have been difficult to comprehend, especially those who had been at war, lost family members or spent the previous years in air raid shelters protecting themselves from the German Luftwaffe. Barnes' opinions also gained press coverage in America; Ohio's *Youngstown*

¹⁸⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, 'University of Cambridge Sermon,' (22 April, 1945), EWB 12/1/649.

¹⁸⁹ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 388.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Vindicator published the following headline: 'British Bishop Wants Easy Terms for Nazis.'¹⁹¹

Meanwhile the *Saskatoon Star* of Phoenix quoted Barnes thus: "The significant people in Central Europe when hostilities have ended will still be the Germans. By reason of their good qualities the Germans became strong: for the same reason they will become strong again, whatever peace terms are enforced."¹⁹² While one could interpret this reference to race and national heritage as pro-Nazi rhetoric, it can also be understood as the re-emergence of Barnes' eugenic worldview.

In February 1945, he told the Archbishop of Canterbury in a private letter: "I have been converted to a belief in euthanasia and to acceptance of the principle of sterilisation of those carrying unwholesome genes."¹⁹³ This was undoubtedly a radical departure from traditional ideas on reproduction, described by Glanville Williams a decade later as the view that "every man and every woman has the right to the fulfilment of parental instincts, and the kind of substitute immortality conferred by reproduction. Romantic marriage, also, is contracted with almost complete disregard of genetic aspects."¹⁹⁴ In a reversal of this view, and with respect to genetics only, Barnes sought to refine the national body by encouraging the reproduction of smaller groups of finer types through a combination of positive eugenic education and population 'checking.'

¹⁹¹ 'Bishop of Birmingham on Peace Terms,' *Youngstown Vindicator* (10 February 1945), 2.

¹⁹² 'British Bishop Wants Easy Terms for Nazis,' *Saskatoon Star* (10 February 1945), 43.

¹⁹³ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Artificial Insemination,' (20 February 1945), EWB 9/21/10.

¹⁹⁴ Glanville Williams, *The Sanctity of Life and the Criminal Law* (New York: Faber & Faber, 1957), 82.

CHAPTER VI:

E.W. BARNES VS. THE 'SCRUB' POPULATION, C.1945-1953

*We need to get rid of the slovenly, vicious, idle wasters of the community. Unfortunately the Welfare State is only too likely to encourage their increase. [...] A time is quickly coming when sterilization of the unfit will have to be essential in our social organization.*¹

- EWB, 1949

As Britain tried to recover from the Second World War, the new welfare state began to take shape. According to Barnes, the country was faced with the unenviable task of providing “ever larger quantities of food” to its already over-populated society, which, “for a virtually bankrupt country, is most difficult.”² While austerity measures, such as wartime rationing, continued and were joined by increased taxation, under the leadership of Prime Minister, Clement Atlee (1883-1967), the Labour government – in line with the notions of social reform such as those proposed by Titmuss and Beveridge – introduced policies such as the establishment of the National Health Service (NHS) in 1948. In addition, this period also witnessed the number of council-funded houses for the poor greatly increase and the introduction of William Beveridge’s system of flat-rate family allowances.

¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Welfare and Population,’ *The Eugenics Review* 42, 2 (July 1950), 92-3.

² *Ibid.*

For the most part, these new reforms were well received. Barnes told the Birmingham Rotary Club in 1949, “For the first time in our history the whole population of the country is in a position to get adequate medical attention.”³ However, for many eugenicists, Barnes included, these ‘advances’ only reinforced the view that – in providing support for the seemingly ‘unfit’ – the modern welfare state was fundamentally dysgenic.

Over the past decade, through news and radio reports, the western world had observed the practical application of racial hygiene in Germany, which ranged from forced sterilizations starting in 1934 through to racial extermination after 1940. When the horrific implications of Nazi ideology were finally discovered, eugenicists in Britain suffered the consequences. As one scholar has noted: “Eugenicists had become used to prominent left-wing scientists and the occasional Labourite denouncing eugenics as a subversive, racist, antidemocratic, pseudoscientific doctrine practiced by the Nazis and advocated in Britain as a way of dealing with the supposedly inferior working class.”⁴

In 1946, a member of the Eugenics Society’s council, Geoffrey Eley, asked whether a eugenics program could in fact operate without “abandoning the essential respect for liberty? [...] Certainly if we are to think in terms of advocating bolder forward strides, we must do so with extreme caution and humility.”⁵ From 1945, if not sooner, the majority of British eugenicists chose either to switch from the once relatively popular approach of negative eugenics to a more ‘positive’ approach, or abandon the cause altogether.

Representing an exception to this rule, Barnes, on several occasions, argued in favour of sterilization and euthanasia, measures he believed would be “the complement of

³ Barnes, ‘Welfare and Population,’ 92.

⁴ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 350.

⁵ Geoffrey Eley, ‘Eugenically Desirable Types: A Symposium’, *The Eugenics Review* 38, 3 (October 1946), 133-141.

the welfare state.”⁶ In 1951, Cedric Carter, editor of *The Eugenics Review*, wrote that there were “Few people [who] have suffered more than [Barnes] from the process of condensation and quotation out of context out of which ‘news’ is manufactured.”⁷ Though by this stage, Barnes was well into his 70s, one scholar has noted that “He was radical in all things and his radicalism grew on him with the years.”⁸ Likewise, *The Manchester Guardian* wrote in his obituary that “Advancing age did not stem the flow of his epigrammatic and uncompromising opinions. Indeed, after the Second World War the controversies of which he was the centre grew fiercer.”⁹ With Birmingham literally crumbling around him during the bombing raids of the Second World War, Barnes’ long running contention that civilization was at a state of spiritual, political and biological crisis was greatly enhanced. Thus after the war Barnes’ ideology entered its most radical, and subsequently, final stage of development. As this chapter details, from 1945 until his death in 1953, the self-proclaimed “bold, bad Bishop”¹⁰ increased his efforts to check the so-called ‘scrub’ population, using the pulpit as his platform.

The Eugenics Movement in Post-War Britain

Providing an additional roadblock to the now popular revulsion of eugenics, the way in which scientists understood inheritance and mental deficiency was evolving and increasingly undermined the main tenets of biological determinism. A new generation of geneticists –

⁶ Barnes, ‘Welfare and Population,’ 93.

⁷ Cedric O. Carter, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 42, 4 (January 1951), 188.

⁸ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 390.

⁹ ‘Obituary: Dr. E.W. Barnes, An Outspoken Churchman,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (November 1953), 3.

¹⁰ ‘The Bold, Bad Bishop,’ *Time* (2 March 1953),

[<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,822678,00.html#ixzz1OD7MLiUk>, accessed on 16 August 2013].

led by figures such as L.S. Penrose, now the Galton Professor of Eugenics at the University College, London – benefitted from what Kevles has described as a “general upsurge in the funding of scientific research, especially by governments.”¹¹ If Penrose was a key figure in revolutionising the way in which human genetics was understood, then arguably, the dawn of this new era began with the publication of his 1949 text *The Biology of Mental Defect*. Rather than attributing ‘feeble-mindedness’ – which seemed to cover too broad a range of conditions – to a Mendelian recessive, Penrose’s work focussed on more specific conditions such as Down’s Syndrome and various foetal malformations.¹² When considered alongside the humanist philosophy personified by a number of social reformers at the time, the deductions drawn by Penrose reinforced the idea that society could no longer be explained – or for that matter ‘improved’ – by focussing on biology alone. In other words, it seemed eugenic improvement could no longer be achieved simply by correcting the differential birth rate. Since many eugenically desirable – but poor – citizens may have been ‘masked’ by the economic inequalities of society, it was thought – by eugenicists such as Muller and Huxley – that eugenic measures could only be effective if combined with environmental reforms, providing all levels of the population with equal opportunities.

Positive Eugenics

As Britain underwent dramatic social and structural reforms, the differential birth rate arguably remained the primary concern of the eugenics movement. Even so, many eugenicists placed an increased emphasis on the social and biological importance of

¹¹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 220.

¹² *Ibid.*

‘positive’ eugenics in the new welfare state. With its ‘negative’ counterpart now as controversial as ever, eugenicists looked more to encouraging ‘desirable’ citizens to have larger families. The influence of Galton on post-war theories of positive eugenics is striking. Blacker, for example, later referred to one allowance-based scheme of positive eugenics as “a Galton Subsidy.”¹³ Notably, Galton’s utopia in the book *Kantsaywhere* (1911) functioned using an elitist template, selecting people to breed in order to increase both physical prowess and academic achievement of future generations.¹⁴ Several eugenicists attempted to ‘modernize’ Galton’s positive philosophy. In one instance, the Eugenics Society’s *Statement of Objects* (1950) detailed several economic and social policies currently in place – including family allowances; educational reforms; social mobility; age at marriage and age of retirement – and considered the effect of each on birth rate and family size.¹⁵ For example, it was queried whether lowering the age of retirement might lead to “quicker promotion and thus earlier marriage and increased fertility among young and active people.”¹⁶ Elsewhere, it was hoped that perhaps “lowered costs of education” would increase the size of families.¹⁷

Earlier, in his 1946 article, ‘Positive Eugenics: A Proposal,’ Blacker suggested that financial aid should be provided to families of three children proved to be of a “superior type, in order to assist them in bringing up a fourth child.” The assessment would be made principally by educational specialists to evade the charge of “giving autocratic powers to ‘experts’ centred in anthropometric laboratories or in ‘eugenic courts’ on the Nazi model.”¹⁸

¹³ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Positive Eugenics: A Proposal’ *The Eugenics Review* 39, 1 (April 1947), 36.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Carlos P. Blacker, *Statement of Objects* (London: Eugenics Society, 1950), 4.

¹⁶ Blacker, ‘Positive Eugenics: A Proposal,’ 36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Blacker's idea received mixed reviews from his contemporaries. The social commentators B.S. Bramwell and Cyril Bibby, for instance, agreed that the "time factor," as they put it, was problematic as once the mother involved had three children, she would be most likely reaching the end of reproductive age.¹⁹ Alternatively, Grace Leybourne-White, a writer on social matters, emphasized the possible psychological effects upon "the individual children who might be born under such a scheme," which she argued should "make us hesitate very much before launching."²⁰ To counter the widespread scepticism aimed towards eugenics, one contributor suggested that the project should "enlist the support of eminent editors and clerics" so that the press and pulpit could not "easily strangle the scheme at birth by cries of 'Subsidized Stockbreeding' and the like."²¹ Elsewhere Bramwell recommended creating privately funded scholarships for eugenically desirable families. Indeed, any "eugenically minded person could found scholarships confined to second or third sons and daughters and fix the conditions of the award so that it might be based on intelligence tests rather than book learning. If many such were in being it might encourage propagation."²²

Having considered the practicalities of positive eugenics, the same year, the Eugenics Society held a symposium on 'Eugenically Desirable Types.'²³ Notably, the contributors tended to move away from the traditional elitist philosophy that had to an extent characterized the eugenics movement before the war. Maurice Newfield, a former assistant editor to the *British Medical Journal*, suggested that genetically superior individuals could be

¹⁹ Cyril Bibby, 'Positive Eugenics: A Proposal', *The Eugenics Review* 38, 2 (July 1946), 102. C. Bibby, *Heredity, Eugenics and Social Progress* (London: Eugenics Society, 1939); and *The Evolution of Man and His Culture* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938).

²⁰ See: Grace Leybourne-White, *Children for Britain* (London: Pilot Press, 1945); and *Education and the Birth Rate* (London: Pilot Press, 1940).

²¹ Bibby, 'Correspondence,' 102.

²² B.S. Bramwell, 'Correspondence, Positive Eugenics: A Proposal', *The Eugenics Review* 38, 2 (July 1946), 102.

²³ Maurice Newfield, Geoffrey Eley, Barbara Basanquet, 'Eugenically Desirable Types: A Symposium,' *The Eugenics Review* 38, 3 (October 1946), 133-141.

found in any sector of society. Expanding on this, Newfield presented the case of French military and political leader Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), a man of relatively humble origins. According to Newfield, “when reminded that by ancestry he was hardly qualified to contract a royal marriage” Napoleon replied “I am an ancestor.”²⁴ Thus, so it appeared, all men could be considered potential ancestors and “long after their earthly course is run may be looked back to with pride by their descendants. That is to say, if they have any.”²⁵ Second, Geoffrey Eley, again focussing on society as a whole, suggested that the population may in fact be divided into three desirable types:

1. A good proportion of people of the highest intelligence chosen by intelligence and efficiency tests.
2. A very substantial body of people chosen by efficiency tests to fill the ‘good lieutenant’ class.
3. A still larger body of people who would be prepared and contented to perform the great mass of honourable tasks that are indispensable to the community if the wheels are to be kept turning.²⁶

For Eley, then, in order to cope with the infinite complexities of modern industrial society, three types of people were required.

Not all contributors were concerned primarily with intelligence. Thus, finally, Barbara Bosanquet, argued that, owing to the increasing threat of nuclear war, “we have only ten or

²⁴ Newfield, ‘Eugenically Desirable Types: A Symposium,’ 136.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Eley in: Ibid, 138

twelve years in which to work out an amicable way of life between nations; and if that is so, it doesn't give evolution much chance."²⁷ To pre-empt this disastrous outcome, she suggested that three character traits were essential to the survival of the human race: co-operation, warmth of emotion; and serenity.²⁸ According to Bosanquet, co-operation was something that could be "seen in children" and cultivated throughout the educational process.²⁹ However, those without 'warmth of emotion,' if highly intelligent, tended to be a "cold and calculating [...] dictator or tycoon." Still, if the individual had the "warmth factor," as she put it, but lacked intelligence, they would likely be "a feckless happy-go-lucky type, [...] often charming and have large families, but on the whole they do not contribute to the glory of our culture." When warmth of emotion and intelligence were combined, however, a truly valuable citizen could be produced with "Churchill and Roosevelt" the "outstanding figures of our day with this combination."³⁰ Finally, 'serenity,' described here as "the vital feeling of fulfilment stemming from a purpose in one's life," could only be "achieved by a change in societal values."³¹ For Bosanquet, then, the ideal society would be one in which "men will live together in peace, because peace is a by-product of true human relationships. I think this is what Galton meant when he said that he was concerned with the religious significance of the doctrine of evolution, and I think we have some grounds for hope."³²

²⁷ This compares to some of Blacker's correspondence with friends and colleagues, which give the impression that he senses an impending doom, characteristic of the cold war period. In late February 1952 he discusses with his friend Anthony Gibbs about a potential project, "I will certainly bear you in mind if ever the project nears completion and if we are not all by then atomised." *Closed Stores Archive, Wellcome Trust*, 6PP/CPB/A5/1.

²⁸ Newfield, Eley and Bosanquet, 'Eugenically Desirable Types: A Symposium,' 140.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 139.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² *Ibid*, 141.

