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The Human Sum

The Human Sum

Edited by C. H. ROLPH

Preface by

LORD SIMON OF WYTHENSHAW

Illustrations designed by

ALFRED G. WURMSER

and a cartoon by

VICKY



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| <i>The Changing Families of East
London</i> | by Michael Young
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Dedicated to the memory of
LADY DENMAN, G.B.E.,
*and her fellow pioneers in
The Family Planning
Association*

LORD SIMON OF WYTHENSHAW

*

PREFACE

I WELCOME THIS BOOK very warmly as evidence of the vigour and imagination of The Family Planning Association in endeavouring to waken the country to the need for family planning: to ensure that parents have the children they want, avoid unwanted children, and are helped to produce and bring up healthy and happy families.

In spite of the splendid work done by The F.P.A., in its two hundred clinics, there is still much avoidable unhappiness and ill-health; there is still a long way to go.

But the problem is incomparably more serious in most underdeveloped countries. In recent years, the West has provided medical knowledge which has rendered possible a very rapid reduction in the death rate. The birth rate has hardly been affected and there has been in many countries in the last decades an increase of population so rapid that it may fairly be called 'explosive'. And the rate of increase in the production of food has been quite inadequate. As Bertrand Russell writes (p. 63): "Nothing

Lord Simon of Wythenshawe

is more likely to lead to an H-bomb war than the threat of universal destitution through over-population.”¹

The population of India is increasing by five million each year; Mr. Nehru fully realises the dangers of this population explosion; he has said that India would be better off if the population were half what it is, and the Indian Government has voted large sums to institute birth control clinics.

Japan is grievously over-populated. Very active steps are being taken to slow down the rate of increase; there are a million officially approved abortions every year. (Abortion is the most effective way of slowing down population increases and the most undesirable.) It is estimated that there are in addition about a million unofficial abortions every year, and that even so the population is increasing by one million a year. Twenty years ago Japan was an aggressive and imperialist nation. If she fails to control her population, is it not almost certain that, if and when she regains power, she will again forcibly demand an empire to provide for her over-crowded population?

The West has helped the underdeveloped countries to reduce their death rate and has done much by improved agricultural methods to help them to increase production, but, as the P.E.P. Report shows, it is most unlikely that the standard of living of the under-developed countries can be raised, or even maintained, unless they control the rate of births. Here the West could help most effectively if by scientific research they

¹ The best report that has been published in the world on this matter is *World Population & Resources: A Report by Political and Economic Planning*, distributed by George Allen & Unwin, 1955.

Preface

could devise what has been called the 'perfect pill'—a method of preventing conception for a period by simply taking a pill, which must, of course, have no ill effects. Much research is likely to be needed; it is not being seriously attempted.

In Britain, we still regard birth control as an unpleasant subject that should not be publicly discussed either in Parliament or in the press. That is an obscurantist and wicked outlook. The work of The F.P.A. is valuable in two directions: first, in improving the health and happiness of British families; second, in educating the British public in their world responsibilities to help to deal with the tremendous problem of world population in relation to world resources.

Good luck to The F.P.A. in its excellent and vital work. And all honour to its founders—Eva Hubback, Lady Denman, Lord Horder—and to their successors who are working so devotedly today. Finally, may I wholeheartedly endorse the words of the distinguished President of The F.P.A., Sir Russell Brain: "It seems to me that there can be few associations in existence which have such opportunities of contributing to human happiness as this."

C. H. ROLPH

*

INTRODUCTION

I HAVE HEARD IT SAID that when the first ejection order in history was served upon our common parents, Adam is believed to have remarked to Eve: "My dear, we live in an age of transition." For the family, it was to be an age that would outlast our own times. This is a book about the greater changes that confront us all today; about a problem, a menace, and a vision of human happiness that is by no means beyond our reach. It commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the occasion when, by way of co-ordinating the work of a growing number of clinics, the newly-formed National Birth Control Council acquired an office, a salaried staff—and a status that began to make it possible for nice people to acknowledge what it was doing. This possibility was enhanced, incidentally but significantly, when the name of the movement was changed in 1939 to The Family Planning Association; and the theme of this book is the growing social acceptance of the family as a group to be predetermined in size by two parents, an Adam and an Eve, able to decide and fulfil their own wishes.

Introduction

It is, however, neither a history of the family planning movement nor an attempt to deal exhaustively with any of its aspects in isolation. A brief account of its development is given in Chapter Two, wherein Mrs. Mary Stocks pays tribute to the pioneer work of Dr. Marie Stopes, Mrs. Eva Hubback, Lady Denman, Lord Horder and others. But because even global population problems are but the logical extension of the conduct and happiness of innumerable families, the extremes are represented in this symposium, on the one hand by the essays of Drs. Julian Huxley and Bertrand Russell about the stark international equation of hunger and supplies, and on the other hand by the joint contribution of Dr. Michael Young and Mr. Peter Willmott, who in Chapter Seven examine the simple family loyalties and interactions in a London borough where family planning has not yet obtained a strong foothold. (This chapter bears out the words of Dr. Margaret Mead, who has said that the family has not suddenly lost its moral fibre—"what has happened is that it has lost its grandmother, and also its maiden aunt.")

Among this book's contributors are not only some of the oldest but also the newest supporters of family planning. In Chapter Eight ("The Last Refuge of Family Feeling") Mr. Edward Blishen, a young schoolmaster in a London 'secondary modern', shows how the emotional needs of the country's unwanted children are being understood, though they can never be satisfied, in classrooms precariously governed by dedicated and uneasy teachers attempting to 'double' the role of parents. Miss Jacquetta Hawkes, in Chapter Six, discusses the family as a social formation "making fearful demands on the

human beings caught up in it" and uniting us, for the purposes of social anthropology, with the hunters of the Ice Age while compelling some reassessments, in the modern world, of the man-woman relationship.

In Chapter Four ("The Dilemma of Medical Science") Dr. A. S. Parkes, of the Medical Research Council, examines the possibilities of producing "controlled temporary infertility without undesirable side-effects". He gives a modestly exciting account of the quest now going on, in biological laboratories in various parts of the world, for what laymen like myself insist on calling 'the Pill'; and by this phrase, which, like all men of science, Dr. Parkes would doubtless reject, I mean the simple and completely reliable contraceptive taken by the mouth. This, it can hardly be doubted, will one day become available for the control of human fertility, universally, among the most backward as well as the most advanced communities in the human race; and its tremendous implications must, in the soberer thoughts of any person with social compassion, dwarf any other consideration that this book can provoke. Reading Dr. Parkes's essay, which credits Nature with the motto "Nothing succeeds like excess", I was myself reminded (I hope not irreverently) of these two verses from Mr. Aldous Huxley's Second Philosopher's Song in *Verses and a Comedy*.¹

A million million spermatozoa
All of them alive:
Out of their cataclysm but one poor Noah
Dare hope to survive.

And among that billion minus one
Might have chanced to be

¹ (Chatto and Windus.)

Introduction

Shakespeare, another Newton, a new Donne—
But the One was Me.¹

In Chapter Nine Dr. J. M. Mackintosh, recently Professor of Public Health in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, considers the changes—and the constants—in family form, behaviour, and tradition from the viewpoint of one with great experience of preventive medicine, and suggests some refreshingly simple reasons for the changes he has himself seen. He compares them with the changes brought about by the 'drift from the land', the decline of the apprenticeship system, and the flood of slum building that surged round the new factories of a hundred years ago. For example: "People often imagine," he says (and he is right, for I have been one of them), "that such vital matters as family life and home-making must necessarily be related to some deep philosophies in human relations; but the causes of change are often relatively trivial—standards of personal cleanliness, hair styles, lighter clothing, leisure pursuits, and so on."

Then this symposium resumes a grimmer note with an account by the novelist James Lansdale Hodson of his own disturbing discoveries, as an enquiring layman, about the prevalence of induced 'back-street' abortion in this and other countries—the deadliest and most desolating 'check on fertility' of all the expedients to which women have been driven by despair. (Hodson's sudden and tragic death in 1956, before this book went to the printer, deprived the world of a crusader and myself of a friend.) The Reverend Dr. Sherwin Bailey, Study Secretary of the Church of England Moral Welfare

¹ From *Verses and a Comedy* (Chatto and Windus.)

C. H. Rolph

Council, ends the book with a careful evaluation of traditional moral theology and its changing attitude to contraception, sounding a call to the Church itself to do all in its power towards a practical Christian theology of sexual relation.

Most of which is solemn enough, as befits a theme that concerns the survival no less than the perfectibility of man. But the theme is not one to be contemplated in tears. If I might for a moment obtrude my own views about family planning, I would say that the people who are running the clinics of The Family Planning Association, whom I began to meet a few years ago in a merely journalistic way—the people pursuing all the related researches and interviewing and advising the thousands of timid, anxious, or soberly practical young seekers after advice, are happy people. They laugh. Sex and sin are not, in their grammar, synonymous. As Mrs. Mary Stocks says in her references to the early work of Dr. Marie Stopes, who dared to offer to men and women a romanticised view of the physical side of marriage: “In order to achieve this apotheosis as a continuing and emotionally satisfying expression of married love, fear of pregnancy when pregnancy is undesired must be eliminated.” An F.P.A. clinic is therefore a place where they dispense happiness: not the hearty, do-gooding happiness that seems to transport so many of our little national movements for alleviating this and that, but the kind that flows from the debunking of merciless taboos and the redistribution of responsibility, blame, and fun. . . . One of the bubbles pricked in the clinics is the hallowed tradition that when a man and his wife want children, it is

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ipso facto the wife who is in some way defective if they don't get them: the 'sub-fertility' sessions are demonstrating to more and more startled males that it is they who need the treatment. "The voluntary birth control clinics," said the Report of the Royal Commission on Population in 1949, "have been paying more attention than formerly to problems of infecundity, and most of them now pay as much attention to this aspect of their work as to their original purpose of giving advice on contraception."

In fact, these F.P.A. people have the capacity to see the human situation in its truly poetic setting, its full light and shade. With a unique knowledge of the unspeakable tragedies for which haphazard child-bearing is still today responsible, they are perceptive persons, alert, for example, to the comedy that coaxes so much tragedy into merciful articulation. (I would scarcely have dared to hope that this delicate thread could have been sustained in cartoon form, but Mr. Alfred Wurmser's drawings do, I swear, achieve it.)

It need never discourage anyone who knows the vigour and enthusiasm with which The F.P.A. have been working for twenty-five years to read this passage in the Report of the Biological and Medical Committee on Reproductive Wastage:

Many married couples are ignorant of some of the most elementary facts of coital technique, and a surprisingly high proportion, even among the better educated, are ignorant of the 'fertile phase' of the menstrual cycle and the desirability of planned intercourse in subfecundity. Few people are aware of the importance of the male factor in fecundity, and there is still a general tendency to regard the wife as being 'to blame' and

for the husband to refuse to submit to examination. On the other hand it is the experience of all who have specialised in the subject that the majority of couples seeking advice are intensely anxious to have children, and are prepared to undergo any investigation or treatment, however irksome, in the hope of achieving their object. Clearly therefore there is considerable need for educating the public in these matters, and there is evidence to show that such education would be eagerly and gratefully received.

That statement, which is quoted by the Royal Commission on Population in paragraph 529 of their Report, shows merely that the millions whom The F.P.A. clinics have hitherto helped are but a beginning, a token of what could and must be done. Birth control advice must be given as part of a total policy for the promotion of family welfare. And for this there must be throughout the country a series of 'comprehensive centres', with accommodation and resources sufficient to deal with the five main aspects into which this work has now empirically sorted itself:

- (1) Advice on contraception
- (2) Ascertainment and treatment of sub-fertility
- (3) The physical problems of marriage
- (4) Pre-marital needs
- (5) Related aspects of family life.

This, in effect, was a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Population in 1949. Nothing has been done by successive Governments to further it, through the National Health Service or otherwise. But there are several F.P.A. branches organised on those lines, the best-known being the North Kensington Marriage Welfare Centre, where on five days a week, from morning until late

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evening, in two old houses knocked together and most ingeniously adapted and equipped, these five vital social services are placed at the disposal of all comers, at no cost to the national exchequer. There are birth control sessions every day. There are appointed times at which those about to marry can come for discussion and for advice that goes much beyond the central question of birth control. There are special sessions for people of both sexes requiring help with difficulties arising from the marriage relationship—and these are always booked up for many weeks ahead. And there is freedom to experiment in the satisfaction of the many new demands that constantly arise. One birth control session is set aside for teaching the 'safe period' method so that even Roman Catholics can be helped; there are regular meetings for parents needing help in sex education for small children; useful statistical enquiries are always being conducted or aided; and there is a complete and continuous liaison with hospitals for the collection of data.

But more than two-thirds of the 220 F.P.A. clinics are held on local authority premises; and although this represents a spectacular change in the official attitude to family planning, sometimes the nature of the premises limits the occasions of their use for this purpose to once or twice a week, in which time little more can be done than the giving of birth control advice—for two reasons. First, the local demand for that advice is always so great that it must be given precedence. Secondly, the clinics *must* contrive to be self-supporting, and only birth control sessions bring in a reasonable income, the other services usually showing a loss.

These 'comprehensive clinics' of the future, going so

C. H. Rolph

far beyond the original purpose of mere family limitation, will in fact be expensive to establish, especially where The F.P.A. could start from scratch—as, ideally, in the new towns—with a model Family Welfare Centre. Elsewhere, an existing branch can be expanded. And for this work of mercy and happiness The Family Planning Association is equipped with everything except the money: the machinery, the contacts, the compassion, the voluntary help, an enormous ‘feed’ through the birth control sessions, twenty-five years’ experience—and the warm encouragement of a succession of Royal Commissions. If anything more is needed to convince Governments or people that this is a field for urgent action, I hope that what the various contributors to this book have written may at last supply it.

I

JULIAN HUXLEY

*

WORLD POPULATION

THE PROBLEM OF POPULATION is the problem of our age. In the middle of the twentieth century anyone who travels around the world, as I have recently done, cannot fail to be struck by the signs of growing pressure of population upon the resources of our planet. The traveller is impressed by the sheer numbers of people, as in China; by the crowding of the land, as in Java; by the desperate attempts to control population increase, as in Japan and India; and at the same time by the erosion, deforestation and destruction of wild life almost everywhere. The experiences of travel merely highlight and illustrate a fact which for some time has been obtruding itself on the world's consciousness: that the increase of human numbers has initiated a new and critical phase in the history of our species.

This crisis was recognised by the holding of a Conference on World Population in Rome in 1954. Held under the aegis of the United Nations, the Conference was a milestone in history, for it was the first official international survey of the subject of human population

as a whole. In 1949 the U.N. had convened a scientific conference on world resources at Lake Success. As Director General of UNESCO, invited to collaborate in this project, I had suggested that a survey of resources should be accompanied by a similar survey of the population which consumed the resources. I was told that there were technical, political and religious difficulties. Eventually these difficulties were smoothed over; censuses were taken; and a conference on population was duly held in 1954. During the five years it took to arrange for a look at the problem the world population had increased by more than 130 million.

Let me begin by setting forth some of the facts—often surprising and sometimes alarming—which justify our calling the present a new and decisive phase in the history of mankind. The first fact is that the total world population has been increasing relentlessly, with only occasional minor setbacks, since before the dawn of history. The second fact is the enormous present size of the population—more than 2.5 billion. The third is the great annual increase: some 34 million people per year, nearly 4,000 per hour, more than one every second. The human race is adding to its numbers the equivalent of a good-sized town, more than 90,000 people, every day of the year. The fourth and most formidable fact is that the rate of increase itself is increasing. Population, as Thomas Malthus pointed out in 1798, tends to grow not arithmetically but geometrically—it increases by compound interest. Until well into the present century the compound rate of increase remained below one per cent per annum, but it has now reached one and one-third per cent per annum. What is more, this acceleration of increase

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shows no sign of slowing up, and it is safe to prophesy that it will continue to go up for at least several decades.

In short, the growth of human population on our planet has accelerated from a very slow beginning until it has now become an explosive process. Before the discovery of agriculture, about 6000 B.C., the total world population was probably less than 20 million. It did not pass the 100 million mark until after the time of the Old Kingdom of Egypt, and did not reach 500 million until the latter part of the seventeenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century it passed the billion mark, and in the 1920s it rose above two billion. That is to say, it doubled itself twice over in the period between 1650 and 1920. The first doubling took nearly two centuries, the second considerably less than one century. Now, at the present rate of acceleration, the population will have doubled itself again (from the 1920 figure) by the early 1980s—*i.e.*, in the amazingly short space of 60 years.

Each major upward step in numbers followed some major discovery or invention—agriculture, the initiation of urban life and trade, the harnessing of non-human power, the technological revolution. During the present century the most decisive factor in increasing population has been of a different sort—the application of scientific medicine, or what we may call death control. In advanced countries death rates have been reduced from the traditional 35 or 40 per thousand to less than 10 per thousand. The average life span (life expectancy at birth) has been more than doubled in the Western world since the mid-nineteenth century. It now stands at about 70 years in Europe and North America, and the process of lengthening life has begun to get under way in Asian

countries: in India, for example, the life expectancy at birth has risen within three decades from 20 to 32 years.

BIRTH RATES *v.* DEATH RATES

Population growth appears to pass through a series of stages. In the first stage both the birth rate and the death rate are high, and the population increases only slowly. In the second stage the death rate falls sharply but the birth rate stays high; the population therefore expands more or less explosively. In the third, the birth rate also falls sharply, so that the increase of population is slowed. Finally both the birth and the death rates stabilise at a low figure; thereafter the population will grow only slowly unless it is spurred by some new development, such as access to new food sources or a change in ideas and values.