Though less concerned with positive eugenics, Barnes also shared the growing angst about nuclear annihilation. That said, when reflecting later on the use of the atomic bomb to end the Second World War, Barnes praised the “good sense” of the scientists involved: “Every political and religious leader talks of peace and discusses with more or less wisdom the atomic bomb. [...] When great scientists urge a course which has such consequences, they are talking Christianity. Their science, like Christianity, knows no boundaries.”³³ However, having reflected on the eugenic implications of nuclear war, in 1951 Barnes asked the Royal Society of Medicine to consider a scenario in which

we in this island, crowded with forty million people, were subjected to atomic bombing. [...] Men of science, from whom wise and moderate statement can be expected, say that relatively few bombs would cause immense loss of life and that many of those living when the holocaust was over would be abnormal in themselves and the parents of children grossly defective owing to resultant harmful mutations.³⁴

Elsewhere, he had expressed “absolute dismay” at a booklet produced by a Church commission that appeared to apologise for the use of the atomic bomb; condemned the use of napalm in Korea; and regarded “with horror” the rearming of Germany.³⁵

At the time, as well as mental deficiency, Barnes’ two predominant concerns, in terms of eugenics, were arguably population and immigration. He commented distressingly

³³ ‘Dr. Barnes and Atomic Bomb,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (30 November 1945), 5.

³⁴ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Over-Population,’ *West London Medical Journal* 56, 2 (July 1951).

³⁵ ‘Obituary: Dr. E.W. Barnes, An Outspoken Churchman,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (November 1953), 3.

in 1951 that “Over-population and social progress are not natural allies.”³⁶ Two important associations were established to engage with the former problem: the Royal Commission on Population (1944-1949) and the Problem Families Committee (1947-1952).

The Royal Commission on Population

In the late 1940s, the issue of population remained one of national importance, something reflected in the activities of the Royal Commission on Population (RCP). Between 1944 and 1949, under the guidance of the Population Investigation Committee, Family Planning Association and Population and Economic Planning – all affiliates of the Eugenics Society – the RCP conducted a national examination of population changes, which, significantly, included a statistical analysis of fertility.³⁷ The publication of its results was highly anticipated in the press. For instance, *The Manchester Guardian* commented prior to publication: “It will be an elaborate document and may prove to be of the greatest importance in guiding policy.”³⁸ In turn, an anticipatory article published in *The Times* suggested to the reader the broader implications of the study: “The inquiry conducted by this Commission has occupied five years. With Lord Simon as its first chairman, the Commission was appointed in 1944 to investigate the causes and probable causes of population trends in Great Britain and to consider whether any measures should be taken in

³⁶ Barnes, ‘Over-Population.’

³⁷ Frank M. Redington and R.D. Clarke, ‘The Papers of the Royal Commission on Population’, *Journal of the Institute of Actuaries*, 77 (1951), 86-7.

³⁸ ‘Report On Population,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (2 March 1949), 8.

the national interest to influence the future trend of population.”³⁹ Perceived as a genuine opportunity for the eugenic cause to win public favour, Blacker noted that

though the Eugenics Society is little mentioned in the Royal Commission's report, and though eugenic issues (apart from those arising from the discussion of intelligence and fertility) are not specifically designated as such, the report as a whole is, from the Society's standpoint, a most satisfactory document. [...] [A]fter blowing contrarily throughout most of the inter-war period, the winds of public opinion are now veering in our favour.⁴⁰

Notably, the RCP strongly backed access to free birth control guidance and “contraceptives as a right of every patient enrolled in the National Health Service, [which] held out the promise at last of effectively restricting the fertility of the very poor.”⁴¹ Initially though, the arguments of the RCP rested on “concerns relating to external threats to the nation,” with a larger population being traditionally linked to military strength. As the report progressed, the terms of the argument began to shift to the more immediate problem of the quantity and quality of the population. As Hanson has recently remarked, whilst the report remained “silent on the question of negative eugenics,” it did recommend “greater financial support

³⁹ ‘Population Report Next Week’, *The Times* (18 June 1949), 4.

⁴⁰ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Royal Commission on Population and the Society’s Aims,’ *The Eugenics Review* 41, 8 (October 1949), 126.

⁴¹ Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 348.

for parents and, more nebulously, that efforts should be made to influence public opinion by stressing the value of ‘family living.’”⁴²

Certainly, class still played an important role in the eugenic discourse in Britain at the time. It appears that the RCP was much influenced by the longstanding campaign of the eugenicists, who had made repeated attempts to prove that the lower class were more fertile and less intelligent than the upper and middle classes. The comparisons between intelligence and family size made in the 1949 report proved to be most divisive among the public. The educational psychologist and eugenicist, Cyril Burt (1883-1971) – who had been enlisted by the RCP to survey this issue – concluded on the matter, as reported in *The Times*, that “It seems almost certain that, in general terms, the larger the family the lower the level of innate intelligence, the more intelligent the parents the smaller the families. Of especially serious significance, it appears that the average level of intelligence among the general population is declining.”⁴³ Curiously, supporting this claim, some readers put forward eugenic arguments in response, arguing that the best stocks were dying out due to their own lack of fecundity. For instance, the poet and historian, Robert Ensor (1877-1958), wrote in *The Sunday Times* “We are now doing our utmost to drain the nation's ablest stock upwards; and when they have risen, let them become infertile and die out. [...] The results could be ignored only if we disbelieved [...] in the existence and supreme importance of hereditary ability.”⁴⁴ Likewise, Ruth Bowley noted in *The Glasgow Times* “A considerable degree of intelligence is inherited. You cannot make it by education, however good: you

⁴² Clare Hanson, ‘Biopolitics, Biological Racism and Eugenics,’ in Stephen Morton and Stephen Bygrave eds., *Foucault in an Age of Terror: Essays on Biopolitics and the Defence of Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 109-110.

⁴³ ‘Intelligence and Fertility,’ *The Times* (30 December 1946), 5.

⁴⁴ Robert Ensor, ‘Intelligence and Family Size,’ *The Sunday Times* (26 June 1949), 7.

must be born with it. [...] [N]ow more than ever we need the highest intelligence possible.”⁴⁵

However, many tended to agree with *The Daily Express* that “intelligence does not depend on inheritance.”⁴⁶ Indeed, *The Tribune* commented sardonically that “Someone palmed off on the Commissioners some rubbish about the comparative intelligence of different classes within the population, and they swallowed it hook, line and sinker.”⁴⁷ From this perspective, it seemed logical that while “in the past a large portion of the leaders of the community have come from one section,” this could be explained by the fact that “they have had the advantages of good food to eat, good education, good training for public life and good examples from their parents. [...] For they were the only section of the population to whom permission to take part in public life was an inheritance in itself. Intelligence in that exclusive set had no barriers to break through.”⁴⁸

It was becoming difficult to justify what *The Guardian* called the “old” eugenic argument that described “the decline of the ‘upper’ or economically better off classes while the workers multiply.”⁴⁹ Eugenicists too in Britain were beginning to question the ‘inherent’ relationship between intelligence and class and, in turn, its apparent relationship to class, many eugenicists – like the socialist eugenicist Muller declared in *Out of the Night* (1935) – were being converted to the idea that the economic inequalities of society masked genetic differences among the population.⁵⁰ If this were true, eugenics could only be a successful social policy if the whole population had equal education, living standards and employment

⁴⁵ Ruth Bowley, ‘Intelligence and Family Size,’ *The Glasgow Tribune* (2 July 1949), 5.

⁴⁶ ‘Intelligence and Size of Family,’ *The Daily Express* (11 July 1949), 3.

⁴⁷ ‘Intelligence and Size of Family,’ *The Tribune* (24 June 1949), 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ ‘Birth-Rate and Brains,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (9 January 1947), 4.

⁵⁰ See: Muller, *Out of the Night*.

opportunities. Likewise, in his 1946 Galton Lecture, the Chairman of the Mental Survey Committee, Godfrey Thompson, argued that “the educational system acts as a sieve to sift out the more intelligent and destroy their posterity. It is a selection that ensures that their like shall not endure.”⁵¹

Nonetheless, the activities of the Eugenics Society continued in many respects to be influenced by the assumption that such families were inherently less intelligent. One example was the Problem Families Committee (1947-1952), a survey on large, troublesome families living in poor urban districts.

The ‘Problem Families’ Committee

The term ‘problem families’ was first used in 1943 by the National Federation of Women’s Institutes (NFWI) when referring to the squalid living conditions of evacuated children.⁵² This was the result of a study carried out by the NFWI between 1939 and 1942, which evaluated slum life in several British cities. The survey was published as *Our Towns: A Close-Up*, in which it was urged that “A study should be made of the problem family.”⁵³ Agreeing with this, C. P. Blacker formed the Problem Families Committee (PbFC) in July 1947.⁵⁴ The PbFC sponsored six pilot surveys in Bristol, Warwickshire, Luton, Rotherham, Yorkshire and Kensington, which were conducted with the help of local Medical Officers of Health. During

⁵¹ Godfrey Thompson, ‘The Trend of National Intelligence,’ *The Eugenics Review* 38, 1 (April 1946), 9.

⁵² Lucy Bland and Leslie Hall, ‘Eugenics in Britain: The View from the Metropole,’ in Bashford and Levine eds., *The Oxford Handbook*, 223. See also: John Welshman, “‘Troubled Families’: the lessons of history, 1880-2012,’ *History & Policy*, available at [<http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-136.html>, accessed on 6th January 2014].

⁵³ Margaret G. Bondfield, *Our Towns: A Close-up* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), 53.

⁵⁴ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Problem Families Committee Minutes,’ (18 July, 1947), *Closed Stores Archive, Wellcome Trust*, SA/EUG/L.58: Box 100.

its infancy, the PbFC spent some time attempting to specify what ‘problem families’ meant in the eugenic sense, which included: “intractable ineducability”; the “presentation of multiple social problems;” and the “subnormal physical capacity of mothers during pregnancy.”⁵⁵ Notably, it was also agreed that “subnormality of intelligence should not [...] be specifically mentioned as a salient characteristic of problem families.”⁵⁶

During 1948-1949, the investigation faced considerable setbacks. While the “Health Departments,” “School Attendance Officers” and “Probation Officers” had been largely helpful to the project, throughout “most of the investigations,” the police “had not found it possible to co-ordinate.” Moreover, Blacker wrote in December 1948, that the term ‘problem families’ was acquiring a “sinister connotation,”⁵⁷ which contributed to a lack of co-operation from some state services. Indeed, in 1945, Barnes himself had lamented the presence of problem families in Britain’s “towns and villages,” who were “almost sub-human, immoral, dirty, thievish, and untruthful.”⁵⁸ For Barnes, as we shall see – owing to their generally high birth rate and apparently high incidences of mental deficiency – the only definitive solution to the problem family was sterilization for the adults and euthanasia for the children born ‘defective.’ In contrast, for the health officer from Rotherham, the phrase ‘problem family’ was “unclear, subjective, and had a bad effect on staff;” he did not hesitate to remark: “I should be glad if I never heard this term again.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Blacker, ‘Problem Families Committee Minutes,’ (18 July, 1947).

⁵⁶ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Problem Families Committee Minutes,’ (10 October, 1947), *Closed Stores Archive, Wellcome Trust*, SA/EUG/L.58: Box 100.

⁵⁷ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Problem Families Committee Minutes,’ (1 April, 1949), *Closed Stores Archive, Wellcome Trust*, SA/EUG/L.58: Box 100.

⁵⁸ ‘Euthanasia and Sterilization,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (21 May 1945), 3.

⁵⁹ John Welshman, ‘In Search of the “Problem Family”’: Public Health and Social Work in England and Wales, 1940-1970,’ *Social History of Medicine* 9, 3 (December 1996), 454, 461.

In any case, the results were published in 1952 as *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*.⁶⁰

There is some evidence that Blacker had attempted to break free from the strict determinism that characterized much of eugenic thought in the inter-war period. He placed much weight on the importance of environmental conditions in the existence of 'problem families.' For Blacker, problem families could be explained through the idea of "self-perpetuating sequences" caused by "maternal deprivation," which could then "reproduce themselves throughout successive generations in a manner which might simulate a genetically determined process."⁶¹

Nonetheless, it became clear that the practical difficulties experienced by the Committee took their toll on the writing of the report. For one, the investigation finished with only five completed surveys out of the original six; the survey in Warwickshire had been discarded. As Blacker admitted in the preface: "I speak for all members of the committee when I say that none of us is unaware of the defects in these inquiries or of the pitfalls involved in comparing them."⁶² Thus in one instance it was put that, though only 39% of known children from 'problem families' were revealed to be 'subnormal' in intelligence, the fieldworkers may have, as he put it, "underestimated through caution" and tended to class children as "normal unless there were some fairly obvious or gross reason for regarding them as subnormal."⁶³ Blacker concluded that many of the young children counted as 'normal' would in fact have been found to be 'subnormal' either "on closer

⁶⁰ See: Blacker, *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*. See also Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain*, 147.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 28.

⁶² *Ibid*, i.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 76.

acquaintance (such as is made by the head teacher),” through “formal testing” or surfacing “when older.”⁶⁴

An interesting example is the book’s section on ‘Defects or Abnormalities,’ divided into five groups: “Prison or Conviction,” “Intemperance or Alcoholism,” “Sex Immorality,” “Physical Defects” and “Psychosis or Neurosis.”⁶⁵ It was observed that in general “more men than women were recorded as showing ‘defects’” and also there were more “‘multiple’ defects per man than per woman.” Curiously, Blacker explained this occurrence to be due to “the fact that the men are less tied down by the home than women and are not expected to accept responsibility for the family apart from earning money for it. Such behaviour as drinking and gambling is also more generally accepted as natural for men.”⁶⁶

The main section of the book discussed the ‘Proportion of Problem Families Per Thousand Families,’ presented in the following table:

| Area | Population | Size of Family | Number of Families | Number of Problem Families Ascertained | Problem Families Per 1,000 Families |
|------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| North Kensington | 90,000 | 3.4 | 26,500 | 69 | 2.6 |
| Bristol | 440,596 | 3.9 | 113,000 | 155 | 1.4 |
| West Riding | 996,217 | 3.8 | 262,000 | 302 | 1.2 |
| Rotherham | 82,800 | 3.7 | 22,400 | 78 | 3.5 |
| Luton | 110,000 | 3.9 | 28,200 | 174 | 6.2 |

(From Carlos P. Blacker, *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*, (London, Eugenics Society: 1952), 79.)

⁶⁴ Blacker, *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*, 76.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 67-8.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 68.

Here the results were negligible. It had been assumed that the number of ‘problem families’ was much larger than the data suggested. As can be seen here, the results indicated that a maximum of 6.2 families per 1,000 could be classed as ‘problem families,’ which equated to just 0.62% of the population. Blacker believed “the problem families ascertained were too few,” and cited examples in which more problem families were discovered after the surveys had been completed, such as in Bristol. With this in mind, he alluded that the actual figure may be closer to 1.5 per cent of the population.⁶⁷ Either way, as a forewarning to future contributors in this relatively new debate, Blacker asserted that “[t]he interaction of nature and nurture is here so close as to make it exceedingly difficult to distinguish the separate effects of each. Further research is needed, but fallacies must be avoided especially those arising from too wide an assessment of psychopathy among the parents.”⁶⁸

Problem Families: Five Inquiries received mixed reviews. Writing for the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, W. Ross Ashby praised Blacker and his associates for following the “right method,” as he put it, insofar as that they “explored the field, discovered the main sources of error, and examined them quantitatively.”⁶⁹ Moreover, a new “full-scale investigation,” based on the “facts” that had been established by the PbFC, could now be planned “intelligently” and with confidence that it “will give results of scientific and social value.”⁷⁰ At the other extreme, the *Annals of Genetics* criticized the study for not selecting “ordinary” families as a reference point: “where a group of families is selected so

⁶⁷ Blacker, *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*, 79.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁹ W. Ross Ashby, ‘Review: *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*,’ *British Journal of Psychiatry* 99 (1953), 165.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* See also: *Perspectives in Public Health* underscored the importance of the study thus: “[F]irst, it is realized that this group of people, although comparatively small in number, does vast harm to the nation as well as to itself; secondly, that the more nebulous the task the greater is the need for accurate objective scientific methods; and thirdly, that we are set an interesting psychological problem when people do not take advantage of technical help which is *freely* made available to them.” ‘Review: *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*,’ *Perspectives in Public Health*, 73, 1 (January 1953), 65.

particularly, it is necessary to obtain, as part of the investigation, parallel information from ‘ordinary’ families who manage their own problems or do not, at least, present problems to the community.”⁷¹ One may conclude from these reviews that, despite its flaws, Blacker’s study had drawn attention to what was, and still is, viewed as an important social and, what remained for some, eugenic question.

During the 1950s, even when discussed by eugenicists, rehabilitation was generally perceived as the only practicable solution for ‘problem families.’⁷² In *The Eugenics Review*, E.T. Ashton, for instance, proposed emulating the efforts made by the Family Service Units (1947-2010), a charity that ran a number of services in localities across England and Scotland for the socially disadvantaged. By centralizing and expanding this service on a national scale, it was thought that some of the families and their children in the coming generations could even become valuable citizens.⁷³ Scholars have argued that, although the Family Service Units were “strongly based in a humanitarian service ethic,” eugenicists “had a significant impact on the terms in which they defined the ‘problem family’.”⁷⁴ Notably, then, with the Family Service Units in mind, the new President of the Eugenics Society, Charles Galton Darwin, referred in 1953 to ‘problem families’ as a “parasitic type that is at present most favoured in our country; if nothing is done, a point will come where the parasite will kill its host by exhaustion and then of course itself perish miserably and contemptibly through having no one to support it.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ M.N. Karn, ‘Reviews: Problem Families: Five Inquiries,’ *Annals of Human Genetics* 17, 1 (1952), 97.

⁷² E.T. Ashton, ‘Problem Families and their Household Budget,’ *The Eugenics Review*, 48, 2 (July 1956); M. Williams, ‘Problem Families in Southampton,’ *The Eugenics Review* 47, 4 (January 1956); P.S. Cadbury, M. MacGregor, Catherine Wright, ‘Problem Families,’ *The Eugenics Review* 50, 1 (April 1958), 37-39.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Bland and Hall, ‘Eugenics in Britain: The View from the Metropole,’ 223.

⁷⁵ Charles Galton Darwin, *The Next Million Years* (London: Greenwood, 1973, first published: 1953), 94.

Barnes on Eugenics and Religion, c.1945-1953

Barnes was one of those who still shared such opinions as the Society President. However, for the ageing Bishop of Birmingham, as we shall see, the issue of race also played an important role in the development of 'problem families.' At this time, Barnes' eugenic ideas were relatively distinct from many views within the eugenics movement, in particular those advocated within the 'desirable types' discourse, and the rehabilitationist approach to 'problem families.' Not only did he publically campaign for sterilization and euthanasia for the so-called mentally deficient, or more broadly, the 'unfit,' but also he did so as a religious leader, in the name of God.

As we have seen, Barnes had already expressed relatively extreme eugenic views, albeit tentatively, during the 1930s. In the immediate post-war years, he appeared to speak with more conviction, was more active and gained more attention. Most notably this came in the form of sustained national newspaper coverage in *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*. The debate that ensued can serve as a microcosm for wider philosophical and ethical debates occurring during this period in Britain. *The Manchester Guardian* provided the following explanatory statement in Barnes' 1953 obituary:

[H]e never avoided dangerous, difficult, and unpopular themes. For instance, in ecclesiastical assemblies he did not hesitate to commend eugenics and the ethics of birth control and to condemn sacramental superstition and materialistic religion. It is

unusual for a Bishop to deal with such themes. If Dr Barnes had been a sceptic or a sophist he might have hedged, but he was a simple believer in the truth.⁷⁶

That considered, one might argue that Barnes' philosophical worldview culminated at this time with his assault on Christian tradition coherently outlined in his book *The Rise of Christianity* (1947) and his public pronouncements supporting eugenics. The latter materialized in a series of lectures in the immediate years following the end of the Second World War, starting with the lecture on 'People and Their Homes' delivered to the Annual Congress of the Co-operative Movement in 1945 and continuing with talks at the Birmingham Rotary Club (1949), the Eugenics Society (1951) and the Royal Society of Medicine (1951). These public lectures gained significant newspaper coverage due to Barnes' endorsement of negative eugenics in a post-Nazi world. First, however, his final attempt at reconciliation between modern science and the Church, as put forward in *The Rise of Christianity*, must be examined.

***The Rise of Christianity* (1947)**

The Rise of Christianity was published in 1947 and covered "the story of Christianity from its obscure beginning to its worldly triumph."⁷⁷ Throughout the book, Barnes examined the Gospels and the New Testament, in order to reach conclusions on the validity of the life, death and teachings of Christ. The book's publication caused an outcry, with Barnes openly

⁷⁶ 'Dr. E.W. Barnes: An Out Spoken Churchman,' *The Manchester Guardian* (30 November 1953), 3.

⁷⁷ Ernest W. Barnes, *The Rise of Christianity* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1947), 334.

rebuked in the Convocation of Canterbury.⁷⁸ In his defence, the Bishop later stated that: “What I wrote in my book was most carefully thought out. Almost every sentence was weighed with anxious scrutiny. I believe that its conclusions, as they stand, are true, that from them we can see how Christianity arose.”⁷⁹

A large part of the controversy from *The Rise of Christianity* was sparked by Barnes’ denial of the ‘miracles’ documented in the Gospels and New Testament. Here the Bishop declared that the virgin birth, the curing of disease, exorcisms, resurrection and control over nature, for instance, did not represent acts of God but demonstrated instead “the fact that man is naturally superstitious.”⁸⁰ He further described the early converts to Christianity as a “pious, kindly people, ill-educated and, as we should deem them, superstitious,” living in “squalid quarters in the cities” under a “harsh social system.” As a result, even in the present day, so Barnes continued, for many Christians, “illustrations, allegories and fanciful possibilities rapidly change into plain narratives and are accepted as historical facts.” Those who originally wrote of such divine intervention were, according to Barnes, not dishonest; it was simply their level of education and types of aspirations. By “imaginatively entering into the mental processes of those from whom miraculous stories came,” one did not necessarily “impugn the honesty of the writers, [...] [but] [impugned] their critical acumen.”⁸¹

Accompanying this, in a continuation from his ‘gorilla sermons’ of the late 1920s, he called into question the ‘virgin birth,’ with reference to its natural occurrence within other species: “Biological research seems to indicate that a human virgin birth may be proved to be possible. Among the insects reproduction from unfertilized egg-cells is common. The

⁷⁸ Bowler, ‘Evolution and the Eucharist,’ 457.

⁷⁹ Quoted in: Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 410.

⁸⁰ Barnes, *The Rise of Christianity*, 62-3.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 64-5.

artificial growth of a frog from an unfertilized frog's egg has been achieved: and a frog is relatively high in the evolutionary scale."⁸² With the help of "modern science," as he put it, Barnes aimed to eliminate the supernatural from the Christian system of belief. Thus, it appeared that a number of the theories, particularly those relating to evolution, "[weakened] the reliability of the gospel narratives; and, in so far as Christian teaching has been built upon the power of Jesus to perform miracles and upon the miracles associated with his birth and death, it [called] for a drastic refashioning of such teaching."⁸³

In the course of the book, Barnes also seemed to have reduced Christ from a prophet to merely a good man, albeit one who was sacrificed and then sacralised by his followers for his moral integrity and strong religious conviction.⁸⁴ In the conclusion, then, Barnes summarized the life of Jesus thus:

There emerged in Galilee a peasant artisan, profoundly convinced of the truth of the prophet's message, who felt that he knew God and was called to serve Him. This man for a brief year or so taught in a remote district, speaking of God with an intimate and beautiful certainty. Finally, because of teaching which expressed his loyalty to God, he was executed as a common criminal.⁸⁵

As had often been the case, Barnes' work divided critics. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, was soon under great pressure from outraged orthodox theologians, who demanded Barnes' condemnation. Accordingly, Fisher delivered "a strong and damaging

⁸² Barnes, *The Rise of Christianity*, 88.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Bowler, 'Evolution and the Eucharist,' 455.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 455.

criticism of the book and cautioned readers against accepting its claim to be an adequate and impartial setting forth of the truth.” Barnes’ superior even went as far as saying, “[i]f his views were mine, [...] I should not feel that I could still hold episcopal office in the church.”⁸⁶ To many ‘modern’ Churchmen, Barnes’ book was an embarrassment. In a letter to A.D. Major, after reading the book then editor of *Modern Churchman*, Percy Gardner-Smyth commented thus: “it honestly compels me to say that I think that *The Rise of Christianity* is a very bad book indeed, amateurish, arrogant and dogmatic.”⁸⁷ As one contemporary put it, his reductionist picture of Christ had turned the New Testament into “Hamlet without the Prince.”⁸⁸

At the other end of the scale, despite the opinions of the journal’s editor, in the July 1947 issue of *Modern Churchman* A.D. Major gave a relatively sympathetic review, admitting it was significant “because it has been written by an English diocesan bishop [and] it demonstrates how very few are the fundamental dogmas of the Christian religion.”⁸⁹ Likewise, Henry Cadbury wrote in *Church History* that Barnes had “done for his generation in England what others have done in other countries or at other times. He has put into one compact and readable volume an analysis of the historic emergence of the Christian movement.”⁹⁰ Elsewhere, Floyd Ross in the *Journal of the Bible and Religion* called Barnes “an honest and honoured pilgrim” and the book “well designed for an advanced undergraduate course in religion, and should be required collateral reading in any introductory

⁸⁶ Rawlinson, ‘Barnes, Ernest William (1874–1953).’

⁸⁷ Alan M. G. Stephenson, *The Rise and Decline of English Modernism: The Hulsean Lectures, 1979-80* (London: SPCK, 1984), 170-1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 397.

⁸⁹ A.D. Major, ‘Review: The Rise of Christianity,’ *Modern Churchman* 37, 2 (July 1947), 97-100.

⁹⁰ Henry J. Cadbury, ‘Review: The Rise of Christianity,’ *Church History* 17, 2 (June 1948), 124.

course in Christian schools of theology. It also deserves wide reading among the laity.”⁹¹ Elsewhere, Richardson in the *Birmingham Diocese Bulletin* greeted it as “a bulwark against modern scepticism” and in *The Eugenics Review*, Usher later wrote that Barnes’ “advanced views gave offence to many a good Christian but [...] his book opened a door of the church which enabled a far larger number to enter who otherwise would have remained outside.”⁹²

The Rise Of Christianity arguably represented the pinnacle of Bishop Barnes’ outspoken views towards the Church. At this time, he also campaigned for the introduction of negative eugenics into British society. In this respect, the main themes covered by Barnes during this period were: population; immigration; the welfare state; racial intermixture; and most controversially sterilization and euthanasia. In the following year, Barnes attended the 1948 Lambeth Conference, the first since 1930, in which the Church – contrary to Barnes’ own beliefs – made a strong statement of anti-racism. In any case, if the publication of *The Rise of Christianity* gave the Church additional reasons to challenge Barnes’ views on religion and science, his eugenic beliefs were even more contested.

Barnes’ Post-War Eugenics

Barnes tended to agree with Galton that the primary concern of religion should be “the furtherance of human evolution.”⁹³ Using his position as Bishop of Birmingham as a platform, he made a concerted effort to spread his eugenic beliefs on a national scale, which

⁹¹ Floyd H. Ross, ‘Review: The Rise of Christianity,’ *Journal of Bible and Religion* 17, 1 (January 1949), 59-61.

⁹² Charles W. Usher, ‘Obituary: The Right Rev. E. W. Barnes,’ *The Eugenics Review* 44, 3 (October 1953), 13.

⁹³ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Galton’s Outlook on Religion,’ *The Eugenics Review* 38, 2 (July 1946), 74.

was duly reported and debated in newspapers and private letters.⁹⁴ As emphasized throughout his professional career, Barnes believed that by protecting the weak, mankind had been left with the choice to either regenerate the national body through population control or face the inevitable descent into war, disease and starvation.

Notably, at this time Barnes was also driven by his belief that society was passing from the post-renaissance world to a new era, something he made clear in one 1950 lecture. For Barnes, civilization could only progress if Christian sentiment was fused with eugenic ideology. Barnes explained his position in the following four points:

- The fundamental principles of the new era (into which we are passing) are two in number, the veneration of knowledge and research and a regard for man's social well-being.
- Arguing from instincts which are, he is convinced, of supreme value, the intellectual who builds religious faith in science tends to believe that God's nature and purpose are to be found in kindness.
- I personally can find nothing in Christ's teaching to cause us to welcome unrestricted population-increase when its direct outcome is a vast growth of human misery.
- Among the tasks of the future, the maintenance of a high standard of sexual ethics will probably be one of the most difficult. In no other realm of human

⁹⁴ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 425.

activity will the union of scientific enthusiasm with Christian idealism be more valuable.⁹⁵

Barnes seemed to ignore the great advances that were made by a new generation of geneticists, such as Penrose. His arguments were more reminiscent of a mindset popular among many eugenicists during the inter-war period: namely, biological determinism. Evidencing this notion, his main sources of influence appear to have remained the work of Fisher and Ruggles Gates, and the conclusions reached by Brock Committee in 1934.

That said, Barnes did adapt some of his rhetoric to address specifically post-war social and political issues. Indeed, notable references included increased immigration at the time and the Cold War. In terms of the latter, Barnes believed the Cold War to be in many respects, a battle “waged between Christianity and communism.” In 1950, fearful for the survival of his faith in the face of “communist materialism,” as he put it, Barnes declared the Cold War would result only in the “spread [of] communism” and an increase in “human degradation.”⁹⁶ Meanwhile, he also expressed concern for increased levels of immigration, mostly from the Common Wealth, into Britain. As we shall see, he believed that this trend represented a serious obstacle to the ‘racial’ improvement of the population.

‘Race’ and Immigration

As we have discussed, the concept of ‘race’ was fairly well established in Britain during the

⁹⁵ Barnes quoted in Cedric O. Carter, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 42, 2 (January 1950), 188.

⁹⁶ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 422.

inter-war period. Arguably, Barnes' opinions expressed after 1945 concerning the existence of 'superior' and inferior' races provide an example of the persistence of this viewpoint in the post-war period.⁹⁷ Indeed, Barnes was one of several ideologues who, as Stone has noted, continued to be "informed by the same assumptions about race."⁹⁸ As his *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry reads: "[Barnes'] belief in eugenics led him to criticize Commonwealth immigration to Birmingham in the early 1950s, as he believed that immigrants would dilute the national stock."⁹⁹

After the war, the Holocaust was largely understood as the result of a profound ignorance with regard to the nature of racial differences. Subsequently, the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was formed to address the issue of 'race' in order to, among other things, avoid another genocide. Several members of UNESCO wished to deny that racial differences existed entirely.¹⁰⁰ In some respects, this was a continuation of the ideas developed in Huxley's – who was initially a key member of UNESCO – controversial 1935 publication *We Europeans: A Survey of 'Racial' Problems*. One of the more notable arguments made in this text was that "the word 'race' should be banished, and the descriptive and non-committal term 'ethnic groups' should be substituted."¹⁰¹ In 1950, UNESCO declared that "all men belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens*" and that "For all practical social purposes 'race' is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth."¹⁰² However, after much dispute, a new definition of race was still presented, which Huxley and others did not sign: "the term 'race' designates a

⁹⁷ See: Chapter II

⁹⁸ Stone, *Breeding Superman*, 95. See also: Schaffer, *Racial Science and British Society*.