In the Western world the reduction of the death rate came gradually, and its effect on population growth was buffered by factors which tended at the same time to reduce the birth rate—namely, a rising standard of living and industrialisation, which made children no longer an economic asset.

Matters have been very different in the still under-developed countries of Asia. There death control has been introduced with startling speed. Ancient diseases have been brought under control or totally abolished in the space of a few decades or even a few years. Let me give one example. In England malaria took three centuries to disappear; in Ceylon it was virtually wiped out in less than half a decade, thanks to DDT and a well-organised campaign. As a result of this and other health

World Population

measures, the death rate in Ceylon was reduced from 22 to 12 per thousand in seven years—a fall which took exactly 10 times as long in England. But the Ceylon birth rate has not even begun to drop, and so the population is growing at the rate of 2.7 per cent per annum—about twice the highest rate ever experienced in Britain. If this rate of growth continues, the population of Ceylon will be doubled in 30 years.

Almost all the underdeveloped countries are now in this stage of explosive expansion. When we recall that rates of expansion of this order (two to three per cent) are at work among more than half the world's 2.5 billion inhabitants, we cannot but feel alarmed. If nothing is done to control this increase, mankind will drown in its own flood, or, if you prefer a different metaphor, man will turn into the cancer of the planet.

Malthus, a century and a half ago, alarmed the world by pointing out that population increase was pressing more and more insistently on food supply, and if unchecked would result in widespread misery and even starvation. In recent times, even as late as the 1930s, it had become customary to pooh-pooh Malthusian fears. The opening up of new land, coupled with the introduction of better agricultural methods, had allowed food production to keep up with population increase and in some areas even to outdistance it. During the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, food production increased in more than arithmetical progression, contrary to the Malthusian formula. We now realise, however, that this spurt in food production cannot be expected to continue indefinitely: there is an inevitable limit to the rate at which it can be increased. Although Malthus's particular

formulation was incorrect, it remains true that there is a fundamental difference between the increase of population, which is based on a geometrical or compound-interest growth mechanism, and the increase of food production, which is not.

There are still some optimists who proclaim that the situation will take care of itself, through industrialisation and through the opening of new lands to cultivation, or that science will find a way out by improving food-production techniques, tapping the food resources of the oceans, and so on. These arguments seem plausible until we begin to look at matters quantitatively. To accelerate food production so that it can keep pace with human reproduction will take skill, great amounts of capital and, above all, time—time to clear tropical forests, construct huge dams and irrigation projects, drain swamps, start large-scale industrialisation, give training in scientific methods, modernise systems of land tenure and, most difficult of all, change traditional habits and attitudes among the bulk of the people. And quite simply there is not enough skill or capital or time available. Population is always catching up with and outstripping increases in production. *The fact is that an annual increase of 34 million mouths to be fed needs more food than can possibly go on being added to production year after year.* The growth of population has reached such dimensions and speed that it cannot help winning in a straight race against production. The position is made worse by the fact that the race isn't a straight one. Production starts far behind scratch: according to the latest estimates of the World Health Organisation, at least two-thirds of the world's people are undernourished. Production has to make good this huge

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deficiency as well as overtake the increase in human numbers.

A POPULATION POLICY

Is there then no remedy? Of course there is. The remedy is to stop thinking in terms of a race between population and food production and to begin thinking in terms of a balance. We need a population policy.

The most dangerous period lies in the next 30 or 40 years. If nothing is done to bring down the rate of human increase during that time, mankind will find itself living in a world exposed to disastrous miseries and charged with frustrations more explosive than any we can now envisage.

Even primitive societies practise some form of population control—by infanticide or abortion or sexual abstinence or crude contraceptives. Since the invention of effective birth control methods in the nineteenth century, they have been very generally practised in all Western countries. Their spread to other cultures has been retarded by various inhibitions—religious, ideological, economic, political. It is worth noting that one retarding factor in the past has been the reluctance of colonial powers to encourage birth control in their colonies, often out of fear that they might be considered to be seeking to use population control as a weapon against an 'inferior' race.

Today the underdeveloped countries are making their own decisions; what is needed is a new and more rational view of the population problem everywhere. We must give up the false belief that mere increase in the number of human beings is necessarily desirable, and the despairing conclusion that rapid increase and its evils are inevitable.

We must reject the idea that the quantity of human beings is of value apart from the quality of their lives.

Over-population—or, if you prefer, high population density—affects a great many other needs of mankind besides bread. Beyond his material requirements, man needs space and beauty, recreation and enjoyment. Excessive population can erode all these things. The rapid population increase has already created cities so big that they are beginning to defeat their own ends, producing discomfort and nervous strain and cutting off millions of people from any real contact or sense of unity with nature. Even in the less densely inhabited regions of the world open spaces are shrinking and the despoiling of nature is going on at an appalling rate. Wild life is being exterminated; forests are being cut down, mountains gashed by hydro-electric projects, wildernesses plastered with mine shafts and tourist camps, fields and meadows stripped away for roads and aerodromes. The pressure of population is also being translated into a flood of mass-produced goods which is washing over every corner of the globe, sapping native cultures and destroying traditional art and craftsmanship.

The space and the resources of our planet are limited. We must set aside some for our material needs and some for more ultimate satisfactions—the enjoyment of unspoiled nature and fine scenery, satisfying recreation, travel, and the preservation of varieties of human culture and of monuments of past achievement and ancient grandeur. And in order to arrive at a wise and purposeful allocation of our living space we must have a population policy which will permit the greatest human fulfilment.

If science can be applied to increase the rate of food

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production and to satisfy our other needs, it can and should also be applied to reduce the rate of people production. And for that, as for all scientific advance, we need both basic research and practical application. Basic research is needed not only on methods of birth control but also on attitudes towards family limitation and on population trends in different sections of the world. Once we have agreed on the need for a scientific population policy, the necessary studies and measures to be applied will surely follow. This does not mean that we should envisage a definite optimum population size for a given country or for the world as a whole. Indeed, to fix such a figure is probably impossible, and to use it as a definite target is certainly impracticable. For the time being our aim should be confined to reducing the over-rapid population growth which threatens to outstrip food supply. If we can do this, our descendants will be able to begin thinking of establishing a more or less stable level of population.

JAPAN AND INDIA

With these general observations as our guide, we can now get a clearer grasp of the population problems of individual countries. Since the end of World War II, we have seen a new phenomenon in the world's history. Two great and powerful nations, India and Japan, have officially adopted the policy of population control.

Japan's 90 million people are crowded into an area only one and one-half times as large as the British Isles. The country is so mountainous that it affords only one-seventh of an acre of cultivable land per head. And its

Julian Huxley

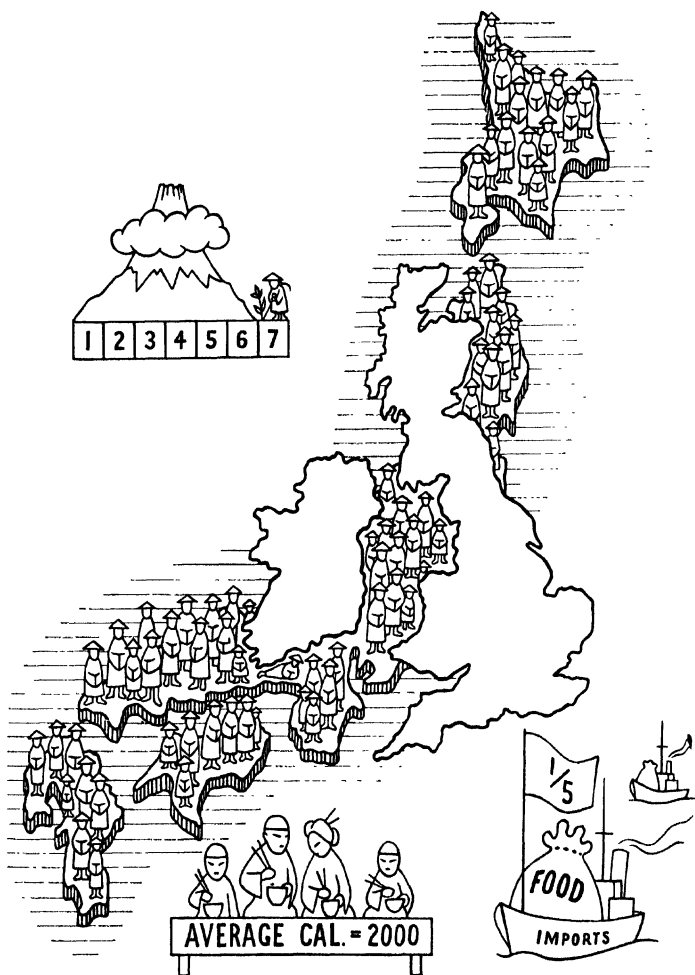
population is increasing by more than one per cent per annum, so that within 10 years it will easily overshoot the 100-million mark.

The Japanese are not well nourished: the average daily calorie intake is only 2,000. About one-fifth of this meagre food supply must be imported, despite the fact that the Japanese have developed the highest rice yield per acre in Asia. Since the war lost them their empire, and the isolation of Communist China deprived them of their biggest market, the Japanese have been able to subsist only through aid given by the U.S. As a recent report on World Population and Resources by the Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.) organisation in Britain says: "Japan is undoubtedly the most over-populated great country there has ever been."

Realising that no expansion of its industry and trade could possibly take care of a major increase in its population, the Japanese Government has embarked on a firm policy of population control. In Japan infanticide was widely practised until some 80 years ago. As its first move after the recent war the Government turned to an almost equally desperate measure: it legalised and indeed encouraged abortion. The number of induced abortions rose from a quarter of a million in 1949 to well over a million in 1953. As was to be expected, the effects on the health of Japanese women were deplorable—and the annual percentage rate of population increase was still above the pre-war level.

With these stark facts in mind, the Japanese Ministry of Health's Institute of Population Problems in 1954 passed a strong resolution urging Government encouragement of contraception. It proposed that birth control facilities

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be provided as part of the health services, that medical schools pursue research and include family planning in the curriculum, that doctors called upon to induce an abortion should be required to provide the woman with information about birth control for the future and that national wage and taxation policies should be such as to avoid "encouraging large families".

Drastic though these recommendations are, they or something very like them are necessary, and it is much to be hoped that they will be speedily and thoroughly implemented. If they are successfully put into practice, they will not only save Japan from disaster but will provide valuable lessons for other countries.

India's problem is rather different. It is an immense country—the best part of a subcontinent—with large resources waiting to be developed. Its present rate of population increase is just under one and one-third per cent per annum—lower than that in the U.S. (which is 1.6 per cent, excluding immigration). Its immediate future is not quite as desperate as Japan's.

But India is still in the early expanding stage of the population cycle. Its death rate (now about 26 per thousand) has just begun to fall, and has a long way to go before it drops to that of advanced countries. Meanwhile its birth rate (about 40 per thousand according to the latest available figures) is well over double that in Western Europe, and shows no signs of dropping. If the death rate is cut to the extent that the Indian Ministry of Health expects, and if the birth rate remains at its present level, within a few years India's annual increase of population will be some eight million—equivalent to adding a new London each year.

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Moreover, India's population even now is not far from the borders of starvation: it must increase its food production drastically to achieve the barest minimum of decent living for its people. Their average daily diet is a mere 1,590 calories. At least two-thirds of India's 380 million people are undernourished. Methods of cultivation and systems of land tenure are primitive and will need a painful and difficult process of improvement before they begin to satisfy modern requirements. Tradition, taboos, ignorance and illiteracy are grave obstacles to progress. Comparatively little more land could fruitfully be brought into cultivation and deforestation compels the people to burn cow manure as fuel, thus robbing the soil of fertiliser.

Above all, the mere size of the problem is formidable. Even at the present rather modest rate of increase, five million people are added each year.

INDIA'S MASSES

The size of India's human flood was forcibly brought home to me in 1954 when I visited the ill-fated Kumbh-Mela of that year. This religious festival is held at the junction of the two great rivers, the Jumna and the Ganges, at Allahabad. The assembled pilgrims acquire merit and salvation by bathing in the rivers' sacred waters. Every twelfth year the festival is especially sacred, and the Kumbh-Mela of 1954 was uniquely important as being the first of these high points to occur after India's independence. One day of the festival is particularly auspicious and to bathe on that day is especially efficacious.

Pilgrims had converged from all over India—by train,

by cart and by shanks's mare. On the day we arrived two and a half million people were encamped on the flats by the river, and three days later, on the great day of the festival, the number had grown to four and a half million! I shall never forget the spectacle of this enormous human ant heap, with its local condensations of crowds converging on to the temporary pontoon bridges over the Jumna to reach the sacred bathing grounds. A crowd of this magnitude makes a frightening and elemental impression: it seems so impersonal and so uncontrollable. This impression was all too tragically borne out three days later, when the crowd got out of hand and trampled 400 of its helpless individual members to death.

Calcutta was another manifestation of India's mere bulk. The overgrowth of cities has been a constant accompaniment of the growth of population: the hypertrophy of Calcutta has been exceptionally rapid and severe. In 1941 the population of greater Calcutta was under three million; today it is nearly five million. Its appalling slums are crowded to the roof-tops, and at night the pavements are strewn with an overflow of people who have nowhere else to sleep and are forced to share the streets with the miserable roaming cattle. This was impressed upon me on the evening of my first day in the city by a scene I shall never forget. In one of the busiest streets a man and a cow approached a traffic island from opposite angles and composed themselves for the night on either side of the traffic policeman.

The Government of the new, independent India born in 1947 showed a refreshing courage in grasping the formidable nettle of overpopulation. Recognising that superabundance of people was one of the major obstacles

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to Indian prosperity and Indian progress, they made the control of population one of the aims of their first Five-Year Plan. The Census Commissioner of India, in his report on the 1951 census, put the problem in quantitative terms. Efforts to keep pace with the growth of population by increasing food production were bound to fail, he said, when the population passed 450 million. If, however, India could "reduce the incidence of improvident maternity to about five per cent", an increase of 24 million tons per year in agricultural productivity would be sufficient to feed the population and bring a "visible reduction of human suffering and promotion of human happiness".

INDIA'S EFFORTS

The Indian Health Ministry has made grants for research on new contraceptives, for certain population studies, for training workers in the field of family planning and maternal and child welfare, for educating public opinion, and for assisting the family-planning ventures of state governments and voluntary organisations.

It is heartening that a great country like India should make population-control part of its national policy. But it must be confessed that the effects are as yet exceedingly small, and that to an outside observer the execution of the policy seems rather half hearted.

Let me take an example. The one large-scale experiment initiated by the Government itself has been a pilot study of the so-called rhythm method of birth control, which is notoriously unreliable, owing to the great variation among individual women, and even in the

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same woman at different times, in the monthly period of infertility. I had the opportunity of visiting the chief centre of the experiment in a village near Mysore, and of interviewing the capable and attractive woman in charge, a negro social scientist from the U.S.

The results of the experiment were interesting. About three-quarters of the married women in the village said they would like to learn some method of limiting their families. After their individual cycles were studied each woman was given a kind of rosary, with differently coloured beads for 'safe days' and 'baby days'. With this guidance a number of the women managed to avoid pregnancy during the 10 months of the experiment. The social scientist in charge thought that about 20 per cent of Indian village families might learn to practice the rhythm method successfully. This was a maximum; in any widespread campaign the figure is much more likely to be 15 or 10 per cent. Thus the method would be quite inadequate to control population growth to any significant degree.

Methods used in Western countries are difficult to apply in India, partly because of the cost, partly because of the lack of privacy and hygienic facilities in the vast majority of Indian homes. In addition, there is the persistent influence of Gandhi. As he narrated in his autobiography, Gandhi indulged excessively in sexual pleasure after his marriage. As a result of his disgust at his own indulgence, and his dislike of anything he considered to be scientific materialism, he pronounced against all mechanical or chemical methods of birth control and solemnly recommended abstinence as the cure for India's population problem!

The ideal solution would be the discovery of what lay-

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men (much to the annoyance and distress of the experts) persist in calling 'the Pill'—a cheap and harmless substance taken by mouth which would temporarily prevent conception, either by preventing ovulation or by rendering the egg unfertilisable. A number of promising substances are being investigated, including some extracts of plants used by primitive peoples.¹ So far nothing safe and reliable has emerged. But our knowledge of reproductive physiology and of biochemistry has been so enormously increased in the last few decades that I would be willing to bet that a solution can be found. A large-scale, concerted programme of research is necessary, as it was for the atomic bomb. If we were willing to devote to the problem of controlling human reproduction a tenth of the money and scientific brain-power that we are devoting to the release of atomic energy, I would prophesy that we would have the answer within 10 years, certainly within a generation.

One of the facts that prompted the Indian Government to undertake the task of reducing population-increase was the ghastly recurrence of famine in 1952, when a major tragedy was averted only by large-scale importations and gifts of wheat and other foodstuffs from other countries. Famine will continue to recur in India so long as population is not brought down into a reasonable balance with the production of food.

The Government has made heroic efforts to increase food production, and for the first time in modern history India has now a surplus of home-grown food—at the meagre diet level. But this has been made possible by two good seasons of abundant rain; when the climatic

¹ See Dr. A. S. Parkes, page 84.

cycle brings the bad years around again, as it inevitably will, hunger once more will stalk the land. The long-term prospect is blacker: if population goes on increasing by five millions or more a year, food production cannot possibly continue catching up with the mouths to be fed.

The Government is also devoting more and more attention to industrialising the country, both by small-scale village industries and by large-scale projects. However, while industrialisation is highly desirable, it is chimerical to suppose that it alone can cope with India's food and population problem.