⁹⁹ Rawlinson, 'Barnes, Ernest William (1874–1953).'

¹⁰⁰ See: Brattain, 'Race, Racism and Antiracism.'

¹⁰¹ Huxley, Haddon and Carr-Saunders, *We Europeans*, 268.

¹⁰² 'Statement by Experts on Race Problems,' UNESCO/SS/1 (20 July 1950), [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001269/126969eb.pdf, accessed on 16 August 2013].

group or population characterized by some concentrations, relative as to frequency and distribution, of hereditary particles (genes) or physical characters.”¹⁰³ This has determined some authors to claim that the pre-war conceptual framework of racial science was not abandoned after the Holocaust.¹⁰⁴ In an attempt to explain this development, Gavin Schaffer has argued that at the time, rather than “leading society on racial ideology, science in fact operated in a shared discursive terrain. Political interest in the idea of race was not constructed exclusively or even predominantly on scientific foundations but was instead eclectically informed by a range of radicalised ideas emanating from science, literature, religion and tradition.”¹⁰⁵

While some eugenicists remained quiet on the subject, others, such as Charles Wicksteed-Armstrong, became more overt in their racial rhetoric.¹⁰⁶ Though Britain had in the past placed some restrictions on immigration into the country – notably the 1905 Aliens Restrictions Act – Wicksteed-Armstrong declared that now “all peoples from the Commonwealth have the right of entry into Britain. [U]nfortunately many leave legitimate and illegitimate progeny to father the next generation of ‘Britons.’”¹⁰⁷ Certainly, the 1948 British Nationality Act had made it easier for citizens from the commonwealth to come to Britain and begin a new life. Despite this, public racial discrimination was not made illegal by the British government until the introduction of the 1965 Race Relations Act. Arguably, if

¹⁰³ ‘Statement by Experts on Race Problems.’

¹⁰⁴ Malik, *The Meaning of Race*, 127.

¹⁰⁵ Schaffer, *Racial Science and British Society*, 10. For more interpretations of the historical importance of ‘race’ at this time see: William McGucken, *Scientists, Society and the State: the Social Relations of Science Movement in Great Britain 1931-47* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984); Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science*; Marek Kohn, *The Race Gallery: the Return of Scientific Racism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995); Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); and R. King, *Race, Culture and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ See Charles Wicksteed-Armstrong, *Survival of the Unfittest* (London: C.W. Caniel, 1931); and *Road to Happiness: A New Ideology* (London: Watts, 1951).

¹⁰⁷ Charles Wicksteed-Armstrong, ‘Immigration of Coloured Peoples,’ *The Eugenics Review* 47, 3 (October 1955), 201.

racial tensions were building in Britain after 1945, they manifested themselves with the widespread race riots in East London and Notting Hill in the 1950s, in which minority populations were the targets of violent attacks.¹⁰⁸ These became more widespread with the rise of groups such as the white-supremacist National Front from the 1970s.¹⁰⁹

In 1950, the Eugenics Society presented its official position on racial integration in its *Statement of Objects*. Notably, the main pitfalls identified were ‘environmental’ and ‘social,’ rather than tied to hereditary and racial differences: “Race mixture is a subject which excites strong feelings. Seemingly bad results are produced by the unstable environment of children who are exposed to contrasting cultural traditions and to hostile forces of prejudice; also by the fact that racially mixed marriages are not always contracted by the best representatives of either race.”¹¹⁰

While, like his close contacts, Gates and Wicksteed-Armstrong, Barnes continued to talk in terms of ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ racial groups, for many, such opinions had become anachronistic.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, along with the aforementioned Italian demographer and sociologist, Corrado Gini and British anthropologist, Roger Pearson (1927-), among others, Gates later founded the *Mankind Quarterly* (1960-), partly in response to the desegregation of schools in America. Featuring articles on human evolution, ethnography and cultural anthropology, Kincheloe has described the publication as the “cornerstone of the scientific

¹⁰⁸ See: John Solomons, *Race and Racism in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration into Britain* (London: Little Brown, 2003); and Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain*.

¹⁰⁹ See: Richard C. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley’s Black shirts to the National Front* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1998).

¹¹⁰ Blacker, *Statement of Objects (1950)*, 6.

¹¹¹ Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 168-9.

racism establishment” and its contributors “scientific racism’s keepers of the flame.”¹¹² Although later relocating to Washington, the fact that it began life in Edinburgh, Scotland, suggests that in certain circles such sentiments were still very much alive in the United Kingdom. In Britain, this viewpoint was only heightened with the increase of African, Asian and Caribbean immigration into Britain. Schaffer has recognized that – among other factors – this process “ensured a climate both in and outside science where the issue of race was a sustained matter of dispute and attention.”¹¹³ As we shall see, that Barnes’ racism influenced his views on eugenics was epitomized by his second Galton Lecture, aptly entitled, ‘The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,’ delivered to the Eugenics Society in 1949.

At the 1948 Lambeth Conference, the Church had delivered a strong statement opposed to racism. According to ‘Resolution 43,’ “discrimination between men and women on the grounds of race alone is inconsistent with the principles of Christ’s religion.”¹¹⁴ Elsewhere, the attendees were in agreement that “all men, irrespective of race or colour, are equally the objects of God’s love and are called to love and serve him.”¹¹⁵ Notably, it was also stated that: “[E]very race should be encouraged to develop in accordance with their abilities.”¹¹⁶ In general, it appears the Lambeth bishops wished for all ‘races’ to be treated equally. However, Barnes had serious reservations about the immigration of different ethnic groups, particularly from the Caribbean and Africa, into the UK. If the

¹¹² See: Joe L. Kincheloe, *Measured Lies: The Bell Curve Debate Examined* (New York: Palgrave, 1997); William H. Tucker, *The Funding of Scientific Racism: Wickliffe Draper and the Pioneer Fund* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002); and Kenneth Leech, *Race* (New York: Church Publishing Inc, 2005).

¹¹³ Schaffer, *Racial Science and British Society*, 5.

¹¹⁴ ‘Resolution 43: The Church and the Modern World – The Christian Way of Life,’ *The Lambeth Conference 1948*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1948/1948-43, accessed on 19 August 2013].

¹¹⁵ ‘Resolution 6: The Church and the Modern World – Human Rights,’ *The Lambeth Conference 1948*, [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1948/1948-6, accessed on 19 August 2013].

¹¹⁶ ‘Resolution 43,’ *The Lambeth Conference 1948*.

predominantly white British race was to further develop biologically and spiritually, Barnes believed that the mixing with other apparently inferior races had to be avoided.

When discussing the Bishop's 1949 Galton Lecture, one scholar noted that "[t]here is an unspoken assumption throughout, as there had always been in his thinking and teaching, that European culture [was] superior to that elsewhere."¹¹⁷ Barnes had voiced his opinions on the superiority of the white race on several occasions in the past, in lectures such as 1925's 'The Rise and Growth of Man's Spiritual Consciousness' and his first Galton Lecture, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion' (1926).¹¹⁸ However, the increased immigration that began after the war posed a dysgenic threat equal or perhaps – at least numerically – even greater than mental deficiency. Barnes believed that "the problem of undesirable immigration is world-wide. [...] A few centuries hence the voluntary limitation of population increase by the different nations of mankind may prove the most urgent of international needs."¹¹⁹ Moreover, it appeared likely that the issue of racial integration in Britain and mental defect were to an extent connected. Barnes would subsequently use his Galton Lecture as a platform to explore this theory.

In the 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,' Barnes began by discussing the prevalence of 'feble-mindedness.' Thus, in Britain's industrial areas and even in some villages, pockets of feble-mindedness appeared to exist, with the children of such families found to be "backward," as he put it, by their schoolteachers. For Barnes, this condition tended to be "inherited more often than not."¹²⁰ Curiously, Barnes suggested that racial

¹¹⁷ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 427.

¹¹⁸ See: Chapters I and II.

¹¹⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,' *The Eugenics Review* 41, 1 (April 1949), 14.

¹²⁰ Barnes, 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,' 11.

integration was the predominant cause of this trend, which was not something he had emphasised in previous lectures. Even so, as he continued,

though 'pockets' are formed by half-breeds, [...] and though children from these 'pockets' fairly often prove unsatisfactory to their teachers, it is difficult to know how far their defects are due to innate limitations rather than to harmful home influences. As we put the inquiry we sometimes receive over-confident opinions: colour prejudice, which in Britain is instinctive and strong, tends to distort judgment.¹²¹

For Barnes, such "grave social decay" often appeared in "seaports where races mix." However, if children were raised in "defective housing," as he put it, it seemed this would always lead to immorality. In 'defective' housing, even "good stocks" tended to decay.¹²² Others tended to agree with this conclusion. A. Dickinson, for instance, argued in the same year that: "[T]he seemingly insoluble problem of race mixture is far less biological in character than it is social and psychological; but it is hardly less difficult for that."¹²³ To accompany this argument, the Bishop discussed racial intermixture in different societies, ranging from that "between Nordic races," which "does not lead to degeneration," to the creation of "Eurasians" in India. Notably, Barnes believed the latter could be of great value to humanity: "They lack the force of the British, the British capacity for leadership, the

¹²¹ Barnes, 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,' 11.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ A. Dickinson, 'Race Mixture: A Social or Biological Problem?' *The Eugenics Review* 41, 2 (July 1949), 85.

British readiness to take risks, and they do not show the outstanding intellectual ability of the best Indians; but they make excellent clerks, careful, honest and hardworking.”¹²⁴

After conversing with some of his American counterparts at the 1948 Lambeth Conference, Barnes was also optimistic with regard to racial relations in America.¹²⁵ He now believed that black people from Africa or the Caribbean had begun, with some success, to integrate into American society. In fact, this was to such an extent that “coloured people in all but remote areas of the United States of America have acquired a mixture of white blood. Whenever a so-called Negro makes his mark in public life, inquiry almost always shows a mixed ancestry.” According to Barnes, the “American ‘Negro’” was already a different race from their African counterparts. This seemed to explain why many people living in “Southern States where the Negro strain in the coloured population is strong,” were opposed to social equality, a sentiment that, for Barnes, would surely disappear if the true “potentialities of what we may call the ‘new’ Negro” was revealed. In fact, a number of “white American bishops,” as he put it, who had attended Lambeth had agreed that “given the right kind of social education and also just economic opportunities, the ‘new’ Negro would prove a good citizen.” In fact, the “‘new’ Negro,” it appeared, were already developing their own characteristic culture: “His religion is a form of Christianity which, though intellectually primitive, is emotionally strong.”¹²⁶

Not all eugenicists were as optimistic as Barnes when considering ‘racial intermixture.’ For example, after considering his own experience of living in South America, Wicksteed-Armstrong noted that: “Every housewife prefers white or pure black servants to

¹²⁴ Barnes, ‘The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,’ 13.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 15.

mulattoes, who have acquired the reputation of being, generally speaking, insolent, lazy and dishonest. Certainly they are fertile, but that is a very doubtful blessing for the community in which they live.”¹²⁷ Barnes’ correspondence at this time seem to suggest he differed from such views. A young woman from the West Indies, Miss C. Forbes, wrote to Barnes after the lecture, questioning whether “evil and suffering can be the only outcome in a marriage between a black and a white person” and was dubious as to Barnes’ opinion on race with regard to negative eugenics.¹²⁸ In response, the Bishop dwelt on the mixing of cultures: “[Y]ou misunderstood what I said as to euthanasia. I had in mind the birth of defective children who would in after life be virtually sub-human. I made no reference to the children of mixed marriages between white and coloured persons. But such marriages often do not turn out well, and I personally should hesitate to advise them.”¹²⁹ Concluding his Galton Lecture, he hoped to clarify this point thus:

Racial intermixture cannot be avoided. A benevolent despot would prefer not to mix divergent civilizations or cultures. [...] At the beginning racial admixture is usually unsatisfactory: it leads to social decay inasmuch as the impalpable things, such as the religious and moral strength that are of highest value in culture, tend at the outset to disappear. But, if economic conditions become satisfactory, if there are opportunities for social education and, more especially, if pressure towards

¹²⁷ Charles Wicksteed-Armstrong, ‘Mixture of Races,’ *The Eugenics Review* 41, 3 (October 1949), 153.

¹²⁸ C. Forbes, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Euthanasia,’ (28 February 1950), EWB 9/19/95.

¹²⁹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Forbes RE: Euthanasia,’ (29 February 1950), EWB 9/19/96.

wholesome living can be brought to bear, the future of a mixed race, as it becomes stable in its make-up, is by no means unpromising.¹³⁰

Nonetheless, as the flow of immigration increased, so did Barnes' concerns. Indeed, he had confessed to the Eugenics Society that, generally speaking "a man of pure European descent naturally values his white blood."¹³¹ It seems the Bishop was of no exception to this rule. In 1950, described the presence of West Indians in Britain as a "social burden" and the following year spoke of "a disquieting increase of men alien to us in race and religion" and that "alien immigration," as he put it, was rapidly becoming "a potential source of world-wide irritation and disorder."¹³² This idea was expanded on in his 1951 Cavendish Lecture, in which he argued that the "pressure of immigrant races" created "racial antipathies difficult to ignore. [...] History, as I read it, holds little promise for the future of racial groups fashioned by over-crowding." Likewise, considering the fate of the Jewish population in Nazi Germany, Barnes agreed that "inter-racial enmity led to the elimination." He then urged for a limit to be put on "the number of members of other races who come here [to Britain]."¹³³ Though they formed an important aspect of his eugenic worldview, Barnes' opinions on race were not met with any notable controversy. His most contentious views – sterilization and euthanasia – are explored in the following section.

¹³⁰ Barnes, 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,' 16.

¹³¹ Ibid, 15-16.

¹³² Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 427.

¹³³ Barnes, 'Over-Population.'

Sterilization and Euthanasia

In May 1945, a month after the war in Europe finished, Barnes called for the introduction of sterilization and euthanasia for those carrying 'defective' genes. He spoke under the assumption that this would create an improved national body and reverse the current degenerative trends in British society. The two practices would represent a joint offensive against the 'scrub' population, which – as we have seen – he described as “groups of problem families sometimes almost sub-human, immoral, dirty, thievish, and untruthful.”¹³⁴ While “living out squalid and shameful existences[,] [...] permanently dysgenic and dangerous,” they contrasted with 'able families' whom with “their superior mental and physical characteristics [...] rose to prominence when given the opportunity.”¹³⁵

For Barnes, under the harsh social conditions of other centuries, defective children “were not able to survive: the village idiot was a butt who died early. Now-a-days, with our humane social services, 'problem' children grow up to create problem families. Constantly a 'scrub' population is appearing.”¹³⁶ As detailed in Chapter II, during his 1926 Galton Lecture Barnes was content with simply identifying that “the feeble-minded [were] disastrously prolific, and their fecundity must be a grave concern to every religious man and woman.”¹³⁷ However, there was a great urgency in Barnes' post-war rhetoric. Thus, in 1949, he declared that: “[W]e must get rid of the slovenly, vicious, idle wasters of the community.”¹³⁸

¹³⁴ 'Euthanasia and Sterilisation', *The Manchester Guardian* (21 May 1945), 3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Ernest W. Barnes, 'People and Their Homes' (20 May 1945), EWB 12/1/655.

¹³⁷ Barnes, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' 11.

¹³⁸ Ernest W. Barnes, 'Welfare and Population,' *The Eugenics Review* 42, 2 (July 1950), 93.

The scientific arguments he had adopted from Fisher, Gates and other inter-war eugenicists was central to his viewpoint. That same year, Barnes provided a useful overview of his opinions on hereditary and degeneration: “A challenge will come from those who do not believe that good and bad qualities are alike inherited. [...] Analysis of facts in the light of the fundamental discoveries of Mendel and Morgan shows that bad stocks propagate bad stocks. At least 90 per cent of feeble-mindedness is inherited.”¹³⁹ Among his influences here was Fisher’s 1924 study, the ‘Elimination of Mental Defect,’ which estimated that 89 per cent of all feeble-minded children come from normal parentage.¹⁴⁰ In his 1949 Galton Lecture, Barnes also described the relationship between heredity and various ‘degenerative’ conditions. In the section dealing with inheritance, then, he argued that:

[P]hysical and psychical qualities are inherited by the same laws of inheritance. As an illustration of this statement we may say that from a tuberculosis parent a tendency to tuberculosis can be inherited; likewise from a drunken parent a tendency to drunkenness can be inherited [...] [and] it seems certain that mental dullness is inherited more often than not.¹⁴¹

From this perspective, as opposed to theories such as neo-Lamarckism, still popular in some leftist circles at the time,¹⁴² feeble-mindedness would not be removed by transferring the

¹³⁹ Barnes, ‘Welfare and Population,’ 93.

¹⁴⁰ Ronald A. Fisher, ‘The Elimination of Mental Defect,’ *Journal of Heredity*, 529 (1927), 114-116.

¹⁴¹ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,’ *The Eugenics Review* 41, 4 (April 1949), 11.

¹⁴² See: Roll-Hansen, *The Lysenko Effect*; and Diane Paul, ‘Eugenics and the Left’ in idem, *The Politics of Heredity*, 11-35.

family from a slum to more wholesome dwellings, “the defect remains: to eliminate it, we must eliminate the stock where it has appeared.”¹⁴³

Barnes described himself as “profoundly pessimistic” with regards to the future of humanity. In ‘Over-Population’ (1951) he admitted that the “comparatively recent conquest of disease has been marvellous, but [...] as a result, not only populations but the rates of increase of population have expanded. Everywhere communities are becoming disquietingly dense” and as a result “we have too few dwellings and too little food.”¹⁴⁴ Likewise, in 1949, he had argued that the most effective solution was to restrict the population by preserving “the good-living, honest, hard-working classes in our people, whether they be rich or poor [and] get rid of the slovenly, vicious, idle wasters of the community” or risk “being permanently the paupers of the English-speaking world.”¹⁴⁵ Following this in 1950, he told the British Association that presently, even from the Christian perspective, “the doctrine that human life is inherently sacred becomes questioned. [...] Sooner or later, as over-population becomes acute, the question of preventing the increase of tainted human stocks will have to be faced, and violent controversy is likely to ensue.”¹⁴⁶

In 1945, *The Manchester Guardian* had reported Barnes’ suggestion that “fairly often we hear of a child being born pitiably defective in mind or body and of the parent’s relief when it dies. I am convinced that in such cases early euthanasia should be permitted under proper safeguards. [...] Equally, from the Christian standpoint, as I see the matter, there is no objection to medically controlled sterilisation.”¹⁴⁷ Then in 1949, *The Times* quoted him

¹⁴³ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Over-Population,’ *West London Medical Journal* 56, 2 (July 1951).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ ‘Sterilization of the Unfit,’ *The Times* (29 November 1949), 2.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Inferior Stocks “Increasing far too rapidly”,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (5 September 1950), 3.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Euthanasia and Sterilisation,’ *The Manchester Guardian*, 3.

thus: “[The] time is quickly coming when sterilisation of the unfit will be essential in our social organisation.”¹⁴⁸ Finally, in 1951, Barnes told the Royal Society of Medicine that “we must eliminate the stock where it has appeared. Is success in this elimination possible without sterilization or infanticide? [...] [W]e cannot avoid the question as to what should be the social policy of a civilized race, anxious to improve the quality of its people.”¹⁴⁹

Responses and Criticisms

In January 1950, the editor of *The Manchester Guardian* sent Barnes some of the letters received following the newspaper’s report on his Birmingham Rotary Club lecture. The 1949 lecture entitled ‘Welfare and Population’ remained a topic of conversation in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ section from early December 1949 through to January 1950. Nearly all of the letters were “opposed to [Barnes’] suggestion.”¹⁵⁰ One could thus assume that most of the public opinion was against Barnes’ support for negative eugenics. However, many of the surviving letters written directly to Barnes were in support of what one contemporary called “your Crusade concerning the prevalence of mental deficiency in this country.”¹⁵¹ He was commended by many for “your wisdom, your farsightedness, and for your courage. Courage because you knew in advance that you would be criticized and condemned by millions of people of all faiths, particularly the Catholics, and including many of the members of your own congregation.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ ‘Sterilization of the Unfit: Dr. Barnes on Over Population,’ *The Times* (29 November 1949), 2.

¹⁴⁹ Barnes, ‘Welfare and Population,’ 94.

¹⁵⁰ M. MCM, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Letters to the Editor’ (4 Jan 1950), EWB 9/19/93.

¹⁵¹ R.A. Lyster, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Crusade Against Mental Deficiency,’ (8 Feb 1951), WB 9/19/100.

¹⁵² H.A. Pagenkoff, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Birmingham Rotary Club Lecture’ (2 Dec 1949), EWB 9/19/87.

In addition to his prowess, many supported Barnes' opinions on negative eugenics. For example, Joshua Oldfield (1863-1953), a lawyer, physician and public writer on health, encouraged the Bishop to discuss "a definite stratum of men and women who are classified as 'idiots' or 'imbeciles'. The important thing to remember about them is that they have never been human, are not human, and never can become human. [...] Upon this basis I am wholly in support of your limited advocacy of sterilization and of euthanasia."¹⁵³ In a similar vein, the children's author, Charles Esam-Carter¹⁵⁴ also offered his support. First, Esam-Carter informed Barnes of his late sister who was an "invalid," as he put it, and consequently, a burden to the family – himself embarrassed by her company, his father turning to alcohol finding "solace in public houses" and his mother burdened with constant need of care, eventually dying in an asylum several years later – and a "misery" to herself. Thus, he supported Barnes' "remarks regarding the 'putting to sleep' of infants who can never become anything but a misery to themselves and an intolerable blight and burden on all around them."¹⁵⁵ Likewise, L. Majorie Smyth, an assistant teacher at a residential school for "Educationally Sub Normal Girls" wrote to the Bishop "strongly in favour of [the] sterilisation of girls in this category before they leave school. It would be better for them to be prevented from reproducing their kind (whether in or out of wedlock) which I regret is more or less inevitable." Despite "loathing the idea of the gas chamber," Smyth believed that it could not be ignored that such individuals could "multiply the sub normal population of Nottingham by at least 3 million over the next 10 years. [...] I feel something must be

¹⁵³ Joshua Oldfield, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Euthanasia and Sterilization' (15 June 1945), EWB 9/19/75.

¹⁵⁴ See: Charles Esam-Carter, *The Turnings of The Shrew* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1945).

¹⁵⁵ Charles Esam-Carter, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Birmingham Rotary Club Lecture' (28 Nov 1949), EWB 9/19/82.

done!”¹⁵⁶ In fact, for one reader of *The Manchester Guardian* it seemed “entirely right that a bishop of the Church of England should be a pioneer in advocating a measure[,] [...] which is designed to eliminate evil and increase the sum total of human good. [...] I for one, on Christian and moral grounds, would heartily support the Bishop of Birmingham.”¹⁵⁷ In general, then, those supporting Barnes agreed that the ‘sub normal’ represented a dangerous, highly-fertile element of society, whose burden on the race and those close to them was too great to justify their procreation. From this perspective, negative eugenics was the best solution.

Inevitably, though, Barnes’ proposals did not go unchallenged. Indeed, when discussing public reactions to Barnes’ lectures, Carter noted in a 1951 edition of *The Eugenics Review* that “Recriminations were outpoured, ironical, abusive and bitter by leader-writers and correspondents.”¹⁵⁸ Criticism included comparisons with German National Socialism; the apparent incompatibility of eugenics and orthodox Christianity; the semantics of terms such as ‘unfit;’ and Barnes’ understanding of the science of heredity.

For many, certainly in the post-war period, it was impossible to avoid “Nazi comparisons” when discussing eugenics.¹⁵⁹ As contemporary scholar of criminal law Glanville Williams later recalled, the Nazi experience had “brought the whole cause of eugenics into disrepute among freedom-loving peoples.”¹⁶⁰ E. Muller-Sturmheim, an author on contemporary political and social issues in Austria,¹⁶¹ wrote in 1949, “[t]his policy of Dr.

¹⁵⁶ L. Majorie Smyth, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: West London Chichurgical Society Lecture’ (26 May 1951), EWB 9/19/104.

¹⁵⁷ Russel Tricker, ‘Letters to the Editor: Sterilisation,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (28 December 1949), 6.

¹⁵⁸ Cedric O. Carter, ‘Notes of the Quarter,’ *The Eugenics Review* 42, 4 (January 1951), 188.

¹⁵⁹ Susan Marshall, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Annual Co-operative Congress Lecture,’ (14 June 1945), EWB 9/19/74.

¹⁶⁰ Williams, *The Sanctity of Life*, 84.

¹⁶¹ E. Muller-Sturmheim, *99.7%: a plebiscite under Nazi rule* (London: New Europe Publishing Company, 1942); and *What to do about Austria* (London: New Europe Publishing Company, 1943).

Barnes reminds me of the ‘philosophy’ of the Nazis, who sterilised and killed those whom they considered ‘unfit’.”¹⁶² Agreeing with this, in May 1945 following the Bishop’s Co-operative Congress talk, Canon A.E. Horner questioned the seemingly odd timing, “just at the end of a victorious war against an enemy whose arsenal contained [like Barnes] euthanasia and sterilisation as its two principle biological weapons.”¹⁶³ Moreover, Susan Marshall, the mother of a “mental defective,” wrote that his arguments were no different to Nazi Germany, with both equating to “the killing of people who are trouble to them.”¹⁶⁴

Extending this argument, another reader asserted that: “During recent years the world has suffered at the hands of a few misguided genii – vicious, but not idle – sane, and certainly not sterilizable according to the accepted meaning of insanity. These few have caused more hardship, sorrow and tragedy than all the insane and defective mortals it is proposed we should destroy or sterilize.”¹⁶⁵ As the then Head of Philosophy at the University of Leeds, J.M. Cameron, concluded, “if one looks at the evils afflicting our civilisation, most of them seem to be the work of ‘clever devils’ [...] and not of uncommonly stupid persons.”¹⁶⁶

Another issue was how to identify the so-called ‘unfit.’ Walter Shawcross, formerly a tutor at the Manchester School of Commerce, considered that even if legislation was passed, society would be left with the problem of “defining ‘unfitness’ and the more difficult task of choosing the person or persons to make the definition.”¹⁶⁷ For Shawcross, the 20th century had unearthed the moral ambiguities of totalitarian dictatorships and forever

¹⁶² E. Muller-Sturmheim, ‘Sterilisation’, *The Manchester Guardian* (29 December 1949), 4.

¹⁶³ A.E. Horner, ‘Sterilisation’, *The Manchester Guardian* (29 May 1945), 4.

¹⁶⁴ Marshall, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Annual Co-operative Congress Lecture.’

¹⁶⁵ S.A.R. Chadwick, ‘Sterilization of The Unfit,’ *The Times* (6 December 1949), 5.

¹⁶⁶ J.M. Cameron, ‘Sterilisation,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (3 January 1950), 6.

¹⁶⁷ Walter Shawcross, ‘Sterilisation of The Unfit,’ *The Manchester Guardian* (17 December 1949), 6.

tainted the idealized image of Plato's 'Philosopher Rulers' guiding society with superior wisdom.¹⁶⁸ Agreeing with this, a 'Common Sense' argued that it "needs little imagination to picture the results if such powers were given to an unscrupulous Minister of Health whose only criterion of right action in a co-called 'Welfare State' was that of temporal expediency."¹⁶⁹

Many critics believed sterilization and euthanasia were neither in the interests of the 'defectives' nor society itself. One reader commented thus: "Will sterilisation make the defective less defective? [...] I venture to suggest that the psychological effects following sterilisation would, if anything, tend to make such people worse than ever; in which case sterilisation defeats its own ends."¹⁷⁰ Another warned of the danger of sterilized women "turning to prostitution" and medical practitioners involved with sterilization and euthanasia suffering "a loss of public trust and confidence." Regarding euthanasia, Marshall concluded that if one were to take a 'defective' child's life:

- (1) It would be impossible to live with the knowledge that one had deliberately deprived one's child of life
- (2) Every human being has an inalienable right to his life and happiness, in however limited a nature (and there are many natures more limited in gentleness, kindness and goodwill than mental defectives)

¹⁶⁸ Shawcross, 'Sterilisation of The Unfit,' 6.

¹⁶⁹ Common Sense, 'Sterilisation of the Unfit,' *The Times* (20 December 1949), 6.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

(3) The ideas are at bottom, an adult evasion of grief and difficulty rather than true care for the child itself.¹⁷¹

This led to another point of contention: the fact that Barnes, a leading figure in the Anglican Church and person of great moral authority, was lecturing in favour of what many saw as a profoundly immoral subject. As one reader summarized, “it is extremely depressing that a bishop advocates the sterilisation of the unfit and [...] even the killing of children born defective in certain respects.” Despite this, Barnes was not the first churchman to support eugenics in Britain. As we have seen, when the British Eugenics Society was in its infancy in the early 20th century, the ranks of the protestant clergy were well represented, with William Inge, Charles D’Arcy and S.T. Percival all advocating eugenics. Inge for example, who was the Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral at the time, believed that “there is nothing inconsistent with Christianity in imposing as well as enduring personal sacrifice where the highest welfare of the community is at stake.”¹⁷²

During the 1900s, as Hale has written, “conspicuously absent from the Eugenics Education Society [...] were Catholics.”¹⁷³ At the beginning of the 20th century, the most eminent Christian opponent of eugenics in Britain was arguably Father Thomas J. Gerrard (1871-1916). In 1912, he stated “the final end of man is not civic worth. That is but a means to the end. The end is another world, and this world is but a preparation for it.”¹⁷⁴ From this position, the ‘other-worldly’ nature of Christianity and the secular aims of eugenics seemed

¹⁷¹ Marshall, ‘Letter to Barnes RE: Annual Co-operative Congress Lecture.’

¹⁷² William R. Inge, ‘Some Moral Aspects of Eugenics’, *The Eugenics Review* 1, 1 (April 1909), 34; and for more on Inge and eugenics see: Hale, ‘Debating the New Religion of Eugenics.’