INDONESIA

Indonesia, another country with an extraordinary population problem, contains the most densely populated large island in the world. Java has more than 50 million people on its 50,000 square miles—a density of population nearly twice that of highly industrialised Britain. Yet Java is almost entirely agricultural. Its cultivable land is very fertile, but there is less than two-fifths of an acre per head. And much of the land is devoted to exportable products, so that rice has to be imported to feed the people, even at the insufficient level of about 2,000 calories per day.

Java's already overcrowded population is increasing at a compound interest rate of at least 1.5 per cent per year. A simple answer seems at hand: the excess should be transferred to the large nearby Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Borneo, which are far less thickly populated. But this facile suggestion has proved to be quite impracticable. With considerable difficulty the Indonesian authorities have persuaded some Javanese to move to

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Sumatra, but many of these have not been able to stand the hardships of pioneering agriculture and have either returned to Java or settled into a depressed urban life on the Sumatra coast. The fact is, the material resources and the skills needed to convert the dense equatorial forest of Sumatra and Borneo to agricultural production are not available. This is not to say that settlement should not be attempted. But resettlement of Java's population on the largest possible scale, plus other economic and political development, could not possibly cope with more than a part of Java's formidable annual surplus of people. Birth control also is necessary. Unfortunately there is no sign yet that the Indonesian Government recognises this necessity.

Bali, whose population density (over 500 per square mile) is about half that of Java, grows just about enough rice to feed itself. However, if its population continues to grow at the present high rate it will seriously outstrip food production in two or at most three generations. Bali provides an extreme illustration of the erosion of a culture by world population pressure. The Balinese have a rich and vital cultural tradition, in which beauty is woven into everyday living. Every aspect of life is marked by some celebration or embellished with some form of decoration. Every Balinese participates in some form of creative activity—music, dance, drama, carving, painting or decoration. What is more, the tradition is not rigid, and the culture is a living and growing one, in which local and individual initiative are constantly introducing novelty and fresh variety. But the Balinese are afflicted with many preventable diseases; they are largely illiterate (though far from uncultured); their religion is

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now being undermined by the Christian missionaries who have at last been allowed to work in Bali; growing economic pressure forces them to take advantage of the flood of cheap mass-produced goods from Western technology; their mounting population demands some adaptation to modern industrial life if living standards are to be raised or even maintained, and this in turn is imposing a Westernised system of compulsory education.

Most foreign residents prophesy that Bali's unique and vital culture is doomed, and will wither and die within 10 or 15 years. This may be over-gloomy, but certainly it is in grave danger. We can only hope that the Indonesian Government will realise the value of this rich product of the centuries, and that UNESCO will justify the C in its name—C for Culture—and do all in its power to help. No one wants to keep the Balinese in a state of ill health and ignorance. Yet instead of being pushed by the well-meaning but ill-considered efforts of over-zealous missionaries and 'scientific' experts to believe that their traditional culture is a symbol of backwardness, they could be encouraged to retain faith in the essential validity of their indigenous arts and ceremonials, and helped in the task of adapting them to modern standards. A traditional culture, like a wild species of animal or plant, is a living thing. If it is destroyed the world is the poorer.

THAILAND AND FIJI

The situation of Siam, or Thailand as it is now officially called, is in some ways not dissimilar to that of Bali. It is in the fortunate position of producing enough rice not only to feed its own people but also to export a consider-

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able amount to less favoured countries. Its people are well fed and look cheerful. Thailand is proud of its past, and especially of the fact that it alone of South-East Asian countries has never lost its independence. There is a traditional culture in which the bulk of the people are content to find fulfilment, though there is not so much active participation or artistic creation as in Bali. At the same time, Thailand is crowded with organisations and agencies, international and national, which are giving advice and assistance on every possible subject: health, education, agriculture, democracy, scientific development, administration, industry, fish ponds and rural community life. As a result the traditional Siamese culture is being crushed or undercut.

Unless Thailand's birth rate falls along with the death rate, she will lose her proud distinction among Asian countries, and will become seriously over-populated well before the end of the century. Thailand needs better co-ordination of her departments of government with the motley collection of foreign agencies, and an over-all plan which would take account of population and traditional culture as well as food production and industry, science and education.

Fiji is another island, with another problem. Its population of about a third of a million is made up of two separate populations, which at present are about equal in number—the indigenous Fijians and the immigrants from India (together with a handful of Europeans, Chinese and others).

The history of the two populations is instructive. The native Fijian population numbered nearly 200,000 in 1850, had fallen to 150,000 when the islands were taken over by

the British in 1874, and was steadily reduced by a succession of epidemics to a point well under 100,000 before health measures introduced by an alarmed administration reversed the decline. It is now around 140,000. Immigration from India started in 1879 and has continued to the present day. The Indian population outstripped the Fijian during World War II and has now passed 150,000. Since its rate of increase is well above that of the Fijians, Indians will in the space of two or three generations constitute a large majority unless present trends change.

The two groups are very different in physique, cultural background, interests and work habits. The Fijians have the finest physique I have ever seen: they make good soldiers and wonderful athletes. But their athletic and warlike propensities have induced no great keenness for Western education, and a definite dislike of regular agricultural work. Indians largely man Fiji's sugar plantation economy. They make excellent labourers and small farmers and traders, and have a notable thirst for education. They have even started secondary schools on their own initiative and at their own expense.

There is little intermarriage between the two groups, and indeed little liking. The Indians tend to regard the Fijians as barbaric, while the Fijians (who still take a sneaking pride in their warlike and cannibal past) find the Indians effeminate and affect to despise their laborious way of life. However, there are now signs of a *rapprochement*, and some of the younger Fijians are realising that they must change their attitude toward work and education if the Fijian community is not to lapse into a sort of living fossil, cushioned by the protective measures of the Colonial Government. Once this new attitude is realised

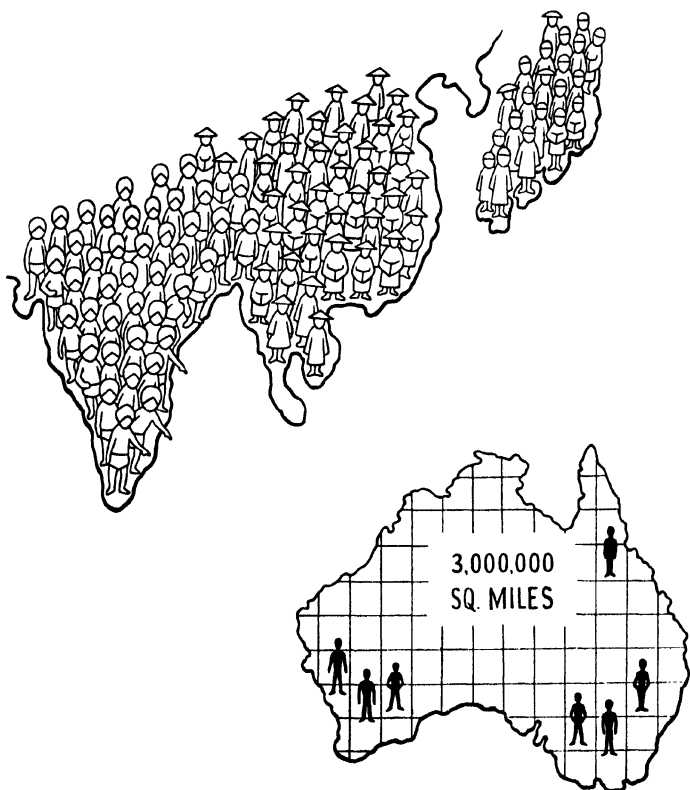
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in practice, and the Fijians accept Western standards more wholeheartedly, their death rate is bound to fall and their numbers to jump. Since the Indian rate of increase shows no signs of falling, a demographic crisis looms ahead. Fiji will become over-populated within the lifetime of its younger inhabitants, unless the Fijians and Indians alike are introduced to the necessity and desirability of family limitation. Unfortunately birth control is still taboo, or at least not publicly acceptable, in the British Colonial Office (and indeed in the Governments of all other colonial Powers). I can only hope that too much economic distress and social misery will not be required to force the action that present intelligent foresight could undertake—and could now undertake with much less difficulty than when the cohorts of the yet unborn have swelled the population to disastrous proportions.

AUSTRALIA

Australia is a storm centre of demographic controversy. She is a continent of close on three million square miles with only nine million human inhabitants. Yet she is committed to a 'white Australia' policy, and admits no Asians or Africans as immigrants, though she is on Asia's back doorstep. The three great swarming countries of Asia-India, China and Japan—have for decades been casting longing eyes on Australian space as a possible outlet for their surplus people; if the Axis Powers had won the war, the Japanese undoubtedly would have established settlements in Australia on a large scale.

However, Australia's open spaces are, from the point of view of human occupation, largely a mirage. For an



The three great swarming countries of Asia—India, China and Japan—have for decades been casting longing eyes on Australian space

indefinite time its uninhabited areas will remain blanks on the world's map. Three-quarters of Australia is desert or semi-desert. At the present time only 2.5 per cent of Australia's land is cultivated. It is true that big irrigation schemes are being planned, and that the discovery that

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much poor land could be enriched by adding trace elements is heartening the farmers and wine growers and herders. But heavy additions of fertilisers would also be needed, and these, like irrigation schemes, are expensive.

'Never' is a big word, but it looks as if much of the land can never be brought into cultivation. I was driven down from Darwin to Alice Springs—a thousand miles of increasingly sparse bush and increasingly stony and barren soil, miserable and for the most part intractable to human effort. The best estimates put 7.5 per cent as the maximum area of Australia's surface which can be brought into cultivation, and to achieve even this will demand great effort and great expenditures of capital.

Australia is under-populated in the double sense that it could support a larger population and that a larger population would benefit its economy. How much larger is a question. Some say 50 million people, but this seems an over-optimistic estimate. A total of 25 or at most 30 millions seems more reasonable. And this would absorb less than one year's increase of Asia's population, less than five years of that of India alone. Furthermore, Australia already is hard put to it to keep up living standards in the face of its present rate of population growth, which is one of the highest in the world (about 2.5 per cent per annum), thanks to its policy of encouraging and assisting immigration from Europe. Thus the idea of Australia becoming an outlet for the spill-over of Asia is chimerical. The highest rate of human absorption possible without jeopardising economic health could not take care of more than a small fraction of Asia's annual increase.

The white Australian policy remains as an affront to Asian sentiment. But it has, in my opinion, strong

arguments in its favour. Certainly it cannot and should not be justified on grounds of racial superiority or inferiority: there is no such thing. But it can be justified on cultural grounds. Cultural differences can create grave difficulties in national development. They often do so when cultural and racial differences are combined. A large minority group which clings to its own standards and its own cultural and racial distinctiveness inevitably stands in the way of national unity and creates all sorts of frictions. And if the immigrant group multiplies faster than the rest of the population, the problem is aggravated, as we have seen in Fiji.

It should be put on record that there is little colour prejudice in Australia. For its aborigines—the only non-white permanent inhabitants of the continent—the watch-word now is assimilation: they are gradually to be incorporated into the country's social and economic life. Australia is also admitting a number of Asians as students or trainees, and giving them a very friendly welcome. What Australia seeks to guard against is the creation of permanent racial-cultural minorities.

RESOURCES

The obverse of the population problem is the problem of resources, and I must say a word about the alarming differentials in consumption between different regions and nations. Even in food these are serious enough. The average daily diet in India (1,590 calories) is less than half that in countries such as the U.S. or Ireland. And between the more privileged classes of favoured countries and the poorer ones of the under-developed countries the differ-

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ence of course is much greater—nearly fourfold instead of twofold. When we come to other resources, the contrasts are still more startling. In the field of energy, the U.S. *per capita* consumption is double that of Britain and more than 20 times that of India. The U.S. consumes 80 times more iron *per capita* than India and nearly two and one half times more newsprint *per capita* than Britain. It uses about two-thirds of all the world's production of oil.

As facts like these seep into the world's consciousness, they are bound to affect the world's conscience. Such inequalities appear intolerable. The privileged nations are beginning to experience a sense of shame. This guilty feeling finds a partial outlet in the various international schemes for technical and economic assistance to underdeveloped countries. But these schemes are not nearly bold or big enough. We need a world development plan on a scale at least 10 times as big as all existing schemes put together—a joint enterprise in which all nations would feel they were participating and working toward a common goal. To achieve even the roughest of justice for all peoples, the favoured nations of the world will have not merely to cough up a fraction of their surpluses but voluntarily to sacrifice some of their high standard of living. For their part the underdeveloped countries, to qualify for membership in the international development club, must be willing not only to pledge themselves to hard and intelligent work but also to restrict their population growth.

As I have emphasised, the crux of the problem lies in establishing a satisfactory balance between the world's resources and the population which uses the resources.

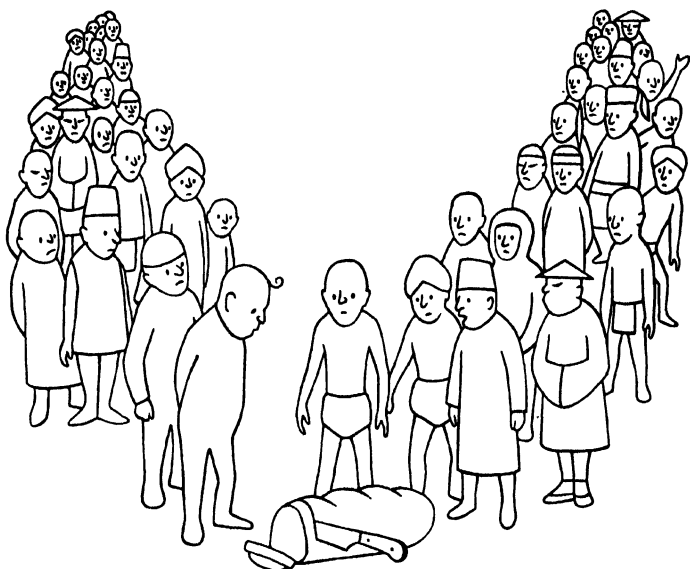
The Political and Economic Planning report to which I have referred surveys in some detail the prospects of the world's main resources for the next 25 years. It concludes that, so far as energy, minerals and other inorganic raw materials are concerned, the total world requirements probably can be met during that period, and for energy the prospect continues reasonably bright up to the end of the twentieth century. But when it comes to food, a world deficiency "of appalling magnitude" already exists, and "supplying the necessary foodstuffs to feed the expected newcomers and also to bring about substantial and lasting improvement in the position of the many millions now underfed is likely to prove exceedingly difficult and increasingly precarious."

This forecast, it must be emphasised, applies to global consumption; when we take the position of individual countries into account, the situation appears even more serious. The trend is towards a widening of the already grotesque differences in consumption between the well-nourished and the under-nourished regions of the world. For one thing, a rise in living standards in food-exporting countries is reducing the amount of food they have available for export; for example, Argentina is exporting less meat because its people are consuming more of its production.

Everything points to one conclusion. While every effort must be made to increase food production, to facilitate distribution, to conserve all conservable resources and to shame the 'have' nations into a fairer sharing of the good things of the world with the 'have-nots', this alone cannot prevent disaster. Birth control also is necessary, on a world scale and as soon as possible.

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Though I may seem to have painted the picture in gloomy colours, I would like to end on a key of hope. Just as the portentous threat of atomic warfare has brought humanity to its senses and seems likely to lead to the abandonment of all-out war as an instrument of national



policy, so I would predict that the threat of overpopulation will prompt a reconsideration of values and lead eventually to a new value system for human living. But time presses. This year will add more than 34 million people to humanity's total, and certainly for two or three decades to come each successive year will add more. If nothing is done soon, world overpopulation will be a fact well before the end of the century, bringing with it an explosive cargo of misery and selfish struggle, frustration and increasingly desperate problems.

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It has taken just one decade from Hiroshima for the world to face up resolutely to the implications of atomic war. Can we hope that it will take no more than a decade from the 1954 World Population Conference in Rome for the world to face up equally resolutely to the implications of world over-population?

MARY STOCKS

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THE STORY OF FAMILY PLANNING

THE FACTORS AGAINST HUMAN SURVIVAL

THE EXISTENCE OF A TIME-LAG between an economic or political situation and the ideas relevant to it is a phenomenon familiar to historians. In other words, it generally takes some time for ideas to catch up with facts. This is illustrated on a gigantic scale by the movement of ideas in regard to human fertility. Since the dawn of history until very recent times, human survival has been engaged in a precarious contest with the killing factors of war, disease and famine, the last two being the major and more constant adversaries. And from the dawn of history human ideas have reacted to this situation by a glorification of fertility which has expressed itself in religious attitudes ranging from primitive fertility cults to the sanctions of the Christian Churches in respect of contraception, sterilisation, and abortion. But the past hundred years or so have witnessed the unprecedented spectacle of the two major adversaries, disease and famine, in retreat over wide spaces of the earth's surface. Human survival, apart from the danger of race suicide in

the form of nuclear warfare, is no longer on the defensive. As a result a number of countries, and the world in general, are faced with over-population problems in one form or another. Human survival no longer has need of its fertility cults and its traditional taboos.

But how far has consciousness of this fact expressed itself in ideas? The answer is: here and there in varying degrees, ideas are on the move. But the movement is slowed down by religious sanctions. This is understandable. The great religions of the world are concerned with eternal verities regarding man's spiritual nature and destiny. The various applications of these truths to changing economic and social conditions are apt to acquire some of the immutability of the truths themselves. For instance it was, is, and always will be, a precept of the Christian religion that one should not take advantage of one's neighbour's necessity—from which, in an age of simpler and more personal economic relationships, the Church of Rome rightly deduced the sinfulness of lending money at interest. This prohibition, embodied in the Canon Law, long outlasted the economic conditions which justified it and gave rise to some very tortuous evasions during the period of readjustment. But today no good Catholic would regard the possession of debenture stock as sinful. It may be that the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to birth control is undergoing similar modification for a similar reason.