¹⁷³ Hale, ‘Debating the New religion of Eugenics,’ 448.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas J. Gerrard, *The Church and Eugenics* (London: B. Hereder, 1912), 23.

irreconcilable. Looking forward, in 1958 the Venerable Pope Pius XII (1876-1958) during one of his 'Last Talks to Doctors' called sterilization "a grave violation of moral law."¹⁷⁵ It was not justified even on the grounds of man's right to dispose of his own body and thus was not an acceptable solution for preventing the transmission of a diseased heredity. According to the Pope "[n]ot even public authority had the right, under pretext of any indication what[so]ever, to permit it, and much less to prescribe it or to have it done upon innocent persons."¹⁷⁶ From the orthodox position, sterilization was objectively wrong, a violation of moral law and thus working against God's divine plan not in line with it, as Barnes had maintained. The reforming nature of the Protestant Church was perhaps what gave Barnes the impetus to approach eugenics, religion and science in what he saw as the most rational manner. Thus, he was able to ask in 1945: "How can our so-called Christian country combine necessary and wise action with what is best in the Christian tradition?"¹⁷⁷

The main area in which Barnes' arguments appeared to fall short was his assumptions with regard to heredity: namely that mental defect was 90% inherited. In 1945, the Director of the Royal Eastern Counties Institutions at Colchester, Colonel Roland Anderson, wrote to Barnes stating that, from his experience, only 5% of mental disorder was due to heredity. Instead, most cases were caused by environmental influences such as "mothers leaving their babies on a sofa or in an unguarded cot whilst they are at work. The child falls out and hits its head. [...] The mental defect does not become obvious until the time comes for the child to talk. Venereal disease is responsible for other cases."¹⁷⁸ Another

¹⁷⁵ 'Pope Pius XII: One Of His Last Talks To Doctors,' *The British Medical Journal* 2, 5102 (18 October 1958), 970.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ernest W. Barnes, 'People and Their Homes,' (20 May 1945), EWB 12/1/655.

¹⁷⁸ Roland Anderson, 'Letter to Barnes RE: Annual Co-operative Congress Lecture,' (21 May 1945), EWB 9/19/71.

reader of *The Manchester Guardian* and correspondent of the *British Medical Journal*, Duncan Leys, emphasized the questionable authority of Barnes' science of heredity. Citing leading contemporary geneticist Penrose as evidence, he declared "Scientists who have spent their working lives in the study of mental defect do not know a) whether the incidence is increasing or not; b) whether the 'national intelligence' is increasing or decreasing; c) what proportion of mental defect is inherited."¹⁷⁹ In view of that, Penrose's aforementioned *The Biology of Mental Defect* (1949) reinforced this notion. The book demonstrated that such traditional dichotomies as 'congenital' and 'acquired,' were no longer useful since nature-nurture relationships were too intimately inter-related and inter-dependent. In fact Penrose went as far as saying, "From the biological point of view, the effects of limited use of voluntary sterilization are likely to be negligible, though considerable medical and social advantages might be obtained by its use in carefully picked individual cases. [...] It is difficult to justify compulsory sterilization of defectives on genetical grounds."¹⁸⁰

For Penrose, then, the only scenario in which sterilization could prove effective was in individual, isolated cases. As opposed to Barnes' call for relatively widespread sterilization and euthanasia, it would prove 'negligible' with regards to a national eugenic programme. With this in mind, Barnes' core points of defence appear highly problematic. In the post-war years, these were based upon, in his words, "the laws discovered by Mendel. A mentally defective child may therefore be born to apparently normal parents. But one or both of the

¹⁷⁹ Duncan Leys, 'Letters to the Editor: Sterilisation,' *The Manchester Guardian* (5 January 1950), 4.

¹⁸⁰ Lionel S. Penrose, *The Biology of Mental Defect* (London: Grune & Stratton, 1949), 236.

parents will carry the defective gene as a recessive.”¹⁸¹ To reinforce this argument he referred his critics to the “Brock Report” and “the ‘Inheritance of Mental Defect’ by R. Ruggles Gates. [...] especially to pages 255, 256.”¹⁸² As detailed in Chapter V, these pages contained the aforementioned paragraph transcribed for Barnes by Gates in 1937.

Nonetheless, to demonstrate the shortcomings of Barnes’ theories one need look no further than the Brock Report itself. The Committee had advised to sterilize ‘mental defectives’ or the ‘mentally disordered’ and persons suffering from a transmissible physical or mental disability while also suggesting “numerous safeguards – for example, each operation had to have the written authorization of the Minister of Health, proof had to be provided that in granting their consent the patients understood the nature and implications of the operation, and no operation could take place in a mental hospital (because of the undesirable associations that might be formed in the public mind).”¹⁸³ Without the necessary scientific clarity on the subject however, it was inherently flawed, with little substance to its argument. Consequently, Barnes shared the same problem in the post-war years. Reginald Gates had even admitted himself the limitations of the argument in the ‘Inheritance of Mental Defect’ stating that: “Until the outwardly normal transmitters of feeble-mindedness can be distinguished from those who are not transmitters, it will therefore be impossible to do more than place an upper limit to the percentage of mental defect which is of the non-inherited type.”¹⁸⁴ As has been suggested, even in the 1930s, at the height of the campaign for sterilization, the exclusive-inheritance argument was by no

¹⁸¹ See: Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Anderson RE: Annual Co-operative Congress Lecture’ (23 May 1945), EWB 9/19/72; and ‘Reply to Marshall RE: Annual Co-operative Congress Lecture’ (23 May 1945), EWB 9/19/77.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Macnicol, ‘Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization,’ 158.

¹⁸⁴ Reginald Ruggles Gates, ‘The Inheritance of Mental Defect,’ *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 13 (1933), 255.

means accepted by the scientific elite. Macnicol has attributed a key reason for the failure of the Departmental Committee on Sterilization to the inability to “produce convincing proof that mental deficiency was primarily inherited, and thus enlist a powerful lobby of public and ‘expert’ support.”¹⁸⁵ Moreover, supporters of voluntary sterilization frequently admitted that the causes of mental deficiency were multifactorial. For example Blacker too reluctantly acknowledged that while there were “good reasons for supposing that Mendelian laws operate in all types of human heredity, the factors are numerous and their differentiation from one another have not been worked out.”¹⁸⁶

Ultimately, Barnes’ wish for the introduction of negative eugenics into the welfare state never became a reality. During the 1950s, then, the new genetic ‘knowledge’ was a serious setback for sterilization proposals, as geneticists continued to question the scientific practicability of racial improvement, at least through this means. As Williams later summarized in 1957, even if feeble-mindedness were 90 per cent inherited, it follows that merely to sterilize (or kill in the case of infant euthanasia) “all actual sufferers would have a comparatively small effect on the total incidence of inherited mental defect in the community.”¹⁸⁷ Even so, this did not stop Blacker and the Eugenics Society considering the benefits of sterilization for the mentally deficient. This was most notable in 1952’s ‘Voluntary Sterilization: A Symposium.’ Here Blacker, among others agreed that sterilization had been in the “doldrums” since 1939 and now was the time to revive it.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Macnicol, ‘Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization,’ 159.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Williams, *The Sanctity of Life*, 85.

¹⁸⁸ Carlos P. Blacker, ‘Voluntary Sterilization: A Symposium,’ *The Eugenics Review* 43, 4 (January 1952), 184.

Artificial Insemination and the 'Positive' Future

During the 1940s and 50s, along with the – albeit somewhat muted – issue of negative eugenics, the 'differential birth rate complex' remained a central theme of eugenic ideology in Britain. For instance, practically, Blacker played a key role in the Family Planning Committee, and ideologically, Leonard Darwin switched attention to positive eugenics in his ill-fated family allowance scheme, the Promising Families Committee (PmFC) (1952-1956).

Sharing similarities with the aforementioned 'desirable types' discourse from the late 1940s, in 1952 the PmFC drafted a letter that asked headmasters to submit the names of children in their schools who had "given the impression of being conspicuously well-adjusted to school life, and who best conform[ed] to the four standards formulated by Cecil Rhodes for the guidance of his selection committees."¹⁸⁹ This was to be followed by a questionnaire sent to the parents to find out exactly what constituted a 'promising family' and finally a scheme of family allowances to increase the size of said desirable families.

Having been poorly received by the press, Darwin's scheme was ultimately unsuccessful in garnering public support, finding willing participants to cooperate, and collecting any convincing data from which to draw a definitive conclusion. For the *Glasgow Herald*, moral and practical difficulties aside, positive eugenics itself was criticized as "a gross oversimplification of what is a complex mechanism." As this reviewer summarised: if one were to consider that "hereditary particles" were linked together in a "seemingly random way to form chains of particles so that each chain consists of a mixture of particles representing good, bad or indifferent qualities," the diverse number of so-called good

¹⁸⁹ Charles Galton Darwin, 'Letter to Headmasters,' (1952), *Closed Stores Archive, Wellcome Trust*, SA/EUG/L.58: Box 100.

qualities suggested would lead to the involvement of more chains “and the greater chance there is of getting some bad qualities along with the desired good ones.”¹⁹⁰

In a last ditch effort, Darwin endorsed the creation of a broadsheet to promote positive eugenics to “MPs, educationalists and other influential people.”¹⁹¹ However, as Blaney describes, ‘Promising Families: Their Characteristics and Encouragement’ went through “several tortured drafts” and was still not finalised when in 1959 Darwin stepped down as President of the Eugenics Society.¹⁹² The new president, the aforementioned Julian Huxley, “delivered the coup de grace to the publication,” concluding that “in trying to incorporate the varied views of Council the broadsheet had lost coherence [...] and the measures suggested would not be sufficiently selective.”¹⁹³

While Barnes’ commitment to eugenics at this time was perhaps best characterized by his insistence on the need for negative eugenics in the welfare state, he also took an active interest in human artificial insemination (AI). For many eugenicists, as a controlled, medical alternative to sexual intercourse, – other than ectogenesis, an undeveloped technology, in which the foetus is grown outside of the body – AI was seen as the most rational and efficient means of selective breeding. Moreover, in theory this increased control over the genetic make-up of the next generation could fulfil the needs of both positive and negative eugenics. It was perhaps this aspect of his eugenic ideology, then, more than any other that gave the clearest indication of the type of society Barnes wished to create.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Improving the Race: Promising Families Project’, *Glasgow Herald* (10 January 1955), 6.

¹⁹¹ Tom Blaney, *The Chief Sea Lion's Inheritance: Eugenics and the Darwins* (Leicester: Matador, 2011), 151.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Blaney, *The Chief Sea Lion's Inheritance*, 151.

While sterilization, birth control and euthanasia to an extent dealt primarily with the problems of the present, AI was focussed directly on the future. AI was not a new theory, with figures such as Marie Stopes and J.B.S. Haldane having flirted with the idea in the early 20th century. It had first become a significant discourse among British eugenicists in 1935 when Herbert Brewer advocated artificial insemination by selected doctors (AID).¹⁹⁴ In this lecture, titled 'Euteleogenesis,' one of Brewer's central arguments was that eugenic artificial insemination should be voluntary in nature. Before publishing the paper, owing to its controversial nature, the then editor of *The Eugenics Review* felt it necessary to add in the footnote that the views expressed did not appear among "the Aims and Objects of the Eugenics Society nor have they been submitted for the consideration of the Council."¹⁹⁵ According to Brewer, AI would "transform the problem of negative eugenics." With regard to the prevalence of mental deficiency and other 'latent' defects, whereas "the elimination of such degeneracy by sterilizing" would be like "clearing a river of fish by catching the few which jump from the water," artificial insemination would ensure that the "existence the whole inextricable tangle of latent defect" would be swept out "in a few generations, replacing it concurrently with hereditary material of the highest excellence."¹⁹⁶

AI was also a central theme in Herman Muller's aforesaid abortive plan, presented to Stalin in 1936. Together with Julian Huxley, Brewer and Muller were part of a circle of eugenic ideologues, which included the likes of Haldane, G.B. Shaw and C.P. Snow, who tended to favour the political left and looked to counter the negative public perception of

¹⁹⁴ See: Martin Richards, 'Artificial Insemination and Eugenics: Celibate Motherhood, Euteleogenesis and Germinal Choice,' *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 39, 2 (June 2008), 211-221.

¹⁹⁵ Maurice Newfield, 'Footnote' in Herbert Brewer, 'Euteleogenesis,' *The Eugenics Review* 27, 2 (July 1935), 121.

¹⁹⁶ Brewer, 'Euteleogenesis,' 123.

eugenics and advocate the use of AI. As Huxley had put it “Eugenics has sometimes been attacked as a mere rationalization of class prejudices. [...] The inherent diversity and inequality of man is a basic biological fact; and Eugenics is the expression of a wish to utilize that fact in the best interests of future generations.”¹⁹⁷

In 1937 Brewer expanded on this: “the aims of euteleogenesis are socialism, biological socialism [...] nothing less than socialization of the germ plasm, the establishment of the right of every individual that is born to the inheritance of the finest hereditary endowment that anywhere exists.”¹⁹⁸ Among eugenics circles, Brewer’s proposal was met with much caution, with his overt references to socialism doing nothing to quell any opposition. Other concerns ranged from fears about public reaction to practical difficulties, such as “finding acceptable method of obtaining semen.”¹⁹⁹ It would not be until long into the post-war period before these issues were overcome.

Demonstrating the contemporary relevance of eugenic ideology to organized religion, Archbishop Fisher asked Barnes in 1945 to join a committee along with the Bishops of Derby and Oxford to discuss the Church’s position on AI. Curiously, Barnes felt an initial repugnance to the idea, unable to overcome the seemingly ‘unnatural’ nature of the practice. However, recognizing how important the practice could be for the future of the race, he was torn on the issue, confessing to Fisher that: “If the Church yielded to the very strong instinct which moves most of us personally, [...] it might be that in years to come men [would] point to our decision as another example of the way in which, when a new

¹⁹⁷ Julian Huxley, ‘Foreword’ in H. Brewer, *Eugenics and Politics* (London: Eugenics Society, 1937), 1.

¹⁹⁸ Herbert Brewer, *Eugenics and Politics* (London: Eugenics Society, 1937), 3.

¹⁹⁹ Richards, ‘Artificial Insemination and Eugenics,’ 213.

departure was made, the Church sought to block the way of progress.”²⁰⁰ Eventually Barnes would nonetheless serve on the committee, in which the three Bishops interviewed among others, the Minister of Health, Anuerin Bevan (1897-1960), some prominent doctors and the aforementioned Eugenics Society Secretary, C.P. Blacker. It was concluded that rather than condemn the practice outright, the best course of action for AI “as between husband and wife,” was simply that “judgement should be reserved.”²⁰¹ However, concerning “artificial insemination with semen supplied by a donor,” – something considered eugenically advantageous by Blacker, Huxley and Brewer, for instance, – “grave exception should be taken, from the Christian point of view, to any such practice.”²⁰² Though hesitant to comment on the practice in public, in private it appears that Barnes became more sympathetic to the idea, even apologising to Blacker for the tentative approach: “You will realize how difficult it is for leaders of the Church to run counter to the almost unanimous opinions of the rank and file. I hope that no episcopal utterance, if and when it should come, will do harm by its unwisdom: more we cannot expect.”²⁰³ After playing his role in the Church’s committee, in 1950 Blacker described the Eugenics Society’s position on AI thus:

Artificial insemination has been successfully used in cases when the male partner is at fault and also when, because of hereditary infirmities in himself or his family, he does not want children of his own. [...] The *Society* holds that while caution is needed

²⁰⁰ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Reply to Fisher RE: Artificial Insemination,’ (20 February 1945), EWB 9/21/10.

²⁰¹ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 429.

²⁰² ‘Committee on Artificial Insemination: Draft Interim Report,’ (est. July 1945), EWB 9/21/28.

²⁰³ Ernest W. Barnes, ‘Letter to Blacker RE: Artificial Insemination,’ (9 July 1945), EWB 9/21/21.

in espousing this revolutionary biological innovation, the practice of which should not outrun prevailing laws and sentiments, it should not be legally prohibited.²⁰⁴

Likewise, towards the end of the decade, as his biographer has described, Barnes grew “more and more convinced that artificial insemination, even by a donor, would be an inevitable and perhaps a desirable element in the positive genetic engineering to which he was increasingly attracted.”²⁰⁵ In a 1950 paper presented to the British Medical Association, Barnes, with his own health rapidly declining, gave the new generation of eugenicists, geneticists and churchmen his final blessing:

[T]he most important medical research of the future will be concerned with the elimination from human stocks of genetic defects and with the production of human types finer than any that have yet appeared. It is among such human types that the finer kinds of religion and ethics will show themselves. I foresee a time to come when the greatest geneticist will be accepted as one of the leading agents of Christian progress.²⁰⁶

In May 1953, Barnes was forced to resign from his post as Bishop of Birmingham due to ill health. Reflecting on his 29-year-tenure, during which he had been publically denounced by three successive Archbishops of Canterbury, *The Observer* provided the following portrait:

²⁰⁴ Blacker, *Statement of Objects*, 8.

²⁰⁵ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 429.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Dr. Barnes is particularly fond of the text: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers,’ yet he has brought not peace but a sword. He has stood for honest convictions and for intellectual integrity at a time when the greatest threat to religion has not been heresy, but avoidance of the more awkward and important questions of the day: the difficulty of reconciling modern knowledge with ancient tradition, and the danger that religious thought would become divorced from a population, educated in scientific habits of mind.²⁰⁷

Barnes died on 29 November 1953 aged 79. The American weekly, *Time* magazine, subsequently described him as a man “who alarmed and angered his fellow churchmen for 29 years by publicly denouncing the doctrine of the virgin birth and the existence of Adam and Eve, advocating strict birth control, euthanasia [and] sterilization of the ‘unfit’.”²⁰⁸ *The Eugenics Review* provided perhaps his most glowing eulogy:

He did not balk at the question of sterilization and suggested that it may well be that compulsory sterilization will prove an essential “complement” of the Welfare State. [...] Without doubt his intrepid thinking, his courageous facing of difficult and damaging questions and his fearless statements of what he conceived to be the truth will remain as inspirations to many weaker members of his flock.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ ‘Profile – Bishop Barnes,’ *The Observer* (3 May 1953), 3.

²⁰⁸ ‘Milestones,’ *Time* (7 December 1953), 7.

²⁰⁹ Barnes, *Ahead of His Age*, 202.

Whether or not he was successful, Barnes' professional life was dominated by his wish to prevent Christianity from slipping into obscurity and with it Western civilization as a whole. From the late 1920s, then, he became more influenced by eugenic ideas, which culminated in the post-war period when, despite his age, he spoke in favour of negative eugenics all the more fervently. On reporting his death, the British press tended to emphasise the fact that much of Barnes' rhetoric "became automatically sensational and controversial because of the fact it was written by a bishop."²¹⁰ In this sense, as well as drawing significant attention to eugenics, as a devout Christian leader of the church he offered a unique eugenic philosophy that sought racial improvement as a means of bringing mankind closer to God. *The Times* provided perhaps the most fitting portrayal of Barnes, describing him in the obituary as someone who would "not submit meekly his own judgement, to that of anyone else, or to care much about the embarrassment he might cause anyone by his actions. He was convinced he had a mission to free Christianity from its accretions and to present it in such a way that it might be acceptable to young people trained in a scientific age."²¹¹

²¹⁰ 'Obituary: Dr. E.W. Barnes, The Christian Faith and Science,' *The Times* (30 November 1953), 10.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSIONS

*The racial stock is of primary significance. [...] Physical and moral and spiritual qualities are handed on generation after generation. [...] Religious people tend to have religious children.*¹

- EWB, 1945.

Throughout his career, Barnes supported a number of ‘modern’ causes, from divorce reform and pacifism to birth control and artificial insemination. To consider him ‘ahead of his age,’ however, as his biographer and son, John Barnes, suggested, when a number of his views – certainly in later life – appeared rather out-dated and obsolete, would be untrue. From the 1930s onwards, for instance, in line with scientific developments regarding the nature of inheritance, some eugenicists wished to abandon the theory of biological determinism, which arguably had underpinned the early philosophy of the Eugenics Society. Conversely, as the above quotation suggests, the ageing Bishop had no such intention. Though his ‘bio-spiritual’ form of determinism was in many respects unique, it was determinism nonetheless. However, Barnes was rarely alone in his convictions, which tended to represent some of the more contentious elements of modern thought.

Covering the period c.1924-1953, this dissertation has identified and established Barnes – who had hitherto received limited attention from historians of eugenics and

¹ Barnes, ‘People and their Homes.’

religion – as an important figure within both the British eugenics movement and the Church of England. In order to provide an in depth and extensive analysis of Barnes' development as a eugenicist, I made use of original primary sources, including his personal archive of letters, manuscripts and sermons as well as largely unused newspaper articles from *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, which focussed on debates surrounding his more controversial public engagements, both within the Church and the eugenics movement. To provide context I relied on more 'well-known' sources like *The Eugenics Review* and the proceedings of the 1920, 1930 and 1948 Lambeth Conferences. In turn, influenced by the work of scholars such as Bowler, Stone, Turda, Griffin and Rosen, I have used Barnes' professional career as a prism through which to view the interlinking roles played by modernism, religion and scientific racism in the development of eugenics in 20th century Britain.

In analyzing Barnes' evolving philosophy and considering the support and criticism it received, I have in turn suggested that the eugenic idea of 'racial' degeneration played an important role not only in his own ideology but also the British psyche more generally, with a widespread concern for the 'mentally deficient' particularly palpable throughout the period. During many of his sermons, Barnes created the image of Britain as a society in permanent transition; a state of decline and imminent revival after which the population would be forever transformed. Even at the beginning of the 1920s, before he joined the Eugenics Society, Barnes expressed this conviction, albeit using predominantly religious language, that Britain was plagued by spiritual and moral degeneration. Though he later spoke in increasingly biological terms, the fear of religious decline – both in terms of Church attendance and broader issues relating to the spiritual cohesion of society – remained an important aspect of his rhetoric. Moreover, despite the perhaps common assumption that

in Britain eugenics was almost solely an inter-war phenomenon, as Bishop of Birmingham, Barnes continued to receive support after 1945 for his opinions on sterilization and infanticide, as well as his racially motivated anti-immigration stance. Thus, Chapter VI in particular demonstrates that both eugenics and racism, though somewhat marginalized, continued to influence public opinion in the post-war period despite myriad factors at the time discrediting the movement, most notably the atrocities perpetrated by the German National Socialist government leading up to and during the Second World War.

In engaging with the relationship between eugenics and religion in 20th century Britain, this dissertation has provided an original analysis of the seemingly ‘religious’ appeal that eugenics once held, despite representing a social philosophy largely rooted in scientific theory. Eugenics movements across Europe placed emphasis on future generations, in an attempt to empower the national community, with a sense of reproductive duty. One could play a leading role in shaping the future of their race, giving responsibility and a sense of importance and urgency that allegedly neither liberal democracy nor ‘traditional’ religion could provide. The Romanian historian and philosopher of religion, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), wrote that the non-religious man “is a comparatively rare phenomenon, even in the most desacralized of modern societies. The majority of the ‘irreligious’ still behave religiously, even though they are not aware of the fact. [...] In short, the majority of men ‘without religion’ still hold to pseudo-religions and degenerated mythologies.”² The religious appeal of eugenics as a *way of life* can also be explained with reference to the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866–1952): “religion is born of the need for orientation as

² Mircea Eliade quoted in Emilio Gentile, ‘The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism,’ *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1, 1 (2000), 30. See also: Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, first published: 1949).

regards life and reality, of the need for a concept that defines life and reality. Without religion, or rather without this orientation, either one cannot live, or one lives unhappily with a divided and troubled soul.”³

The core thesis put forward here has emphasized that Christian interpretations of eugenics, such as that of Barnes, blur the definition – or even undermine the idea – of eugenics as a ‘secular religion.’ The process of *disenchantment*⁴ enabled the Italian scholar Emilio Gentile to speak of the “sacralisation of politics,” that is “the formation of a religious dimension in politics that is distinct from, and autonomous of, traditional religious institutions.”⁵ According to Gentile, this takes place when “a political movement confers a sacred status on an earthly entity (the nation, the country, the state, humanity, society, race, proletariat, history, liberty, or revolution) and renders it an absolute principle of collective existence, considers it the main source of values for individual and mass behavior, and exalts it as the supreme ethical precept of public life.”⁶ Certainly in the case of Barnes and the eugenics movement, this thesis has demonstrated that the above explanation is too simplistic. The Bishop’s professional life was dominated as much by the need to refine and modernize the Church as by a strong faith that scientific progress could help guide the evolution of humanity. For Barnes, racial improvement in itself could not be given a sacred status. It only became sacred when eugenics was perceived as a means to bring mankind closer to God, creating a modernist creed that erases the line drawn by scholars in recent decades separating ‘secular’ religion from more ‘traditional’ interpretations of Christianity.

³ Benedetto Croce quoted in Gentile, ‘The Sacralisation of Politics,’ 31.

⁴ See: Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1985).

⁵ Gentile, ‘The Sacralisation of Politics,’ 21-22.

⁶ *Ibid*, 18-19.

Throughout this dissertation, as we have seen, many of Barnes' lectures and sermons represented his reaction to the apparent 'disenchantment' of society, a process he believed was both evidenced and facilitated by factors such as the decline in Anglican Church attendance, the 'danger' of socialism and the 'racial' problem of immigration. Much of his rhetoric from the 1920s to 1950s, then, could be perceived as an ongoing attempt to attach spiritual significance to an increasingly secular world. However, rather than replacing Christianity with a new 'political religion' – as scholars such as Gentile have suggested is often the case with other modernist ideologies like communism and fascism – Barnes' suggested the need to re-enchant the existing spiritual framework with the advancements of modern science, above all eugenics. Thus, at the beginning of the 1920s, he attempted to demonstrate how science and religion were compatible, with scientific discovery not displacing religion but shaping how it should be understood and practiced. On the one hand, while evolution was accepted, for Barnes and other sympathisers of the Christian Modernist position it was nonetheless a process designed by God, providing teleological evidence for *His* existence. On the other, from the 1930s, though much of Barnes' rhetoric still led with the 'spiritual sword' of Christianity, a holy standing was also bestowed on eugenics, which was put forward as an expression of the most vital cultural problems, and as a question of the eventual fate of humanity.

This thesis has explored several parallels and crossovers between 'eugenic' and 'religious' visions of social improvement, which certainly within the British context had yet to be subjected to concerted historiographic scrutiny as attempted here. Rather than in direct conflict, as one may assume when considering some of the opposition, particularly from Catholic quarters, for several religious leaders and eugenicists alike, eugenics and

religion were complementary viewpoints. At the 1931 'Conference on Eugenics,' detailed in Chapter III, not only were the clergy portrayed as a useful group of professionals to disseminate eugenic ideas to the population, but the renowned geneticist, R.A. Fisher, for instance, even suggested that they should be recognized as a eugenically desirable type, who should be encouraged to have larger families. There is also evidence, as noted in Chapter I, that eugenic convictions were shared by the Lambeth bishops in 1920, with resolutions passed emphasizing the need for an increased national birth rate, albeit at the same time condemning birth control as a threat to the future of the race. This dissertation has not provided an exhaustive history of 'eugenics and religion' in Britain but opened up further avenues for research, particularly with reference to journals such as *Modern Churchmen* and the personal archives of other Christian eugenicists.

The preceding chapters have also suggested that some broad distinctions can certainly be made between 'secular' and 'religious' understandings of eugenics. While many British eugenicists tended to judge people with regards to their biological 'worth' and intellectual ability, Christian eugenicists also tended to believe that intellect was intrinsically linked to religious understanding. Ideologues like Barnes produced a hybridized rhetoric in which, certainly during the early 20th century, the differential birth rate and other so-called trends of racial degeneration could be equated with the fall in Church attendance and other elements of apparent religious decline. Considering, for instance, the debate that led to the passing of the 1930 Lambeth resolution, in which the Church finally accepted the use of birth control, detailed in Chapter III, Barnes was not the only Church figure whose social concerns were both racial and religious, with Hensley Henson, Dean Inge and Reverend Fiske among the other eugenicists in attendance. Likewise, for Hinton and Calcutt, the

authors of the 1935 book, *Sterilization: A Christian Approach*, eugenics was a tool with which humanity could use to recreate itself in the image of God. Many thus agreed that mentally defective children, for instance, could never “reach full development here on earth in every sphere of life, physically, mentally and spiritually.”⁷ Two years later, in 1937, Barnes argued likewise that for humanity to progress, it must use “knowledge to end old and useless conventions” and “eliminate the unfit” so that “the children of the future come plentifully from good stocks” in a society “free from superstition.”⁸

Although the teaching of Christ remained central to many of his public sermons, from the end of the 1920s onwards, Barnes made increasing references to the dysgenics of war, the differential birth rate and the so-called rise of mental deficiency. As we have seen, pacifism,⁹ his obsession with ‘undesirable types,’ as well as the undue support given to ‘them’ by the state,¹⁰ played an ongoing role in his rhetoric. Later in life, Barnes described the dysgenic decadence of modern society thus: “Nature is harsh: she eliminates the bad: what is unfit to survive perishes. But civilized man, save when he goes to war, has learnt to be humane. He protects the weak and even the worthless. So our mentally deficient, our ‘problem’ families, increase.”¹¹ Such ‘eugenic’ concerns for the genetically ‘unfit’ is perhaps best characterized by the American social philosopher, Eric Hoffer (1902-1983): “There is a tendency to judge a race, a nation or any distinct group by its least worthy members. [...] For the character and destiny of a group are often determined by its inferior elements.”¹²

Although in the late 1920s Barnes had neither the scientific knowledge nor the ecclesiastical

⁷ Hinton and Calcutt, *Sterilization: a Christian Approach*, 155-7.

⁸ Barnes, ‘God Speaks to This Generation.’

⁹ See: Chapters I and V in particular.

¹⁰ See: Chapters II-VI.

¹¹ Barnes, ‘People and Their Homes.’

¹² Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 24.

backing needed to confidently give public support to negative eugenics, he would eventually articulate the need for contraceptive measures, including sterilization, to be made available to poorer sectors of the community.

With scientific racism also a key component of Barnes' eugenics, following on from the work of Stone and Schaffer, I have also suggested that the idea of inherent racial differences was relatively common in Britain during the early 20th century. Considering that the idea of racial differences was not often discussed in *The Eugenics Review*, for example, one may assume that – aside from the aforementioned minority viewpoints from the likes of Reginald Gates – the concept of 'race' was not as important to British eugenicists as it was, for instance, in Germany under Nazi leadership. However, this does not necessarily mean that racist attitudes were absent from British society and indeed, the existence of anti-Semitic and anti-black attitudes, for instance, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries have been fairly well documented. Moreover, repeated references by eugenicists to emigration as a means to biologically strengthen the declining Empire, suggest that, much like Barnes, for a number of eugenic luminaries, 'racial improvement' referred more to that of the predominantly white population than the 'human race' in general.