Bearing in mind this generalised relationship between ideas and events, let us see what has happened and is happening in Great Britain in respect of contraceptive birth control.



Human survival no longer has need of its fertility cults and its
traditional taboos

IDEAS AND EVENTS IN BRITAIN

Malthus, writing at the close of the eighteenth century, was the first serious economist to focus public attention on the danger of over-population. He was faced, in Industrial Revolution England, with the dual phenomena of a considerable expansion of productive resources and a considerable expansion of population. From this coincidence of events he deduced the conclusion known as the Malthusian law, which envisages a general tendency for population to press continuously and disastrously on the means of subsistence—unless checked by human prudence. The check he envisaged, however, was not prevention of conception by couples leading normal married lives, but a national policy of economic individualism so rigidly upheld as to make literal starvation the inevitable penalty of reckless marriage or improvident parenthood. His influence may be traced in the deterrent provisions of the 1834 Poor Law; though he himself would have preferred to see no Poor Law at all.

The expansive economic developments of the nineteenth century, however, focused public interest on other aspects of human affairs, and the population problem became a matter of purely academic concern as far as Great Britain was concerned. And as a problem of fertility in relation to productive resources, it has remained so ever since. It is true that in the precarious world of today the utter dependence of 50 million well-fed, highly mobile and leisure-conscious Britons on the shifting sands of international exchange in a world obsessed with economic and political nationalism might at any moment face us with a very menacing population

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problem indeed. But nobody seems to worry about it, and the potential danger makes less impact on public policy than was the case in Malthus's day. Indeed it makes none at all.

The fact is we have quite enough to worry about in other directions as well as quite enough to encourage a mood of complacency as regards the population problem. We have achieved, with the assistance of a low birth rate, a low death rate and a high degree of industrial productivity, a relatively stable survival rate at a remarkably high standard of comfort. So far so good. And this we have done, not as the result of a national population policy directed to this desirable end, but as a spontaneous reaction on the part of individuals to improved standards, and of society to a group of problems connected with individual welfare: housing, maternal mortality, the emancipation of women, sexual maladjustment, and the propagation of the unfit. All these, in varying degrees and at various times, have impelled social reformers to explore the possibility of bringing parenthood under voluntary control without imposing restraints on normal married life which might endanger its stability. And in these various responses, the time-lag of ideas, reflected mainly but not wholly through religious sanctions, has played a part.

THE PROPAGANDISTS

But that is not the whole story, or even the most important part of it. Birth control would have spread less effectively as a policy or group of policies if it had not begun by spreading as a personal habit in response to

rising standards of living. As a policy it has been propagated by voluntary organisations mainly concerned with maternal health and happiness, operated by enthusiasts who have promoted clinics, supplied information, rebutted opponents, and bullied delicate-minded public authorities into making provision for a growing demand. As a habit it has spread downwards from the privileged classes to the less privileged, in response to the spontaneous desire of individuals to raise their material standards at the expense of such modicum of careful self-discipline as is required by the successful practice of contraception. As a habit it has doubtless been assisted by the social policy-making propagandists. But its widespread adoption is conditioned primarily by this motive of individual self-advancement. It has happened slowly—*pari passu* with the advance of those social and scientific developments which we summarise as 'death control', and with the economic expansion which offers a stimulus to more abundant life. Incidentally it is important to remember that in Great Britain the society which taught itself to practise contraception was the same society as that which, through generations of social and political reform, evolved the conditions for its widespread adoption. In fact birth control and death control sprang from the same root of indigenous British self-help. It must not therefore be readily assumed that in primitive countries where death control and economic aid are introduced as twentieth-century gifts from benevolent international agencies, these gifts will show the same tendency to generate parental prudence as a popular habit.

In Great Britain, the habit of contraception had got a

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long way before the policy-makers and propagandists took effective action. The trial of Bradlaugh and Annie Besant in 1877 for distributing, what was then regarded as an obscene publication, *The Fruits of Philosophy*, coincided with the early years of a declining birth rate at the upper end of the social scale. By 1889 there was enough written information circulating to prompt a counterblast by Professor Francis Newman in a pamphlet published by the Moral Reform Union. "Some benevolent ladies," he wrote, "in pity for poor girls whom they see to be dragged down into old women by having one infant after another too quickly, have actually pressed upon young wives to be guided by the notorious books advertised by a corrupt portion of the public press; wholly unaware that Artifice cannot succeed against Nature." Elizabeth Blackwell, America's pioneer woman doctor, contributed sympathetic footnotes to this publication, and it would be safe to say that she and Professor Newman represented the attitude of articulate organised religion. Not that opinion in the matter was readily articulate. Birth control was not a subject for discussion in polite society. It related to a particularly indelicate aspect of the wider and scarcely less indelicate subject of sex. It is interesting to note in this connection that in the historical introduction to the Ministry of Health's 1949 Working Party Report on Midwives, the following is indicated as one of several reasons for the delayed public recognition of midwifery as a profession requiring elaborate training and congenial conditions of work:

The Victorian prudery which characterised the nineteenth century, and lasted until well on into the twentieth, focused its



Childbirth shrouded in an almost impenetrable mist

taboo upon the process of childbirth and shrouded everything connected with it in an almost impenetrable mist. A pregnant woman was delicately referred to as "in an interesting condition". Girls were allowed to reach maturity without any knowledge of how they came into the world. In school elaborate attempts were made to satisfy curiosity in terms of pollen, pistils, and pericarps. Their very desire to learn was

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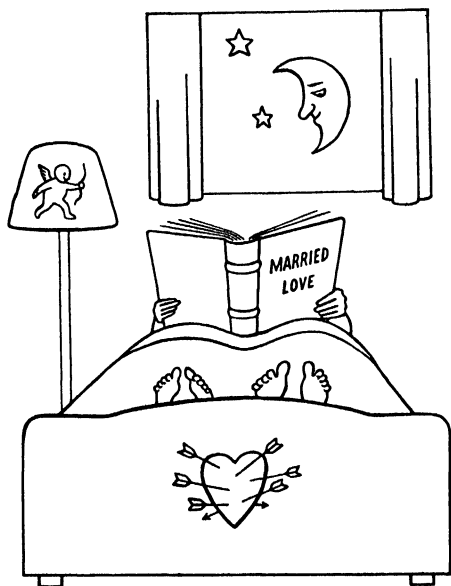
regarded as prurience, and in consequence degenerated into furtive exchanges of inaccurate information.

What hope was there in such an atmosphere for effective action by 'benevolent ladies'?

It would be fair to say that up to the eve of the first world war this taboo effectively prevented the development of contraceptive birth control as a policy, though, as a habit the differential birth rate showing a rising figure from the low level of the professional class to the high level of unskilled labourers told of its progress. But at this point the great silence was shattered in a spectacular manner by a spectacular person. In 1918 there appeared *Married Love* by Dr. Marie Stopes. It ran rapidly through 26 editions and is indeed still going strong. With its appearance, right into the arena of public consciousness came the question of birth control. It is interesting, however, to note that this book was not, as many of those who refrained from reading it assumed, primarily directed to the advocacy of birth control. It was what its title indicates, a treatise on the intimate personal relations of married people. Against the widely prevalent view that sex relations in marriage constitute a simple physical relief for the man which a long-suffering wife must learn to put up with for the purpose of keeping him happy, Dr. Marie Stopes advanced the view that the sex act should and can offer a continuous emotional as well as physical satisfaction to both parties, if operated with mutual consideration, skill, and reverence. Indeed with a wealth of descriptive detail previously associated only with pornographic literature, Dr. Stopes presented the public with the possible realisation of a romanticised and almost

Mary Stocks

sacramental view of the physical side of marriage. But in order to achieve this apotheosis as a continuing and emotionally satisfying expression of married love, fear of pregnancy when pregnancy is undesired must be eliminated. With this in view, hygienic methods of contraception



No single publication in our time has brought more happiness
to more people

are described with the uninhibited precision of detail which characterises the rest of the book.

This publication brought down upon the head of its author a storm of execration from representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and indeed of other Churches. Nor was Dr. Stopes's literary style to everybody's taste.

The Story of Family Planning

It could be described as purple in patches. But it was written with a force of religious passion which penetrated deep into the consciousness of those who like their literature purple, and it would be fair to surmise that no single publication in our time has brought more happiness to more people. This is a surmise that can never be proved, since those who have found such happiness are inarticulate common men and women, scattered up and down Great Britain in innumerable small undistinguished homes in whose obscurity they have reorientated their intimate personal lives under the guidance of Dr. Marie Stopes. Other contemporary writers have doubtless preached her gospel, but none has preached it in such a manner as to strike deep into the heart of the common man. Nor is it her fault that copies of her book appeared and still appear in dubious surroundings in the purlieus of Shaftesbury Avenue—where, indeed, she is in good company, for Aristotle has suffered the same fate.

THE FIRST CLINICS

From this point the fight was on. The successors of Professor Newman's 'benevolent ladies' took the field. The first phase of the campaign was to get voluntary clinics started at which married women in real need of advice could get advice of the right kind. Indeed, for very many women it was not merely the difficulty of paying for medical contraceptive advice but also of finding a medical practitioner who knew what advice to give and was prepared to give it. In 1921 Dr. Marie Stopes opened up a clinic in St. Pancras on the proceeds of *Married Love*. In the same year a clinic operating a slightly

different technique was opened at Walworth. In Manchester, a handful of enthusiasts, after a visit to Walworth, opened a clinic almost under the shadow of the Roman Catholic Cathedral, whose press denounced them as "the kind of women who visit matinées and sit with cigarettes between their painted lips". To the ladies in question, who feared that the phrase "dowdy social workers" would have described them more accurately, this unexpected designation brought a ray of sunlight. But indeed there was plenty of cheer in the situation as a whole. Up and down the country 'benevolent ladies' supported by adventurous doctors got together. Clinics were started and the response of those who sought their help indicated that a real need was being met.

The effort, however, required a deal of propaganda. Those who administered the clinics found that much of their time was devoted to explaining the need for them, raising funds, and disentangling mis-statements concerning their methods and clientèle. The demand of women's organisations for speakers was incessant; but the experience of those who responded to it was rewarding. No—the clinics did not practise abortion; they did not aim at safeguarding the promiscuous from the consequences of their sins. They were not an encouragement to unbridled sex indulgence; on the contrary their methods were ill-adapted to the needs of the drunk and the dissolute; nor did they cause cancer of the uterus. At meeting after meeting, prejudice, ignorance and misunderstanding would melt away; leaving only a hard core of honest conscientious devotees to the old ecclesiastical taboos.

Thus the cause of the clinics went forward. But as it did so, it became increasingly obvious that voluntary

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clinics and the conversion of the public to their usefulness were not enough. The public health authorities concerned with maternity and child welfare had to be brought into the picture. Unfortunately the attitude of the Ministry of Health during the early 'twenties was conditioned by the fact that under Ramsay MacDonald's first brief Labour Government the Minister of Health had been the Roman Catholic Mr. Wheatley, a humane and able statesman, but an adherent of the 'hard core'. His legacy to his Ministry was a taboo upon the giving of contraceptive information by any medical officer of a municipal maternity centre even though the health of the mother might render it desirable. To get this limitation removed, therefore, became a major object of the birth control campaign. Birth control thus became for the first time a political issue.

One after another the big women's organisations came into line with the demand that the Ministry's ban be lifted: the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Labour Women's Conference, the Women's Liberal Federation, and, perhaps most impressive of all because most respectable and most cautious, the National Council of Women. But most weighty of all these expressions of burgeoning public opinion was the House of Lords debate on April 28th, 1926, on Lord Buckmaster's motion "*That His Majesty's Government be requested to 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*". Unlike the House of Commons, which had two months earlier rejected a

"Local Authorities (Birth Control) Enabling Bill" introduced by Mr. Ernest Thurtle under the ten-minute rule, the House of Lords feared no 'Catholic vote'. In the teeth of Government opposition led by Lord Salisbury and the Lord Chancellor, their Lordships supported the motion by a majority of 57 votes to 44. This inspiring result owed as much to the weighty and influential support of Lord Chief Justice Wrenbury as to the unexampled eloquence of Lord Buckmaster. Two other incidents render it noteworthy. The Archbishop of Canterbury, opposing the motion on the ground that in fact no such prohibition existed, did so in a speech which implied no absolute opposition by the Church of England to contraception as such. And the Lord Chancellor, Lord Cave, let slip a sentence which indicated that he, as member of a Government responsible for a public health service, was really abysmally ignorant concerning its scope. "Everyone at least has a panel doctor," he said in support of the contention that medical advice was readily available to the poorest mothers. Nor was this arresting statement greeted by their Lordships with any expression of incredulity.

It was not, however, until 1930 that this growing volume of public opinion brought about a change of heart at the Ministry of Health; and even then it was a somewhat obscurely expressed change. A circular was issued to local health authorities granting them permission "to give contraceptive advice to nursing and expectant mothers in whose cases further pregnancy would be dangerous to health". Strange indeed is the language of bureaucracy. Expectant mothers are those to whom the clinics would say: "Go away and come back

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when the baby is born". And nursing mothers are less likely to need such advice than are those whose last baby has been weaned. The birth control enthusiasts chose, however, to assume that the Ministry really thought it



Scattered groups of enthusiasts build the clinics

was doing what most people wanted it to do, and prepared to concentrate their activities upon inducing local authorities to make use of their new permissive powers. This they were now in a better position to do; for the year 1930 was notable for another and equally constructive development: the formation of a National Birth Control Council from the scattered groups of enthusiasts who had been responsible for the organisation of the clinics.

OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

With these two developments birth control moved into the second phase familiar to historians of our British social services. From voluntary experiment it entered the era of integration with statutory provision. The response of local health authorities varied from place to place. Some—like Manchester—established special clinics in the local municipal hospitals for contraceptive advice to mothers referred by the welfare centres or by private practitioners. Some provided premises for voluntary clinics. Some paid the local voluntary clinics a block grant; some, a *per capita* grant for patients referred to them from welfare centres. Some obstinately refused to do anything at all.

Meanwhile the Birth Control Council acquired an office and a salaried staff. It acquired also a medical committee concerned with the investigation and testing of existing methods of contraception and with the search for better ones. This particular activity was of considerable importance in face of the wide-spread sale of commercial preparations, some of which were useless if not positively deleterious. It is difficult to apportion credit for this new phase of organised activity because so many names leap to mind. Eva Hubback first thought of the committee. Lady Denman was from the first until her death in 1954 its untiring Chairman. Lord Horder became its President in the days when such public advocacy might have involved him in the kind of criticism which does a fashionable consultant no good. For in spite of the House of Lords, in spite of the new movement's qualified acceptance by the Church of

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England, in spite of the official co-operation of public authorities, in spite of unequivocal pronouncements by accepted medical authorities, in spite of the multiplication of voluntary clinics and their growing clientèle, birth control was still a subject that was not readily discussed either in public or in print.

THE FEAR OF 'RACE SUICIDE'

Meanwhile, though public opinion was tentatively on the move and its consciousness of individual need intensified by economic depression, the middle 'thirties brought a new and potentially stultifying consideration into play. This was an outburst of public concern lest a diminishing birth rate, operating with cumulative force through the second half of the twentieth century, might reduce the population of Great Britain to dimensions incompatible with the responsibilities of a world Power. This concern was certainly a godsend to the advocates of family allowances. But was it likely to be a menace to the cause of birth control? In fact many leading personalities were active advocates of both; and with the best of logic. They stood for voluntary parenthood. Voluntary parenthood implies that those who want babies should be helped to have them, while those who do not want babies should be helped not to have them. And this indeed was the view of the Royal Commission on Population, the appointment of which, in 1944, was directly due to concern for the birth rate. It took five years to produce its report—by which time the fear of race suicide had yielded somewhat to statistical reassurance. But its conclusions were of importance to the cause of birth control; since they

integrated, for all to read, the positive and negative aspects of voluntary parenthood. Family allowances, the Commissioners suggested, should be increased and extended; professional contributory schemes should be encouraged. At the same time, the giving of contraceptive advice to married persons who want it "should be accepted as a duty of the National Health Service and the existing restrictions on the giving of such advice by public authority clinics should be removed". Such was the considered result of five years' deliberation.

But to the voluntary clinics this integration of the positive and negative was an old story. From their earliest days they had encountered visitants who wanted to know why they had not been able to produce babies. Often a simple piece of advice or reference to a hospital for a minor operation was the obvious answer. But the more intractable problem of sub-fertility could not be ignored, and the ideal of voluntary parenthood demanded its solution. It became, in fact, part of the concern of the National Birth Control Council's medical committee. And in response to this expanded conception of its function the Council changed its name in 1938 to the Family Planning Association. Logically, the term birth control should be held to mean what it says: the control of births—either way. But it had come to be associated in the public mind with its negative aspect. It had also become associated with an age of ill-informed opposition and vituperation. Those who had used it in the heat of controversy might cherish a certain affection for it, but it had outlived its usefulness. So the phrase 'family planning' took its place and is now in general circulation.

Today the two hundred or so voluntary clinics, acting

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alone or in varying forms of conjunction with public authorities, perform a multiple function. They give contraceptive advice to those who need it. They give such help as they can to those who want babies and cannot produce them. Many of them give advice, through experienced workers, on the more intimate problems of married life. And acting as the field stations of the Family Planning Association, they provide training centres for doctors and medical students anxious to keep abreast of contraceptive technique. Meanwhile the central organisation from its office in Sloane Street carries forward the medical research and public propaganda which the cause needs almost as much, though in different directions, as ever it did.