For Barnes, racial origin was both a useful indicator of intellect and level of spiritual understanding, with the white 'Anglo Saxon race' assumed to be at the height of civilization. As we have seen, he often claimed that it was from the 'lesser stocks' of humanity – ranging from pre-existing Colonial assumptions on the lives of native tribes in the British Empire to the 'primitive' nature of Catholicism in southern Italy, the latter seemingly caused by racial intermixture – that the more superstitious strands of religion tended to arise. He expressed eugenic concerns, then, not only for the *internal* rise of mental deficiency, for instance, but

also the *external*, 'bio-spiritual' threat of immigration. In his 1949 lecture 'The Mixing of Races and Social Decay,' he expressed concerns regarding the beginnings of mass immigration into the United Kingdom. Arguably, such sentiments reflected deep-seated racial convictions within British society that manifested themselves in the years that followed his death, with notable examples including the 1958 Notting Hill riots.

At this more general level of conceptualisation, this dissertation has also demonstrated that eugenics was compatible with various political positions, ethical systems and scientific approaches. Barnes' multifaceted approach, beginning when he presented a detailed explanation of his emerging eugenic ideas in the 1926 Galton Lecture, 'Some Reflections on Eugenics and Religion,' provides proof of this assumption. Notably, while maintaining the overall goal of human biological improvement, eugenics could vacillate between different understandings of heredity. At this stage in his career, rather than adopting theories of heredity traditionally regarded as more popular among the British eugenicists, based on the inheritance of defective genes, Barnes relied upon figures such as H.S. Jennings and E.W. MacBride, who were renowned Lamarckians.¹³ He therefore accepted the theory of 'chemical Lamarckism' – popular with epigenetic embryologists like Paul Wintrebert (1867-1966) in France and sometimes expressed as 'germ-weakening' caused by inner-city overcrowding – as an explanation for the existence of both mental deficiency and declining Church attendance. However, as he participated in the Anglican Communion's acceptance of birth control at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, and the Catholic Church subsequently rejected any practice that interfered with the 'sacred' act of

¹³ With MacBride in particular a prominent member of the Eugenics Society during this time it is surprising that more work, other than that of Bowler in the 1980s, has not been produced exploring his significance – as well as that of the ongoing debate relating to the nature of heredity – to British eugenics in the 1920s.

procreation, Barnes brushed up on the latest theories of evolutionary science. With the help of authors – and eugenicists – such as Reginald Gates and R.A. Fisher, he soon dismissed Lamarckism, adopting Mendelism in its place. In 1933's *Scientific Theory and Religion*, he even put forward a Mendelian explanation for the existence of 'feeble-mindedness' that also emphasized God's role in the existence of recessive gene mutations. With such theories in place, Barnes was among the signatories of both A.G. Church's and Laurence Brock's parliamentary proposals for sterilization, in 1931 and 1934 respectively. Meanwhile, he helped quell opposition from other churchmen to the establishment of birth control clinics in Birmingham. In the late 1930s, while warning against the dangers of war he also made efforts to boost the birth rates of the middle class. Often immediately after weddings that he had ordained, Barnes would provide newlyweds with eugenic advice on the number of children they should have, usually based on their social status.

The international eugenics movement arguably suffered its greatest blow at the end of the Second World War, when awareness of the Holocaust became more widespread. In the British context, the importance of the Nazi atrocities in the name of racial science cannot be underestimated. Certainly, to the frustration of Barnes and other eugenicists, a number of developments from the 1920s onwards had also undermined many of the core principles that originally made 'eugenics' such an inviting philosophy in the first decades of the 20th century. This is noticeable in the decrease in popularity of concepts such as biological determinism and social elitism. The 1927 Mental Deficiency Act redefined the term 'mental deficiency' to include both the inherent and environmental as potential influences on the individual's condition. According to the new Act, mental illness could not be described solely – or even predominantly – in biological terms. This somewhat set the

tone for future developments in social legislation. Certainly, the move to universal enfranchisement in the 1920s, the Housing Act in the 1930s, Beveridge's flat-rate family allowance schemes and even the formation of the National Health Service were all arguably at odds with determinist or elitist views of society. Many eugenicists abhorred any such 'anti-evolutionary' philosophy, which it was believed served only to invert the 'survival of the fittest' by protecting the 'weak.' Additionally, Barnes frequently blamed Christian morality, as preached by much of the church, in particular, and modern forms of social welfare, particularly the rehabilitation-based approach of organizations such as the Central Association for Mental Welfare (CAMW), for the apparent decline of society.¹⁴

After the Second World War, most scientists avoided describing human populations in 'racial' terms and in turn suggested that those deemed 'undesirable' or 'unfit' should have the same rights as everyone else. Eugenics had already come under increasing attack, particularly from renowned organisations such as the British Medical Association and the British Association for the Advancement of Science, on moral and scientific grounds. Along with geneticist Lionel Penrose, some members of the Eugenics Society shifted the emphasis "in a medical and biological direction, establishing ties with hospitals, medical schools [...] and mental institutions, which supplied data on the diverse physiological characteristics and afflictions found among their patients."¹⁵ Penrose demonstrated that neither the sterilization of so-called mental defectives nor the increased procreation of 'desirable types' would have a positive impact, or any noticeable impact whatsoever, on future generations. Any theories of social improvement that placed disproportionate attention on the so-called

¹⁴ Notably, after the formation of the NHS, the CAMW became part of the National Association for Mental Health in 1946.

¹⁵ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 214.

biologically 'unfit' have remained difficult to justify. Though the observation could not be avoided that poorer families tended to have a higher birth rate, as studies such as the 1949 Royal Commission on Population demonstrated, this was rarely seen as a biological problem and more frequently referred to as a socio-economic issue. In Britain, it was arguably under this more sympathetic ethos – emphasizing enlightenment and rehabilitation rather than sterilization or segregation – that the modern welfare state was developed and subsequently evolved into the form we recognise today.

Barnes was also profoundly affected by the war, yet, in terms of eugenics, this was largely, so it appeared, for reasons other than the Holocaust. Referring to Britain specifically, he believed the war had created a small yet highly fecundate 'scrub' population, residing in British city-slums and made up of high and low-grade, hereditarily contagious, 'mental deficients.' In many respects, Barnes was an anomaly after the war. Indeed, when he advocated sterilization and euthanasia, he was not only adopting a position that was radical in comparison to societal norms but also more radical than the eugenics movement itself at this time. Led primarily by Blacker, partly in an attempt to disassociate themselves from National Socialism, the Eugenics Society moved away from negative eugenics, focussing more on family planning, schemes of positive eugenics and the rehabilitation of problem families. Nonetheless, Barnes did not receive universal criticism, with some praising his work and even claiming that the 'mentally deficient' could not technically be classified as human. Continuing in the vein of scholars like Clare Hanson, for instance, this certainly suggests that a detailed study should be conducted in order to reassess post-war British attitudes to practices of negative eugenics.

This dissertation contends that eugenic ideas did not simply disappear from British society after the Second World War,¹⁶ but have continued to reside within a fascinating discursive environment centred on the often conflicting roles of science and morality in society. To some, arguments associated with eugenics and biological determinism may be considered *a thing of the past*. However, underlining the contemporary relevance of this study, the subject matter continues to permeate social welfare and scientific debates today. As we progress further into the 21st century, modern techniques including In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PGD) and pre-natal screening allow both scientists and citizens an unprecedented level of power over the genetic makeup of future generations. Accordingly, themes explored by Barnes such as ‘the sanctity of life,’ ‘individual liberty,’ ‘scientific morality’ and ‘reproductive ethics,’ remain highly relevant today.¹⁷ In recent decades the development of ‘new genetics’ has shifted the emphasis from the interwar eugenic idea of the ‘national body’¹⁸ to what Nicholas Agar has called ‘Liberal Eugenics.’¹⁹ Nevertheless, there remains a link between Barnes’ eugenic ideas and modern debates on genetic engineering and human enhancement. Some parallels may be drawn between Barnes’ contentious proposals of infant euthanasia and sterilization in the late 1940s and early 1950s and some of the moral and ethical issues associated with the modern techniques of pre-natal screening, PGD and IVF. As D.S. King commented in the early days of

¹⁶ Merryn Ekberg, ‘Second Opinions: The Old Eugenics and the New Genetics Compared,’ *Social History of Medicine* 20, 3 (2007), 583. See also idem, ‘Eugenics: Past, Present and Future,’ in Marius Turda ed., *Crafting Humans: From Genetics to Eugenics and Beyond* (Goettingen: V&R Unipress, 2013), 89-108.

¹⁷ See: Nicholas Agar, *Liberal Eugenics: In Defence of Human Enhancement* (London: Blackwell, 2004); Michael Burleigh, ‘Eugenic Utopias and the Genetic Present,’ *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1, 1 (2000), 56–77.

¹⁸ See: Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics*.

¹⁹ Agar, *Liberal Eugenics*. See also Glenn McGee, *The Perfect Baby: A Pragmatic Approach to Genetics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Erik Parens, *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2000); Allen Buchanan, Dan W. Brock, Norman Daniels and Daniel Wikler, *From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Gregory Stock, *Redesigning Humans: Choosing our Genes, Changing our Future* (New York: Mariner, 2002).

PGD, the main group “of clients for this service have been couples known to be at risk of having children affected by a genetic disorder, often because they already have an affected child.”²⁰ Although modern examples exist in the private sphere and Barnes was proposing a national programme, the intention is similar in both cases: to utilise scientific knowledge to eliminate genetic disorders from subsequent generations. Furthermore, whether eugenics is voluntary or state-controlled, the extent to which it is acceptable to both ‘interfere’ with nature and make infringements into individual liberty is still debated.

Likewise, the relationship between class and reproductive freedom in Britain remains contentious and polarizing. In the wake of the ‘England Riots’ of August 2011, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, confidently asserted that “a relatively small number of families are the source of a large proportion of the problems in society,” and that within these families there exists a “culture of disruption and irresponsibility that cascades through generations.”²¹ In 2012, after extensive fieldwork – including time spent with 16 ‘problem families’ – Louise Casey, the head of Cameron’s newly established ‘Troubled Families Unit’ concluded that although there were “plenty of people who have large families and function incredibly well,” the families that she had worked with were “not functioning, lovely families. [...] One of the families I interviewed had six social care teams attached to them: nine children, [and a] tenth on the way. Something has to give.”²² In her article for *The*

²⁰ David S. King, ‘Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis and the “New” Eugenics,’ *Journal of Medical Ethics* 25 (1999), 176.

²¹ David Cameron, ‘Troubled Families Speech,’ *Number 10* (15 December 2010), [www.number10.gov.uk/news/troubled-families-speech, accessed on 1 November 2013].

²² Robert Winnet and James Kirkup, ‘Problem families “have too many children”,’ *The Telegraph* (July 20, 2012), [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9416535/Problem-families-have-too-many-children, accessed 1 November 2013].

Guardian, Zoe Williams criticized the project as a “demonization of the poor.”²³ Though many agreed with Williams’ viewpoint, others praised Casey’s work for identifying “those who perpetuate anti-social behaviour generation after generation and get away with it.”²⁴ In fact, some readers, whom one may assume reside at opposite ends of the political spectrum, on the *Daily Mail* and *Guardian* websites, even suggested measures which would certainly have been considered eugenic during the period covered by this dissertation. While for many it was agreed that “Child Benefits [should be capped at] one child per parent,”²⁵ for a significant minority the introduction of voluntary sterilization “with a modest cash incentive” was the only way to solve the perpetuation of the problem family.²⁶ Similarly, in July 2013, *The Sun* reported the story of a self-proclaimed “super-fertile” six-child family from Maidstone, Kent.²⁷ It was the parents’ wish – in addition to £27,000 a year of unemployment and child-benefits – to move from their one-bedroom flat into a four-bedroom council-funded house, in order to provide a better environment for their children to grow up in. While the majority of readers simply abhorred the apparent abuse of ‘taxpayers’ money,’ some again suggested that “if no other contraception works,” there was little other choice than “sterilisation for the pair of them.”²⁸

What were once considered ‘eugenic’ questions on reproductive rights and individual liberty remain controversial issues in 21st Century Britain, especially when one considers the role of sterilization in modern society. The persistent desire to control future

²³ Zoe Williams, ‘The real “problem” with these families is that they’re poor,’ *The Guardian* (July 18, 2012), [www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/18/problem-families-poverty, accessed on 1 November 2013].

²⁴ ‘zeldalicious,’ quoted in: Ibid.

²⁵ ‘Gordon Webster, Dundee,’ Williams, ‘The real “problem” with these families is that they’re poor.’

²⁶ ‘LordPosh,’ quoted in: Williams, ‘The real “problem” with these families is that they’re poor.’

²⁷ ‘Jobless couple with SIX KIDS demands four-bed home,’ *The Sun* (16 July 2013), [http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/5016941/jobless-couple-six-children-demands-four-bed-home.html, accessed on 14 January 2014].

²⁸ Ibid.

generations is further demonstrated by the efforts of the US charity Project Prevention in October 2010. Like Barnes 60 years ago, the charity thought some people should not procreate and in this case British drug addicts were offered £200 to be sterilized.²⁹ More recently, in June 2013, a British man under the care of the NHS was sterilized because of his severe learning difficulties. Though this was the first case involving a man in the UK, since 1987 50 women with similar conditions have also been sterilized in order to protect them from the psychological trauma that parenthood would supposedly cause. In Britain, vasectomies and female sterilizations are not limited to those suffering from learning difficulties or drug addiction. Though both procedures are free through the NHS and in theory available to everyone, waiting lists remain long. One alternative is the registered charity, Marie Stopes International, which offers both procedures and appointments available in as little as two weeks. However, the organization charges more than most can afford: currently £1527 for females and £402 for males.³⁰ Indeed, while in the 1920s and 1930s Stopes argued that everyone should have the right to control their own fertility, in the 21st century Marie Stopes International arguably reinforces the once intrinsic connection between social elitism and reproductive freedom.

When one reflects on the parallels that can be drawn between E.W. Barnes, the eugenics movement and modern day debates on medical advance and social reform, the words of Romanian philosopher, Emil Cioran (1911-1995), though written in 1949, in many respects still ring true: “Our truths are worth no more than those of our ancestors. Having

²⁹ ‘Charity Offers UK Drug Addicts £200 to be Sterilized,’ *BBC News*, 17 October 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-11545519, accessed on 1 November 2013].

³⁰ For female sterilisation fees see: [http://www.mariestopes.org.uk/Fees/Womens_services/Female_sterilisation.aspx, accessed on 16 January 2014]. For vasectomy fees see: [http://www.mariestopes.org.uk/Fees/Mens_services/Vasectomy.aspx, accessed on 16 January 2014].

substituted concepts for their myths and symbols, we consider ourselves 'advanced'; but these myths and symbols *expressed* no less than our concepts."³¹ Even in a 21st century democratic society, it seems that ethical arguments for the right to parenthood are still connected to social elitism and welfare favouritism, along with the desire to control existing populations and future generations.

³¹ Emil Cioran, *A Short History of Decay* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010, first published: 1949), 149-50.

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