THE TASK OF THE FUTURE

There is still a long way to go. Many doctors are still incapable of giving sound advice. Many local authorities are still apathetic. Contraceptive advice has not yet, in spite of the Royal Commission's plea, been "accepted as a duty of the National Health Service". Many parents are still ignorant of the medically accepted methods of contraception. Nor are these methods, though harmless if properly applied, a hundred per cent fool-proof and capable of solving the most intractable problem of family welfare: namely the needs of the mentally sub-normal problem parent whose procreative powers are a menace to our human quality and a burden on our social services.

But even as we write of these things, one more barrier is falling. The conspiracy of silence which for so long has hampered public discussion and the process of enlighten-

ment is dissolving under our eyes. In November 1955 the Minister of Health in person participated in the Family Planning Association's coming-of-age. Speaking from the North Kensington Marriage Welfare Centre, he commended the work of the Association and in so doing reminded his hearers that "the position you hold today is one that would have been unthinkable to the pioneers of the movement and indeed unthinkable only a few short years ago." Nor were those two great repositories of conventional respectability, *The Times* and the B.B.C., ashamed to record and publicise his words.

"A few short years ago"? To the pioneers of family planning they may not perhaps appear quite so short. But to few pioneers of social reform is it given to observe so considerable a swing of public opinion and administrative practice in the brief span of their own active lives.



BERTRAND RUSSELL

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POPULATION PRESSURE AND WAR

THE AWAKENING OF THE WEST

THE WORLD IS FACED at the present day with two antithetical dangers. There is the risk, which has begun to sink into popular consciousness, that the human race may put an end to itself by a too lavish use of H-bombs. There is an opposite risk, not nearly so widely appreciated, that the human population of our planet may increase to the point where only a starved and miserable existence is possible except for a small minority of powerful people. These risks, though diametrically opposed to each other, are nevertheless connected. Nothing is more likely to lead to an H-bomb war than the threat of universal destitution through over-population. It is with the nature of this threat and with the means for averting it that I shall be concerned in what follows.

Wars caused by pressure of population are no novelty. Four times—so the historians of antiquity assure us—the population of Arabia was led to overrun neighbouring countries by drought at home. The results were many,

Bertrand Russell

and of many kinds. They included Babylon and Nineveh, the Code of Hammurabi, the art of predicting eclipses, the Old Testament, and finally Islam. The barbarians who



drawing by VICKY

destroyed the Roman Empire did not keep accurate vital statistics, but there can be little doubt that population outgrew the resources of their northern forests and that this

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pressure precipitated them against the rich Mediterranean lands. During the last few centuries population pressure in Europe has been relieved by emigration to the Western hemisphere, and, as Red Indians do not write history, we have thought of this process as peaceable. The East, however, has enjoyed no such outlet. It was mainly population pressure that precipitated Japan's disastrous excursion into imperialism. In China, the Taiping Rebellion, civil war, and Japanese aggression for a time kept population in check. In India, the population grew, and grows unchecked, producing a downward plunge towards misery and starvation.

But, although population pressure has been a vital element in human affairs from time immemorial, there are several new factors which make the present situation different from anything that has preceded it. The first of these is the utter disastrousness of scientific warfare, which means that war makes the survival of anything doubtful and the survival of any good thing almost certainly impossible. The second is the absence of empty or nearly empty lands such as those into which the white man has overflowed from the time of Columbus to the present day. The third, which has an immense importance but has hardly begun to be recognised, is the success of medicine in diminishing the death rate. These three factors taken together have produced a situation which is new in human history. It must be coped with if utter disaster is to be avoided. The East has been awakening to this necessity; the West, largely for ideological reasons, has been more backward.

A few facts are necessary to make the situation clear, but I shall deal with them briefly, as Professor Huxley's

previous article has dealt with most of them. The population of the world, which at most periods has been very nearly stationary, began to grow with unprecedented rapidity about the year 1650. Since then the rate of growth has been not merely maintained but continually increased and is now much more rapid than it was even twenty years ago. The present rate of increase in the population of the world is, roughly, one birth a second or 80 thousand a day or 30 million a year, and there is every reason to think that during the next decade the rate of population growth will become even greater. As a consequence of the growth in numbers during the last 20 years, human beings, on the average, are less well nourished than they were before the Second World War. It is considered that 2,200 calories is the least upon which health and vigour can be maintained and that those who have less than this are undernourished. Adopting this standard, half the world was undernourished during the 'thirties and two-thirds of it is undernourished now. To this process of deterioration no limit can be set except by a slowing-up of the increase in numbers. A careful survey of the world's resources in the matter of food leads to the conclusion that technical advances in agriculture cannot keep pace with the great army of new mouths to be fed. Moreover, technical advances can barely hold their own against the deterioration of the soil which results from a desire for quick returns. There is yet another matter of policy which has played a great part in the U.S.S.R. and is destined to play a great part in China as well as in various other countries. This is the determination, for reasons of national power and prestige, to industrialise very quickly and even at the expense of agriculture. In the existing

Population Pressure and War

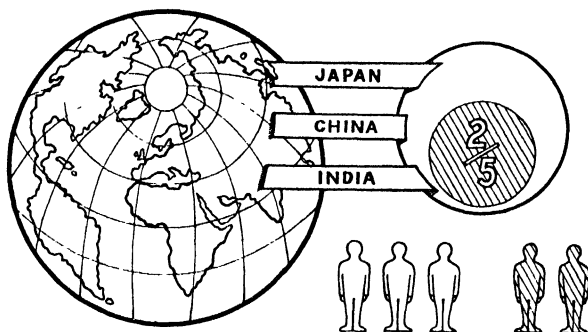
state of the world, one can hardly blame countries for this policy. Before the First World War, Russia had little industry but was an exporter of grain. Before the Second World War, Russia had much industry and had ceased to export grain. Russia was defeated in the First World War and was victorious in the Second. In view of such facts, we cannot wonder at the race towards rapid industrialising on which many underdeveloped countries have embarked.

THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS

All these reasons make it nearly certain that poverty and undernourishment will increase in many of the most important parts of the world during at least the next 20 years, even if everything possible is done to prevent this result. The downward trend will continue until the growth of population has been slowed up. The deterioration in living conditions must be expected to produce increasing discontent and increasing envy of the more prosperous parts of the world. Such feelings tend to produce war even if, on a sane survey, war can bring no good to anybody.

In regard to the population problem there is an enormous difference between the white and non-white parts of the world. In most white countries there has been a continual decline in the birth rate during the last 80 years and, at the same time, such a rapid advance in technique that the growth in population has not been incompatible with a rise in the standard of life. But in the East, in Africa, and in tropical America the situation is very different. While the death rate has declined enormously, the birth rate has remained nearly stationary and

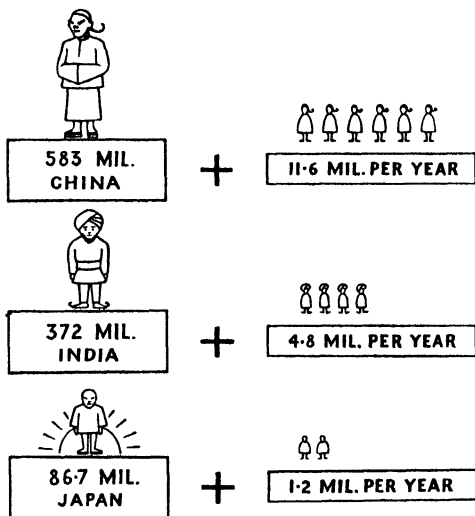
the nations concerned have not enjoyed those outlets which enabled Western Europe to prosper during the nineteenth century. Let us consider the three most important countries of the East: India, China and Japan.



These three countries, between them, contain two-fifths of the population of the world. China, where the vital statistics are somewhat uncertain, is estimated to have a population of 583 million and an annual increase of 11.6 million. India has a population of 372 million and an annual increase of 4.8 million. Japan has a population of 86.7 million and an annual increase of 1.2 million. All these three countries, as well as the U.S.S.R., have recently undergone a change of policy in regard to population. In India and Japan this change has been very notable. Nehru inaugurated the change by a pronouncement which had no precedent among the leading statesmen of the world: "We should," he said, "be a far more advanced nation if our population were about half what it is." In pursuance of this policy, his Government inaugurated a birth control campaign. Unfortunately, so

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far, economic and ideological reasons combined have led to the adoption of ineffective methods, but there is every reason to hope that better methods will be adopted before long. The Japanese Government in an official bulletin,



published in December 1940, just one year before Pearl Harbor, said: "If we think of the distant future of mutual prosperity in Asia, and if we give heed to the glorious mission of the Japanese race, the one thing of which we can never have enough is the number of superior people belonging to the Imperial nation." Defeat in war has changed the attitude of the Japanese Government, which is now doing everything in its power to lower the rate of population growth. In the absence of birth control information, abortions in Japan have become extremely prevalent. According to Dr. Yasuaki

Koguchi there were between 1,800,000 and 2,300,000 induced abortions in the one year 1953. So desperate is the economic situation that large numbers of women have resorted to sterilisation. The Japanese Government, although it does not forbid abortion, is aware that contraception would be preferable, and does what it can to encourage it.

THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE IN THE WEST

Both China and Russia have been compelled by hard facts to take up an attitude not consistent with what Communists have hitherto regarded as Marxist orthodoxy. They have been in the habit hitherto of proclaiming that only under capitalism does a population problem exist and that under Communism over-population cannot occur in any foreseeable future. In Russia abortion, which Stalin had made illegal, was again made legal by a decree of November 23rd, 1955. China, during the past two years, has permitted and even encouraged propaganda for scientific methods of contraception avowedly "at the general request of the masses" and in the hope of bringing about a steady fall in the Chinese birth rate.

It is a humiliating reflection for those who are inclined to feel complacent about what are called 'Western Values' that on this supremely important question, upon which the whole future of mankind depends, the West is less enlightened than the East and less capable of rational adjustment to circumstances. This is due, no doubt, in large part to the fact that the most powerful Western countries, owing to their low birth rates, do not have a serious domestic population problem. Western practice

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at home is at variance with Western theory. What people do is right, but what they think they ought to do is wrong. What they think they ought to do has disastrous consequences, not at home, but wherever Western nations dominate less developed regions either directly or through financial and medical assistance. By their superstitious and benighted policy, they are breeding great areas of discontent and hostility.

It is difficult not to be filled with despair when one contemplates the blindness of statesmanship and of everyday popular thought on the issues with which modern man is faced. The leading Powers of the world spend enormous sums and devote their best brains to the production of methods of killing each other. Eminent moral leaders give their blessing to such efforts, and at the same time tell us that it is wicked to prevent the births which, by their excessive number, drive the nations on to the invention of H-bombs. I could wish to see it generally recognised in the West, as it is coming to be recognised in the East, that the problem of over-population could probably be painlessly solved by the devotion to birth control of one-hundredth or even one-thousandth of the sum at present devoted to armament. The most urgent practical need is research into some method of birth control which could be easily and cheaply adopted by even very poor populations. There is, at present, only an infinitesimal research on this all-important matter, although it is in the highest degree probable that rather more research and rather more public encouragement could produce incalculably beneficial results.

Given a successful outcome to such research, there should be in every town and village of the more prolific

countries centres of birth control information and public assistance as regards the supply of birth control apparatus. The Western nations have a special responsibility in this matter, for it is the discoveries of Western medicine that have so lowered the death rate as to produce a lack of balance that, on a global scale, is a wholly new phenomenon.

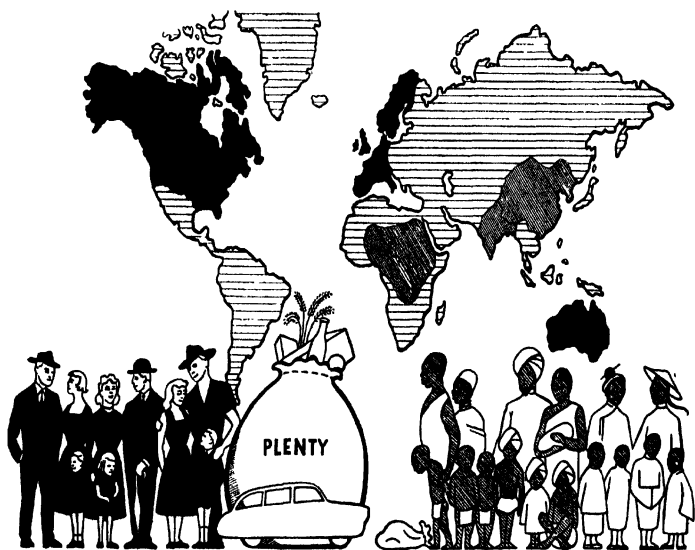
The desirable remedy does not lie in restoring the death rate to its former level. It does not lie in the promotion of new pestilences. Least of all does it lie in the vast destruction that a new war may bring. It lies in adapting births to deaths. The stern limits of the earth's fertility will see to it before long that the balance between births and deaths is restored. It will see to it with an arithmetical inevitability which is independent of human wisdom or folly. But if the balance is restored through human folly, immense suffering throughout the world will be involved; while, if it is restored in accordance with the dictates of good sense and humanity, there can be an end to poverty and an end to the vast hopelessness of female lives devoted to the production of children who ought not to exist and whose existence must almost inevitably be filled with misery.

THE ALTERNATIVES

During what remains of the present century, the world has to choose between two possible destinies. It can continue the reckless increase of population until war, more savage and more dreadful than any yet known, sweeps away not only the excess but probably all except a miserable remnant. Or, if the other course is chosen,

Population Pressure and War

there can be progress, rapid progress, towards the extinction of poverty, the end of war, and the establishment of a harmonious family of nations. It seems that the East is becoming alive to the problem, but the West, in its theories and in its external dealings, lags behind. Of all the long-run problems that face the world, this problem of population is the most important and fundamental, for, until it is solved, other measures of amelioration are futile. It is too late to escape from great hardship in the near future, but there is good reason to believe that, if war can be averted meanwhile, the pressing needs of the world will bring amelioration before it is too late.



A. S. PARKES

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THE DILEMMA OF MEDICAL SCIENCE

“NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE EXCESS”

THE CAPACITY FOR REPRODUCTION is one of the two essential characteristics of living matter, and sexual reproduction, in which a new individual arises from the fertilisation of an ovum by a spermatozoon, is almost universal among higher forms of animal life. Devices for bringing these two cells together and for starting the new individual on its way are extraordinarily diverse, but, generally speaking, the more complex the organism the more elaborate the reproductive processes. In the course of evolution among the vertebrate animals, external fertilisation has been replaced by fertilisation within the body of the female, which in turn has permitted the laying of a hard-shelled egg for external incubation, as in birds, or the internal gestation of the embryo, as in mammals. It should be noted, however, that the essential characteristic of the mammal is not the capacity for gestation but is a further manifestation of maternal care, the possession of mammae to secrete milk for the young. Progressive increase in maternal care, associated with

The Dilemma of Medical Science



The greater the care the fewer the offspring

various degrees of paternal care, is thus a notable feature in the evolution of the vertebrate animals, and the process may be said to have reached a peak with the appearance of the human family, in which parental care continues long after biological need for it has ended.

The appearance of parental care has had several very interesting results. For instance, the greater the care taken of each offspring the fewer the offspring that can be dealt with. Many fish, for instance, give little or no parental care, and produce millions of young which suffer wastage so enormous that only a small number reach maturity. By contrast, the larger mammals can produce comparatively few young of which a large proportion survive. In man the trend towards parental care in excess of biological needs has evoked a corresponding trend towards reducing fertility below biological limits. A further effect of the development of maternal care in vertebrate animals is that the increased complexity of the reproductive processes has inevitably increased the likelihood of breakdown at some point. In other words, infertility has become not uncommon, especially in domesticated animals and man. Here then in a nutshell is the paradoxical problem confronting the modern student of human reproduction—to remedy the infertility of those unable to have children and to restrict the fertility of the rest in an acceptable way. In relation to the individual, however, the general problem is not a new one. The urge to influence human fertility must be almost as old as the capacity for thought; it certainly pre-dates any adequate knowledge of the biological processes concerned. As the result, vast edifices of superstition, conjecture and taboo have been built, and up and down

The Dilemma of Medical Science

the world rites and treatments to promote fertility or prevent conception are widespread. Of the two contrasting objectives the former is usually the one to receive attention in social and religious doctrine, because those concerned with race or ideology naturally wish their followers to outbreed others.

The generalisations made above refer mainly to the individual, but there is another side to this matter. Nature takes as her motto that nothing succeeds like excess, and this is especially true of reproductive capacity. As a result, any kind of animal if able to multiply without wastage to the limit of its reproductive capacity would in time swamp the world. This is true even of the comparatively slow-breeding mammal, and of man himself. The fact that such an inundation does not happen shows that all animal populations are kept severely in check by limiting factors, of which the important ones are food supply, disease and enemies. Translated into terms of the human race these factors are famine, pestilence and war, the traditional scourges of mankind. More than a century ago, Malthus reiterated these well-known facts and drew the conclusion that, in the absence of voluntary control of its numbers, mankind would continue to run into highly unpleasant limiting factors. As a result of formulating this simple and evidently valid idea, Malthus has become possibly the most maligned of Cambridge dons—no mean achievement—and it is fashionable to dismiss him as a false prophet. It is true that the Industrial Revolution, based on the molecular energy of coal and the invention of the steam engine, so increased productivity as to permit of a rapid increase in the population of the Western world, and later, when that had slackened, of an

increase in the standard of living. In this way the full rigour of the Malthusian doctrine has been averted in Western countries at least for a time, though the escape has been greatly assisted by decline in the birth rate during the last 70 years as a result of the voluntary action recommended by Malthus.

AN ETHICAL DILEMMA

The medical scientist has already incurred a heavy responsibility for the present growth of world population and for the results that may flow from it, and his ethical dilemma has been set out by me in a previous publication as follows:

It is the ethic of the medical man that a life must be saved if only for the gallows, or prolonged if only for months of suffering. In the same way it is the ethic of medical science that disease must be conquered no matter what risk of war and famine may thereby be incurred. Whether or not, in modern times, this is still a completely adequate ethic, the simple facts remain. Medical science has done much to relax one of the three checks that restrict populations. It is hardly likely that in the long run this will fail to throw emphasis on the other two checks unless the human species as a whole is willing and able to take voluntary steps to restrict its numbers. Of the willingness of the individual nothing need be said here. . . . But the logic of the population situation demands, at least, that simple and effective means of limiting propagation should be available, and a growing body of opinion maintains that the dilemma of the medical scientist, caused by his vigorous work on death control, can be resolved only by correspondingly vigorous work on birth control.

The Dilemma of Medical Science

There is much leeway to make up. For many years, religious and social prejudices have caused matters relating to reproduction, especially the problems of contraception, to languish under a public taboo strangely at variance with private practice.¹

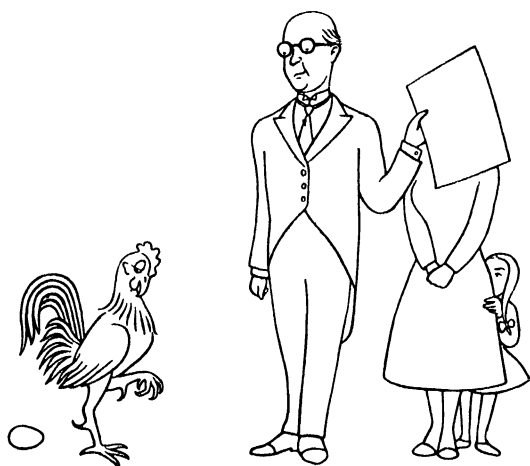
This taboo has extended to the scientific study of methods of restricting human fertility, and, as a result, present methods, depending on the local use of mechanical obstructions and chemical spermicides, are crude in the extreme and remain as a remarkable anachronism in an age of spectacular technical progress.

THE PROGRESS OF RESEARCH

Fortunately the facts are now widely recognised, and in many centres in many countries research is being concentrated on the study of biological and biochemical aspects of reproduction relevant to the restriction of fertility, with the object of evolving greatly improved methods. What are the chances of success? The requirements of an ideal method of contraception can easily be

¹ The following story is instructive. In the 1920s biologists were much interested in cases of apparent sex-reversal in domestic fowl, and I was lucky enough to obtain a specimen in the early stages of changing superficially from a hen to a cock. I wanted to keep the bird under observation for some months, but suitable accommodation was not available at University College, London, where I was working. At the time, as a young man, I was living with my family in a residential suburb, and it occurred to me to lodge the bird in a private poultry-run near home. My father therefore asked a neighbour, a well-known banker, who kept a few fowls at the bottom of his garden, whether he would be kind enough to house my bird for a time. The neighbour naturally asked why the bird was of special interest and looked very dubious on being told that its sex was changing. However, he promised to think it over. A few days later he came back and, after a good deal of humming and hawing, said that he would prefer not to take the bird, explaining that he himself would not mind very much, but that, after all, he had his wife and daughters to consider.

stated. Evidently it should not depend on local action contemporaneous with coitus, and preferably should involve only occasional dosage by mouth. Moreover, it should be effective retrospectively over a short period and



“I wouldn’t mind very much, but after all I have my wife and daughters to consider”

prospectively over a known period, and it should be simple enough to be generally available and easily usable by people intelligent enough to understand the possible consequences of coitus and to know whether they do or do not wish to become parents. Finally, of course, it should have no other effects than the prevention of conception. This specification is a formidable one and no competent biologist would guarantee to evolve such a method in the near future. In research, however, prophecy is nearly always misplaced. It may be that some spectacular dis-

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covery will suddenly open up entirely new prospects and permit progress at an unexpected rate. More likely, progress will be made step by step, and probably the first results of research will make things easier and more effective for intelligent and educated people but be of no value to others. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that sooner or later the problem will be solved. The reproductive processes are among the most complicated and delicate found in the animal world, and there are numerous stages at which it should be possible to interfere simply and effectively with the sequence of events without harm to either partner. The following account of the processes involved is necessary to any consideration of this idea by those without medical knowledge.

The events leading to the implantation of a fertilised egg, *i.e.*, to conception, may be summarised as follows: the male germ cells, the spermatozoa, are produced in the testes of the male and are stored in an adjacent organ, the epididymis. At coitus they are transported through the male canal and into the vagina of the female, whence they ascend through the neck of the uterus by way of a canal filled with mucus, up through the cavity of the uterus and thence to the top of the fallopian tube, which leads to the ovary. In the tube, at the proper stage of the menstrual cycle, they make contact with the egg which has been shed from the ovary. The spermatozoa survive in the female reproductive tract for only a short time, perhaps one to three days, and the egg, after leaving the ovary, for only a few hours. Fertilisation, therefore, can take place only when coitus occurs not more than a few hours afterwards. An egg is discharged from the ovary once in each menstrual cycle, typically about mid-cycle, and this is the

time at which fertilisation occurs. Unfortunately, the exact time of discharge of the egg varies considerably from woman to woman and cycle to cycle, and methods for detecting the event are not very reliable. It follows, therefore, that the so-called fertile and sterile periods of the cycle vary to an extent which is difficult to detect or predict and which makes uncertain their precise use for the avoidance of conception. By contrast, a knowledge of the approximate incidence of the fertile period is of great value in promoting fertility.

At fertilisation a spermatozoon, having made its way through any ovarian cells still adhering to the egg, penetrates the outer covering of the egg and then the membrane covering the substance of the egg proper, and so enters the egg. Immediately after penetration by one spermatozoon changes occur in the egg membranes which prevent the penetration of further spermatozoa. The male and female nuclei then develop and unite, and the fertilised egg passes down the tube, dividing as it goes. In the course of a few days it enters the uterus, where it develops into a minute hollow embryo and finally becomes implanted, at which stage conception may be said to have taken place. For these events it is essential that the relevant organs shall be in an appropriate state. For instance, after the egg leaves the ovary, the uterus must be physiologically prepared for the reception of the fertilised egg. If a fertilised egg does not appear the lining of the uterus breaks down and menstruation occurs.

The co-ordination of the reproductive processes is effected mainly by means of hormones, *i.e.*, by chemical messengers carried by the bloodstream from the organ in

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which they are elaborated to another in which they produce their effects. The hormones concerned in reproduction fall broadly into two categories. First, those produced by the anterior pituitary body, a small gland located in the base of the skull, which stimulates the gonads, the testes and ovaries, which are therefore known as gonadotrophins. Second, those produced by the gonads, which evoke changes in the accessory organs of reproduction, such as the uterus, appropriate to the stage of the reproductive cycle. The chief gonadal hormones are:

Testosterone—elaborated by the testes, and responsible for the development and the maintenance of function of the accessory male organs.

Oestrogen—produced by the ovary and responsible for the general attributes of femaleness, and in particular for the changes which occur in the female accessory organs at the time of ovulation.

Progesterone—produced by a special body, the corpus luteum, which develops in the ovary after ovulation, and which is responsible for the changes characteristic of early pregnancy or of the preparations therefor.

Disappearance or suppression of the gonadotrophic hormones results in a state of sexual quiescence such as is seen in many animals which have a restricted breeding season, including some species of monkeys and possibly certain races of man. It may be said, therefore, that there would be nothing unbiological about the production of a temporary state of infertility by suppression or inhibition of the gonadotrophic hormones. Unfortunately, no certain and otherwise innocuous means of producing such an effect in man is known. Possibilities do, however,

exist. One of these, which has received much publicity in recent years, has a rather curious history. In 1941, biologists, working for the U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, reported that infusions of the herb *Lithospermum ruderales* were used by Nevada Indians to prevent conception.



Nevada Indians lead the way in prevention of conception

Laboratory tests showed that such infusions did, in fact, disturb the reproductive cycle in mice and decrease fertility. Since then a lot of work has been carried out with extracts of *Lithosperm* and, although the situation is confused, there is reason to believe that a substance is present in this plant which is antagonistic to the gonadotrophic hormones and brings about a state of reproductive quiescence in the female mammal. An important feature of this effect is that the extracts are active by mouth.

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Several other plants seem to contain the same or a similar substance and chemical work is being pushed on vigorously. There is thus a chance that the active substance will become available in quantity, but it remains to be seen whether it will have any practical value as an oral contraceptive in man. The history of the work on *Lithosperm* is a good example of the curious way in which things happen in scientific work, because it is difficult to believe that the Nevada Indians really produced detectable effects with the decoctions of *Lithosperm* used by them. Apart from inhibiting the gonadotrophic hormones, other means are known of modifying the action of the gonads, but at present none of these seems to offer any prospect of producing controlled temporary infertility without undesirable side-effects.

IMMUNISATION

It remains to consider in what ways, other than the known ones, it might be possible to prevent conception when normal germ cells are being produced and normal coitus takes place. One interesting possibility arises from the fact that antibodies can be prepared against spermatozoa in the same way as against bacteria and other living cells, so that in theory one should be able to effect immunisation against spermatozoa and thence against pregnancy in much the same way as against, say, small-pox. Great technical difficulties, however, stand in the way of this attractive solution of the problem, the first of which is to obtain an effective concentration of antibody at the site of action by any means offering an improvement on present methods of contraception. The same

problem of obtaining an effective concentration within the female reproductive tract, without bringing about an injurious concentration elsewhere, besets efforts to obtain spermicidal action from substances taken by mouth. It must be recognised, therefore, that there are great difficulties in the way of killing the spermatozoon in the female reproductive tract by any other method than the local use of spermicides, but there are other ways in which the fertilisation of the egg might be prevented. A major hazard which the spermatozoa have to negotiate before they reach the egg is the narrow canal through the neck or cervix of the uterus. This canal is normally plugged with mucus, which at other times of the cycle than the fertile period seems to be impassable to spermatozoa. Much is now being learned about the factors which control the state of the cervical mucus, and it may be possible to evolve methods for ensuring that the mucus is impassable to spermatozoa throughout the cycle and thus effectively to block the spermatozoa from the egg. There is here at least the possibility of a neat and easily controlled method of contraception not depending on action contemporaneous with coitus.

Nearer the site of fertilisation other hazards appear, and even if spermatozoa reach the neighbourhood of the egg it does not necessarily mean that fertilisation will take place. For instance, it is possible or even likely that the penetration of a spermatozoon through the ovarian cells which may adhere to the egg depends on the action of an enzyme, hyaluronidase, carried by the spermatozoon. Ways of inhibiting this enzyme are known and in experiments with animals it is easy to prevent fertilisation by the coincidental insemination of hyaluronidase inhibitors

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with the spermatozoa. Unfortunately, no way of bringing about this reaction by oral administration of enzyme inhibitors is known, and clinical and other reports to the contrary have not been confirmed. The means by which a spermatozoon penetrates into the substance of the egg, the final hazard awaiting it, and the nature of the stimulus to the changes it undergoes there are quite unknown. It would be mere speculation, therefore, to guess at possible methods of preventing penetration. There is, however, one intriguing indication. It has already been stated that when one spermatozoon has penetrated the egg a change takes place in the membranes and the entrance of further spermatozoa is prevented. The biochemical nature of this change is not yet known, but elucidation of its nature might enable it to be simulated artificially so that no spermatozoa could penetrate the egg.

After the egg has been fertilised it is possible, in experiments with animals, to interrupt its journey to the uterus, or, after it has reached the uterus, to prevent its implantation. Such methods have the great advantage that they are effective after coitus, but no serious attempt has yet been made to study their applicability to man.

CLINICAL VOLUNTEERS

In all discussion of this kind one qualification must be kept firmly in mind. The reproductive processes follow the same general pattern in all mammals, but the chronological, anatomical, physiological and biochemical details vary greatly. It must be realised therefore that no amount of work on preventing conception in experiments with animals will necessarily produce an answer immediately

applicable to man. At best, a vast amount of careful clinical testing will have to be carried out, and it is unlikely that there will be available a sufficient number of cases in which conception is medically undesirable and in which further measures could therefore be undertaken in the event of failure of the experimental method of contraception. Moreover, the likelihood of conception in such cases may well have been subnormal in any event. It seems therefore that clinical tests of possible new methods of contraception will require the co-operation of volunteers, presumably young couples who are not particular as to the exact time at which a child is conceived. Such volunteers would, of course, require an absolute assurance that the procedure under test was not medically more dangerous to themselves or their future offspring than, say, the use of chemical spermicides. For such tests the competence of the organisers and the confidence of the volunteers will be equally necessary, and here The Family Planning Association will be well placed and well fitted to play a major part.

The Dilemma of Medical Science



C. H. ROLPH

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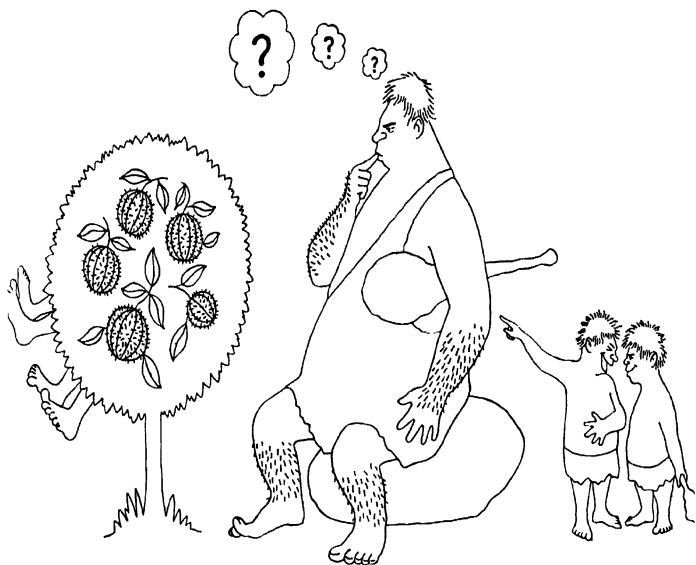
THE FAMILY AS A LEGAL NOTION

THE FAMILY IDEA

I SUPPOSE THAT THE IDEA OF THE FAMILY as the earliest kind of grouping in human culture, the first little consanguineous tribe, must have germinated in the minds of men when they made the thought-provoking discovery that coitus and child-bearing had something to do with each other. I should be disposed to call this the most significant deduction in the history of thought, though for some thousands of years it may well have been lurking in the backwoods of credulity as an old wives' tale. Its earliest outcome could have been either the kind of family group led by a dominant male, with a number of wives and a small host of children; or the monogamous family as we know it today; or—and this seems the most probable—what is called group marriage, of the kind still found in Tibet, India, and Ceylon, under which the male members share their wives. Cæsar seems to have found this going on among the early Britons: "In their domestic life," he said, "they practice a form of community of wives, 10 or 12 continuing in a group, especially brothers with brothers and fathers with sons."

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Monogamy, or 'pair marriage', was probably bound to supersede this arrangement, and develop with the sense of property and inheritance. After all, the sexes have been roughly equal in number for so long that "the memory of



The thought-provoking discovery that coitus and child-bearing had something to do with each other

man runneth not to the contrary", and this is a biological constant that itself favours pair marriage, since all other systems leave too many of one sex or the other without mates. But the real trouble about group marriages is that no one really knows who is whose father. The bringing up of a child seems most naturally the job of the particular pair that happened to produce it, and this is the crux: it is today the child that determines the true man-woman

relationship. The family unit in civilised States was a fairly late solution to the great sex difference in the job of reproduction. It is not long since women spent every moment of their youth and middle years in bearing, bringing forth, feeding, and training children—and in carrying them about; and some racial survival instinct may have done a lot to induce men, in the freedom of their trifling contribution to the generative process, to supply food and shelter for women who would (and who did) otherwise abandon or kill their children. In this arrangement the man was the lord and master because he needed it less than the woman; but once the idea was accepted that the man had a physical share in the child, he became aware of the need to ensure strict chastity, as well as domestic servitude, in his wife.

He therefore surrounded her with special restrictions, inventing the 'double standard' of morals that irks every thoughtful woman today. The emancipation of women, and the tendency to later and later marriage that accompanied the rise in living standards, ensure that between them at any given moment there are in civilised societies many unmarried adults. This is inimical to monogamous marriage systems: the human sex-instinct doesn't seem to operate so that every man may expect to meet one woman with whom he can ideally mate, whose children must inevitably be his. Every man, still, is polygamous by inclination, so that any monogamous marriage system is under ceaseless strain. And every woman?

Every woman today, given normal health, can have children or refrain from having them. That is where we have got to. The patriarchal family, though still the foundation of family law, is on its way out. The

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matriarchal family, as Dr. Michael Young shows in Chapter Seven, lingers on here and there with a strange new tenacity that may grow tougher with the planning of families.

THE SOCIO-LEGAL UNIT

Legally, 'the family' is the social unit resulting from a lawful marriage and comprising the relatives on both sides up to a number of 'degrees' of kinship. No one seems quite certain where the 'extended' family comes to an end and the outsiders begin, though any one person, tracing his own links far enough, is bound sooner or later to find himself involved more intimately in other families than in his own. What the imagination can do along these lines was nicely portrayed by H. G. Wells in his essay on 'Individuality as an Interlude' in *First and Last Things*:¹

I do not know (he wrote) if it has ever occurred to the reader to compute the number of his living ancestors at some definite date, at, let us say, the year one of the Christian era. Everyone has two parents and four grandparents, most people have eight great-grandparents; and if we ignore the possibility of intermarriage we shall go on to a fresh power of two with every generation, thus:

3	8
4	16
5	32
7	128
10	1,024
20	1,048,576
30	1,073,741,824
40	1,099,511,627,776

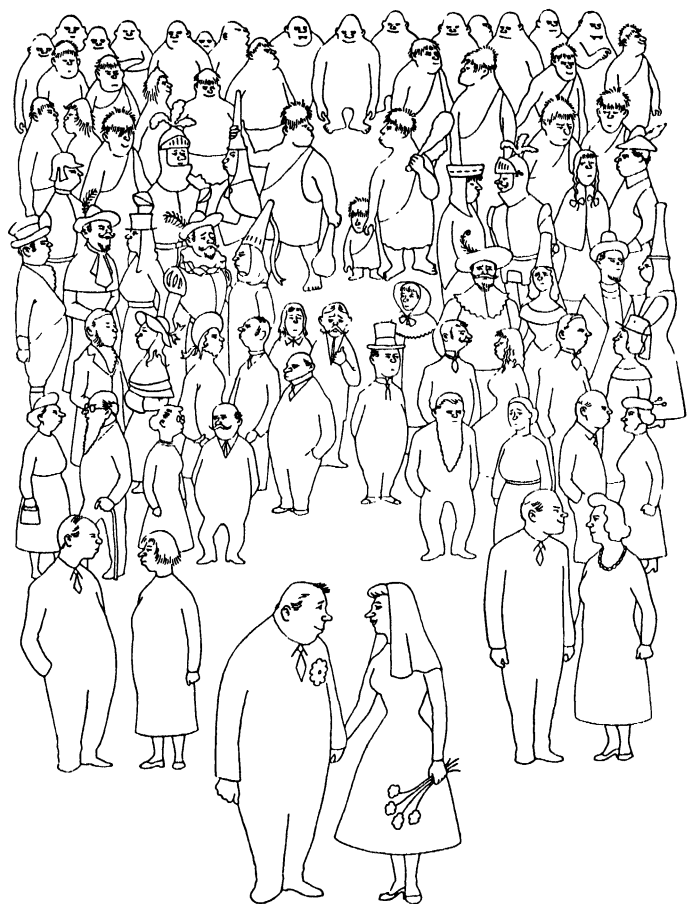
¹ (Watts & Co., London, 1938, by permission of the author's executors.)

. . . It is the commonest trick to think of a man's descendants as though they were his own. We are told that one of the dearest human motives¹ is the desire to found a family; but think how much of a family one founds at the best. One's son is after all only half one's blood, one's grandson only a quarter; and so one goes on until it may be that in ten brief generations one's heir and namesake has but 1/1024th of one's inherited self. Those other thousand-odd unpredicted people thrust in and mingle with one's pride.

This, of course, is Wells the biologist contemplating his fellow-men in the process of realising themselves as "experiments of the species for the species", as episodes in an experience greater than themselves. I have quoted him because he sets out so conveniently, though incidentally, the reason why from a legal point of view you have to conclude that true family relationship stops at the third degree. That is the consanguinity test for the purposes of marriage, for the kind of conduct prescribed by the law that punishes incest, and for the entitlement to succeed to an estate on the intestate death of its owner (although, in this last case, there *could* be succession by a descendant of a third degree relative, making a fourth or even remoter degree of kinship). Liability for maintenance stops at the second degree, for in matters of compulsory contribution to the welfare of relatives there is a point at which this thoughtful cement in the fabric of society becomes gunpowder. Both husbands and wives can now be prosecuted for failing to maintain each other, but the wife, if she finds herself deserted, is still alone in the privilege of being able to 'pledge her husband's credit' for necessities; and he will have to pay.

¹ It is certainly the inspiration of family law and the law of property.

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Those other thousand-odd unpredicted people thrust in and
mingle with one's pride

MARRIAGE NO 'CONTRACT'

It will probably be as well though, for present purposes, to dispose of the idea that marriage is a 'contract'; an idea that arises naturally enough from the fact that a wedding is generally understood to involve the voluntary participation of two people, which is probably true more often today than when the idea was first invoked. But to say that marriage is a contract can lead to the assumption that the law of contract applies to it, which is totally mistaken. The bride and her groom are not the only parties to the marriage: they share their joy with the State. Therefore they cannot vary or modify the terms that bring them together; they cannot dissolve the contract by agreement; and their married state involves certain duties to society as well as conferring certain benefits upon them. Moreover you can get out of most contracts on reasonable evidence that there was misrepresentation on the other side (unless, in some particular case, an Act of Parliament says that you can't—a growing Parliamentary habit); but you could not get a divorce on the ground that your husband had falsely described himself as a lieutenant-colonel or that your wife had put it about that she could jug hare.

The law has never been in doubt that it is the duty of husbands and wives to live and sleep with each other. If one of them goes away and stays away without good reason, either into the next house or into the next county, he or she can be required by law to come back—by a High Court decree for the "restitution of conjugal rights". When this device was first thought of, a large number of rebellious spouses were imprisoned for failing to obey

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such decrees, but it was gradually realised that the truly happy household is not one which is held together by the threat of imprisonment. Thereafter, a decree for the restitution of conjugal rights became merely (though expensively) a preliminary step on the road to divorce; which, when you come to think of it, is hardly what its progenitors had in mind.

ANCESTRY OF THE MARRIAGE LAWS

Last, room must be found, in this sketch of the family "in contemplation of law", for the oft-forgotten fact that the law itself is the child of the Church; the legal position being to some extent, accordingly, the product of holy asceticism. The man who wants to shut himself off from the disturbing realities of earthly life, in order to contemplate the good, is apt to find himself contemplating, now and again, not merely what women are like but what he would like them to be like. This is not what he is supposed to be doing. Women are to blame for it. So the early divines who breathed life into so much that is law today denounced woman as vile, setting her up as the main instrument of original sin. This meant that she had to be carefully denied the right to any property and to the possession of her own children. It was even a bit doubtful, until quite lately, whether she had a soul.

Many of these oddities still exist in the laws that regulate the relationships of husband, wife, and children; and there are some new ones. For example, the law has always liked husbands and wives to talk to each other freely, giving their conversations 'absolute privilege', at least so far as the law of defamation is concerned. (Hus-

band-and-wife colloquies in the street have sometimes had sequels in the Magistrates' Courts, but this has been because their frankness was considered to amount, in the larger sense, to 'insulting behaviour'.) Husband and wife, in the eyes of the law, are but one person: a man talking to his wife is, in law as he often is in fact, a man talking to himself. Between spouses, therefore, there can be no 'publication', in a punishable sense, of a libel or a slander; and a good thing too, for the conversational resources of a daily and lifelong propinquity are not without limit.

Nor can one spouse bring an action for 'tort' against the other, whatever the wrongful act may be that prompts the desire to do so. There have always been exceptions to this complete legal identity of spouses. Before 1935, for example, any wrongful acts done by the wife were the liability of the husband. If she was a gossip and a scandal-monger, he sometimes led a hunted life in which he daily expected writs for damages that he would have to pay. But he was rescued from this position by an Act of Parliament with a title that suggests a milestone in the history of marriage—the Law Reform (Married Women and Tortfeasors) Act, 1935; and the acknowledgement that, in her own right, a married woman could behave like a tortfeasor was not entirely to the benefit of society: a person grievously libelled or slandered by a married woman is now likely to find that he can get no damages out of her, though her husband be a millionaire and she living in luxury.

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NO DOMINANT SEX

But the law still regards husband and wife as one person when there is any question of a criminal conspiracy between them. In law, they cannot conspire, except with some third person. Moreover, although a married woman who incites her husband to commit a felony can be punished as an accessory before the fact, if she merely shelters and conceals him after he has done it she cannot be punished, for that (the law unselfishly allows) is what a good wife is likely to do. Until 1925 the law always presumed that any criminal wrong done by a wife in the presence of her husband was done under his coercion, and unless the Crown proved otherwise she could not be punished; but the Criminal Justice Act, 1925, ordained that this should no longer be a ready-made presumption, and the coercion now has to be proved by evidence. However, she cannot be compelled to give evidence against him, except in a very few circumstances (though she can always volunteer, and, I have always thought, too often does). But in no sense is the law more concerned to recognise the integration of the family than when the family or any of its members is physically attacked or threatened. "A husband may justify an assault in defence of his wife," says Mr. Justice Hawkins in his *Pleas of the Crown*, "a wife in defence of her husband, a parent in defence of his child, or a child in defence of his parent, a master in defence of his servant, and a servant in defence of his master; but in all those cases the battery must be such only as was necessary to the defence of the party or his relation."

Finally, any wife now enjoys the same protection for

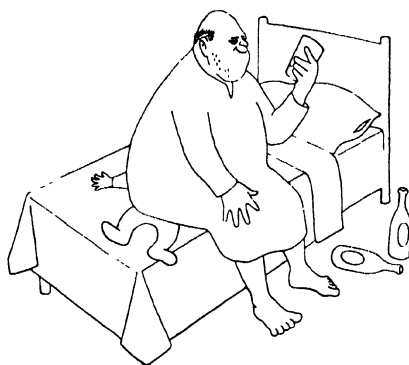
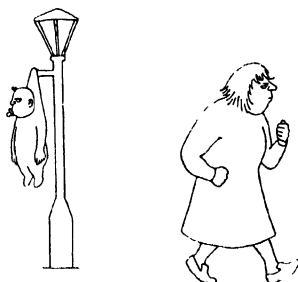
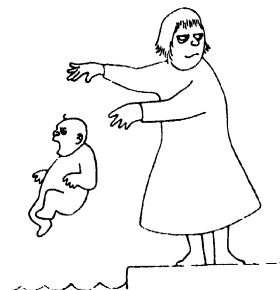
her own property under the *criminal* law as if she were single or legally separated from her husband, except that she can only prosecute her husband for stealing the property if he stole it in the act of leaving or deserting her, or preparing to do so.

LEGAL ODYSSEY OF THE CHILD

It is into this carefully legalised milieu that the modern child is born; and it says much for the amiability and unselfishness of a considerable majority of parents that the average household is one that would probably be much the same whether all these laws existed or not. They are the printed Rules, the Articles of Association, to be turned to in dire need: but few couples know where or what they are, and the more deprived and harassed by circumstances a family may be, the less likely does it seem that the Rules will be invoked, at least by the parties themselves. Nevertheless, to get the child's true legal setting, it is desirable to glance quickly at certain aspects of the law's concern for him, from the cradle to the age of seventeen.

We must take examples. . . . Until he is twelve months old, his death at the hands of his own mother may, if the balance of her mind is disturbed by the effects of giving birth to or breast-feeding him, be treated as 'infanticide', which is something very much less than murder. Until he is two, there are specially heavy penalties upon those who abandon him (unless they have the presence of mind, as an increasing number do, to leave him in his pram at the Welfare Clinic); and there is a special penalty, until he is three, upon people who get

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The first three ages of man

drunk and suffocate him by lying on him in bed (a Hogarthian flashback to gin and overcrowding). Until he is five he must not be given intoxicants except on doctor's orders or "other urgent cause"; and over five he must go to school. Until he is seven, a drunken person must not look after him in the street, and until he is eight he is not criminally responsible for his own breaches of the law. Until he is twelve he must not be trained in dangerous acrobatics, or left in a room with an unguarded fire. The law regards him as still a 'child' until his fourteenth birthday, and will not, therefore, discover a criminal intention in his acts unless his mental capacity for it is proved; it will not, however, let him have a rifle or revolver, go into the bar of a pub during drinking hours, or dispose of goods at a pawnbroker's. It gives him education whether he wants it or not until he is fifteen, at which age it can send him to prison. At sixteen he may be supplied with cigarettes, get married, be a barrow boy, drive a motor-cycle, go to see 'A' films by himself, and enter Borstal. At seventeen, becoming an 'adult' for most legal purposes, he loses a host of statutory protections, and if he commits a crime, he is called a criminal instead of a delinquent. But he still belongs, as a rule, to a family.

Throughout those years, the law has looked upon him as its special care. Of him alone in the family will the law be found to say, as it does in section 44 of the Children and Young Persons Act, 1933, that it must "have regard to the *welfare* of the child or young person", whether he is an offender or not. But now that he has reached the age of 17 he is emancipated from the obligation, implicit in section 1 (7) of the same Act, to submit to chastisement at the hands of his parent, guardian or schoolmaster. He

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can now hit back; for even the most righteous onslaught upon him has acquired, as from his seventeenth birthday, the character of an assault and battery which he may lawfully repel with reasonable force. He has arrived.

“KEEPING THE FAMILY TOGETHER”

From 8 to 17, every member of a cohabiting family who ‘gets into trouble’ unavoidably involves his family in it. His mother or father (preferably both) will be summoned to the Juvenile Court, called as witnesses, weighed up, questioned, advised, and sometimes ordered to pay the fine inflicted upon their offspring. From birth to 16, and in some cases 18, every member of a family is under the protection of the Children Acts, so that neglect, ill-treatment, indecent molestation, cruelty, exposure, truancy from school, and failure to provide may again bring the family before the criminal courts. When you hear people deploring the modern ‘break-up of family life’, you need to compare all these provisions, and their regard for the family as an aggregation of individuals, with the conditions that beset the family among Mayhew’s London poor, with the early nineteenth-century work of the Philanthropic Society in taking children from the foot of the gallows that had newly orphaned them, and indeed with the long struggle against social and political indifference to the well-being of children that is the concomitant of an unrestricted birth rate. There are in fact so many people concerned to keep this family together, to foster its importance as the social unit of Western civilisation, and to assist the family to fulfil its responsibilities rather than to take them over from the

parents, that their zeal and their multiplicity now threaten the fabric of what they seek to strengthen and maintain. There are many houses at which there are constant calls by more than a dozen officials or visitors, representing both statutory and voluntary organisations concerned with the health, welfare, housing, national assistance, pensions, education, security, cleanliness, and behaviour of the family. Sometimes—if, for example, there are half a dozen or more children going to different schools—this total may be greatly swollen; and I have heard of a case in which over forty visitors, with frequently overlapping interests, were calling on one village household.

Many of these welfare services are new and feeling their way, discovering empirically what are likely to be their proper spheres of activity; but the need to co-ordinate them has been urged by many M.P.s upon successive Governments since 1948, and by Governments in turn upon local authorities, with incomplete success. In 1950 about half the local authorities in England and Wales recognised that there was a job of co-ordination to be done, and gave it to their Children's Officer, himself already a co-ordinator of child welfare activities under the Children Act, 1948; some entrusted it to the Town Clerk, some to the Medical Officer of Health, some to the Chief Education Officer. Too many did nothing at all; and in their districts the family often suffers because the fragmentation of interest among a large number of visitors encourages each visitor to leave urgent initiatives, including the act of setting the law in motion, to someone else. Moreover, their counsellings and importunacies tend to cancel each other out. An assistance officer may today be telling a woman that she could with advantage go out to

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work, whereas a health visitor will tomorrow be urging her to stay at home. A probation officer or moral welfare visitor may be discussing with a housewife the possibility of her getting a separation order, and an hour after he has gone a church visitor may be urging reconciliation with her husband and "the supreme good of keeping the family together". The crowded workhouses, the bleak children's homes, of the nineteenth century are gone. The number of children born 'and reared' has fallen to the point where room can be provided for them under parental roofs. But law and the family are indivisible, social unity and stability are the essential aims with which the law is designed, and the welfare legionaries are out on the doorsteps instead of running institutions. It used to be said that we were not concerned with what we call our 'problem families' (not all of which, by any means, are living in fecklessness or squalor) until they broke the law. Only a few years ago the law relied upon punishment, often imprisonment, as a means to shape the family, constantly releasing the socially unfit from prison to face their world with increased difficulties. Today we are supposed to be casting about for every possible means of preventing social deterioration, the ill-treatment of children, the forsaking of the old, the neglect of the sick and disabled. But we are actually fostering a certain risk that the excellence of our welfare services may devitalise family obligation: there are cases of children abandoned by their parents at Welfare Offices, of children brought before Juvenile Courts by their parents for quite unnecessary commitment to approved schools, and of parents who, though they have no interest in or affection for their children, resist their adoption or fostering by

others because they want their earning capacity the moment they leave school.

THE FUTURE OF THE FAMILY

The relationship between The Law and The Family remains one of the great question-marks of the future. On the one hand the determination of many magistrates, judges, probation officers and children's committees to preserve a crumbling and unsatisfactory family at all costs is to be traced, no doubt, to the belief (I have never been able to share it) that the break-up of a home is *ipso facto* the worst that can happen to the children of it. On the other hand, this determination may be a quite recent statutory product of the convenient circumstance that a cohabiting family can always be got at and manipulated in the best interests of law and order. From this viewpoint the statutory visitors, whether they call once a month or forty times a week, are the apotheosis of the Knock on the Door, the Law preying benevolently on the Family. I would like to see the law playing a smaller, not a greater, conscious part in the life of the family. The law is at best a great, blundering, blunt instrument; it fills as best it can the dangerous gaps in the social fabric that education fails to fill. And educationalists have not even yet, I think, given enough attention to the appalling process of un-learning that we must all go through as we come upon those aspects of civilisation that our mentors have felt it necessary to conceal from our infant minds. "The children suspect nothing," said the desperate Mau-passant in *Forgiveness*:

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and reach the age of life with a bandage over their eyes and reason—without suspecting what the underside of existence means—without knowing that people do not think as they speak, do not talk as they act—without knowing that one must live in a state of continual warfare with everyone, or at best of armed peace—without ever imagining that one is certain to be tricked if one is simple, deceived if one is sincere, maltreated if one is kind and good. Some go on to the moment of their death in this blindness of loyalty, honour and probity—so thoroughly upright that nothing can open their eyes. Others, ultimately disabused, yet unable to understand, are perpetually stumbling here and there in wild desperation; and die at last in the belief that they have been the sport of exceptional ill-fortune.

While, in fact, the family is reasonably well-behaved, the law hovers protectively on the threshold, ready to be asked indoors and have a cup of tea. But at a downright breach of the moral law it asks itself in, often without troubling to get a warrant. The moral law, according to Kant, demands justice, justice being happiness proportional to virtue. The family learns the alphabet of virtue by beginning at 'Z'. Its grown-ups enjoin one way of life upon their children and secretly enjoy another; grown-ups lie and quarrel, they are stupid and unkind and adulterous, and they don't appear to know anything much when you ask them; you are supposed to honour your father and mother even after you have discovered all this, even after the countless deceptions and hypocrisies have had to be shrugged off under the growing logic of your inquisitiveness. And if you do not learn fast enough how wrong it has all been, there is the Law. . . .

Has the family done its job?

JACQUETTA HAWKES

*

THE CHOICE BEFORE MAN

EMANCIPATION

FROM A HELPLESS SLAVERY to natural circumstance, mankind has moved towards some slight command over life. We are still helpless enough, still endlessly buffeted, but it is one of the proudest aspects of our mental growth to have accepted the active responsibility of choice in many realms where before there was only the dead necessity of acceptance. Once we were at the mercy of climate, of food supply, of infection and deficiency disease; one after another, shelter, clothing, husbandry, medicine, have vastly extended the range of choice as to where and how we should live.

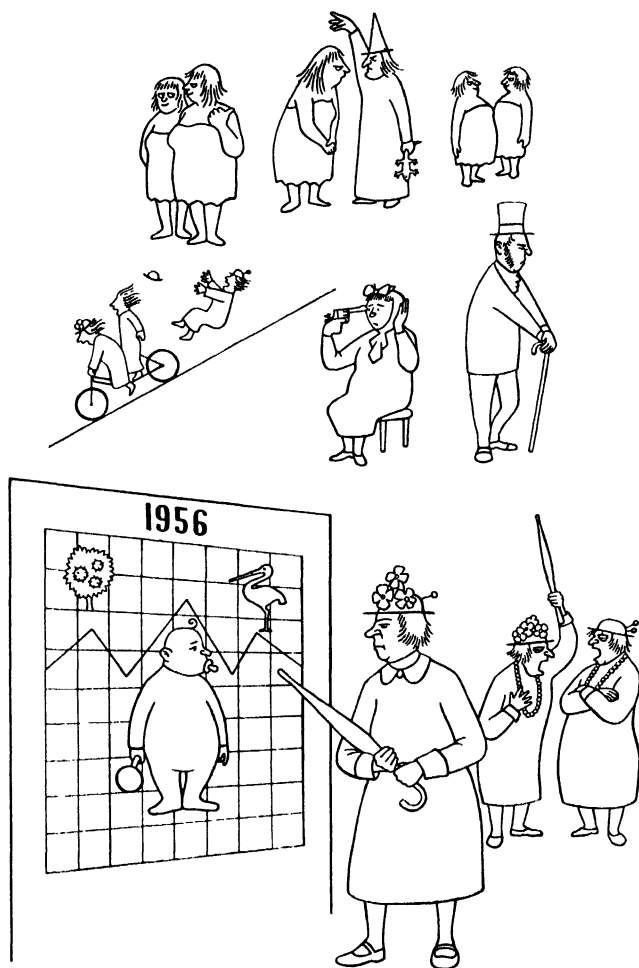
In the present century we have come nearer than ever before to being able to exercise choice in that most fundamental of all our undertakings—the creation of new life and the form of our families. It is probably wise to say “nearer than ever before” because not only have methods of birth control been strengthening slowly, since the days of the mainly protective condoms deplored by Madame de Sévigné as “gossamer against infection, steel

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against love", but there need be no doubt that at all times women have had their various ways of limiting child-bearing. There have always, of course, been those highly dangerous old wives' means of procuring abortion that are still prevalent, and all the ways of inducing miscarriage of which brave young women are capable. (One reads of brides coming from the most conventional Victorian and Edwardian middle-class families jumping down flights of stairs and staging runaway bicycle accidents.) But more than that, from ancient Egyptian and Sumerian times at least, women must have whispered to one another of various tricks and devices for preventing conception—this is as certain as that they imported malachite over hundreds of miles for painting their eyes. These things were not exactly secret, they were a part of the private tradition of the female world, but they were very much off the record. They were not set down in hieroglyphs or cuneiform or any subsequent script. It can also be assumed that they were unreliable—even those that depended on something more substantial than magic. It is only now that birth control has become both public and scientific, a reliable instrument for the exercise of free choice, that it has provoked organised resistance.

The family is the great incubator of happiness and unhappiness. This is obvious enough. Within it men and women achieve the best fulfilment of their emotional lives, or wreck them, condemning themselves to tragedy and makeshift. Within it children are given either an armour of confidence enabling them to go safely through all the normal hazards of growing up, or left unprotected and even scarred, carrying damaged emotional tissue that

Jacquetta Hawkes



It is only now when birth control is open and scientific that
it provokes organised resistance

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all their lives may wreck their happiness as though they were the carriers of unseen physical disease.

From the beginning of our history the family has been of continuing importance, the foundation of personal and social well-being and the means of human evolution. It is worth reflecting on the fact that an unbroken line of parents and children unites us with the hunters of the earliest Ice Age, and indeed with the ape-men before them. It is worth reflecting on such a truism because every age is inclined to regard its own family arrangements as immutable and evidently right, whereas in truth during 500,000 years almost every conceivable pattern has emerged and had some success. Starting from an institution founded on mother love and the prolongation of this natural maternal instinct by the slow maturing of the human infant, and with paternity either unknown or little recognised, the family has followed many lines of development, including several within the harsh framework of patriarchal societies, in which the old order was reversed, the father being all-important, the mother hardly more than a chattel.

THE MODERN FAMILY A DIFFICULT UNIT

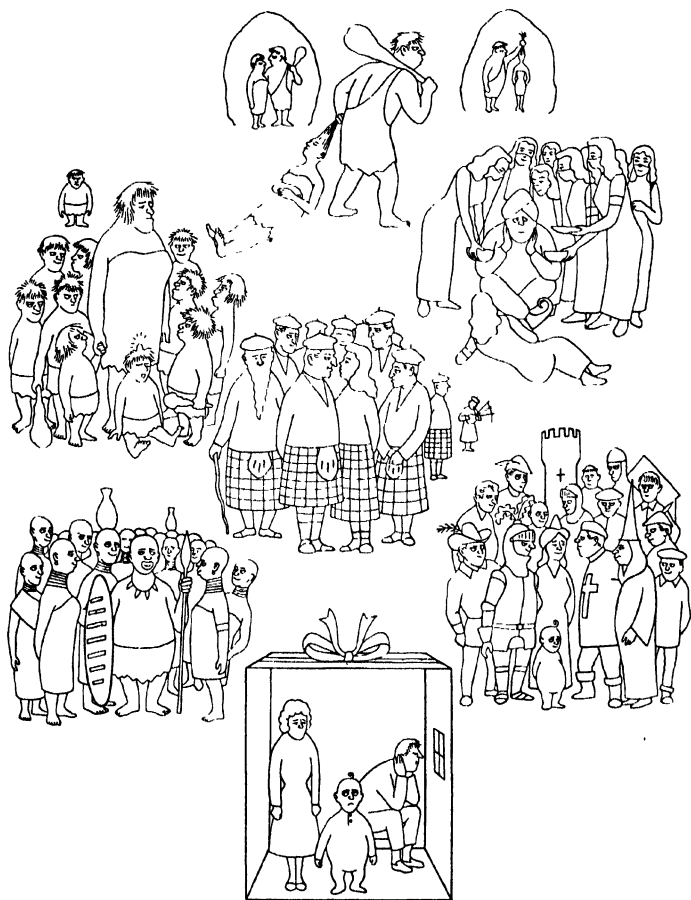
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Generally speaking, it is true to say that the form of the family has been very much more open, both among primitive peoples and in earlier civilisations, than the form adopted by the Christian West. Even where monogamy was accepted, larger kinship groups, neighbours or age groups lived much together. Of all the forms the family has taken in different lands and centuries, that which is now accepted by Western man, and parti-

cularly by industrial Western man, is probably the hardest to maintain—the little biological family unit of parents and children, each living in its own small box, belonging to no living community and perhaps even ignorant of the names of its neighbours.

It is a form making fearful demands on the human beings caught up in it; heavily weighted for loneliness, excessive demands, strain and failure. It may ideally be the best and highest form, but it has always proved impossible for the greater number of people. It has been maintained by various evasions, generally involving a high degree either of convention (the Latin form) or hypocrisy (preferred by the Anglo-Saxons). Victorian moralists openly accepted the necessity of extensive prostitution for the maintenance of 'Christian matrimony'. No wonder that many people of goodwill have cursed the family ideal, have seen it as the enemy of freedom, genius, true love and fine personal relationships, have tried to smash down the walls of all those boxes and cut the family bonds. To a more dispassionate judgment it appears that our ideal if it can be achieved offers high felicity, but the difficulties are so severe that this institution of ours needs all the help it can get. And pre-eminent among the aids upon which it must rely are, first, a full sexual relationship between husband and wife, and, secondly, the power to limit their families—the second being dependent upon the first. If the suffering of each woman who has known the fear and horror of unwanted pregnancies could generate a cloud only the size of a man's hand, then I believe that what has already been suffered would blacken out the sun over the whole world. It has been a most terrible thing, this, and perhaps

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The hardest group to maintain, the little biological family unit each in its own small box

more terrible because it has been so largely stifled, battened down under the hatches of respectability, of prudery and—more admirably, perhaps of—pride. That it has already been so greatly reduced by our new mastery of birth control is surely one of the really great advances of our modern world.

RELUCTANT MOTHERS

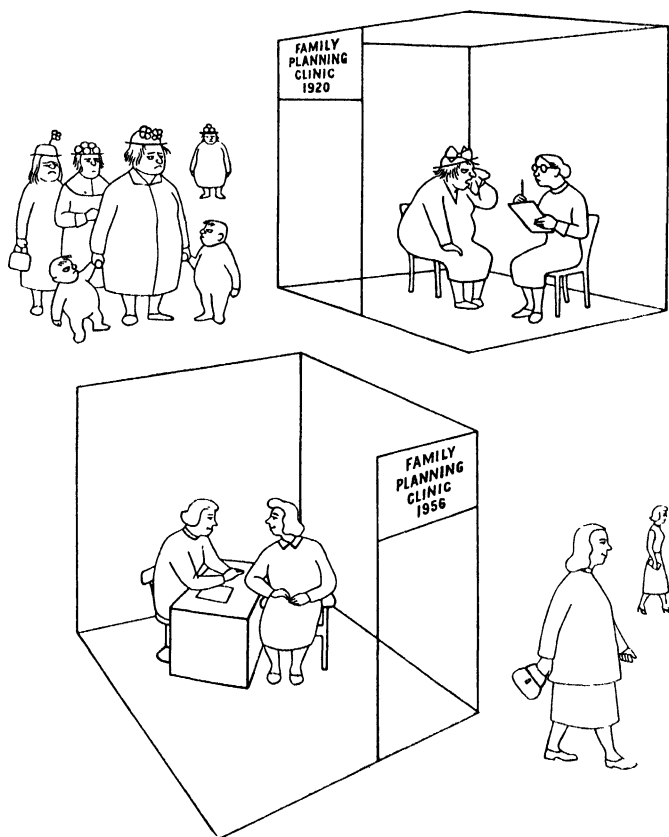
The unwanted pregnancy was a source of misery and humiliation in all classes. It so happens that two recently published books reveal its prevalence among the well-to-do—an edition of the letters of Madame de Sévigné and a life of Victor Hugo. Madame de Sévigné more than once wrote beseeching her adored daughter to persuade her husband, the Comte de Grignan, to spare her further pregnancies: "Will you never have a rest from this continual and wearisome state? I must try to understand M. de Grignan, but, when all is said and done, he should take pity on the woman he loves." Or again: "Ah! My dear Count—I can well believe no one in your place would have acted with more restraint than you have . . . but do remember that the youth, beauty, happiness, the very life of the woman you love are prejudiced by the recurrence of the strain you impose upon her." But the pregnancies continued. A friend said of Hugo: "Victor turns out odes and children without pausing. He never gives himself a moment's rest." But it was his wife who suffered. Why was she (who had once loved him passionately) so often in tears? "Because this illustrious husband was a potent and insatiable lover; because she already had four children and dreaded the possibility of

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having more; because, in a confused sort of way, she felt crushed."

To put it no higher, this state of affairs seems hardly worthy of human dignity—and in this matter of humiliation the man suffers equally with the woman. But when it prevails among the poor, with none of the comforts and other compensations of servants and possessions, then the misery, pain and occasional mortal tragedy become overwhelming. Most of us have seen something of this for ourselves. When as a young married woman I first worked at a birth control clinic in East London, I was horrified at the distress I encountered even in one tiny sample of our population. Woman after woman came in for interview who was not "in a confused sort of way . . . crushed" but in an unmistakable way crushed—both in body and spirit. Slowly they recalled 15 or 20 years of child-bearing, the case-card becoming black with the record of miscarriages and births live and dead. As I registered these increasingly grim and hopeless personal calendars, my imagination saw the heavy years, the crowding of the home, the relationship between husband and wife weakened and destroyed. Many talked of their perpetual dread of pregnancies—and with that dread there went the inevitable horror of sexual intercourse. Others, coming too late but hopeful that we could arrange for abortions, broke down utterly on learning that we could not.

At that same clinic today there are few of these heart-breaking cases. Young mothers and those approaching middle age are full of confidence, and evidently in command of their family life; often they rejoice in it and are happy. Young girls come just before marriage, a little



nervous perhaps, but nevertheless determined to learn how they can have a year or two to adjust to married life and to learn the ways of sexual love before child-bearing. This change from dark to light, from hopelessness to confidence, may be due in part to the Welfare State, but it is due far more to the work of that clinic and of others like it. This work has included psychological guidance and

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the cure of sterility, services that have contributed notably to the major achievement of birth control in the bettering of family life.

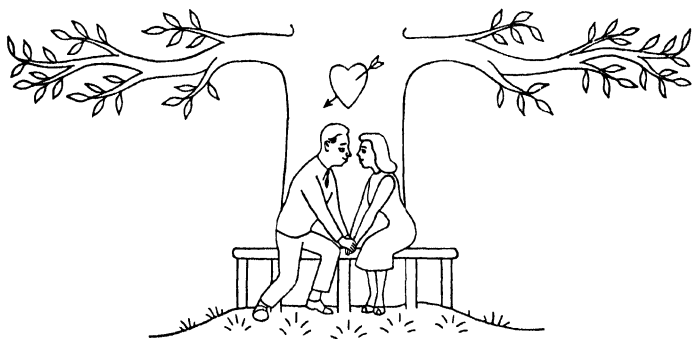
I do not know how many priests of those Churches that prohibit contraception could have witnessed this marvellous lifting of the clouds of misery and not have questioned their doctrine or experienced an even deeper revulsion. Perhaps some could, but I find it hard to believe that the Founder of their faith could have done so, any more than he could have watched a woman in labour and denied her the relief that human intelligence had made possible. It is strange indeed that, in the name of One whose whole life was so much directed against the dead letter of law and custom, texts handed down from an altogether different world should be used to perpetuate fear and suffering for the individual and indignity or wretchedness in the family. It is worth commenting, too, that those texts most insisted upon tend to be those bearing most hardly on women and their values.

PEACEFUL REVOLUTION

I have no confidence whatever in any scientific Utopia. But I do cherish a very great hope that in the relationship between the sexes and in their way of living together we may be mounting towards a higher level than has ever before been generally attained. I feel sure, indeed, that a peaceful revolution has already gone much further than has been recognised, a revolution in which more has been gained than lost. This is not, evidently, wholly due to the new control over the birth of children—many other factors enter in: the emancipation of women socially and

politically, education, psychological understanding and the weakening of puritanism. Nevertheless the revolution would have been impossible without birth control.

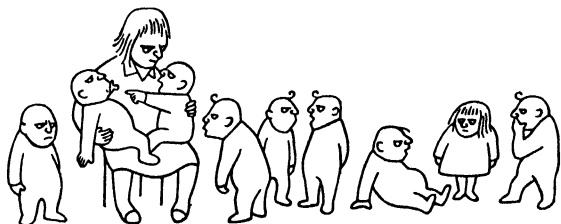
Among the many forms of family life that, as has been said, mankind has evolved at different times and places, the one accepted in Victorian England, the one whose ghost still haunts us, went far towards the patriarchal, with the authoritarianism and rigidity so often associated with an excessive ascendancy of the masculine principal. Now the balance is shifting back; women have won a new status and the things they deem valuable are more respected. The atmosphere is less authoritarian, more permissive, and a very large number of men and women of all kinds get married on the mutual assumption of equality in difference. The men develop their feminine side a little; the women have a chance to exercise their more masculine talents, while sexual love is no longer regarded as a thing of darkness and shame. As a result, I believe, the successful marriage may be more fully satisfying than ever before, allowing a wider, more com-



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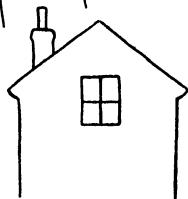
prehensive frontier of sympathy between husband and wife. It can be supported on a foundation of renewed bodily love without fear of endless child-bearing, and on this new freedom of choice, this further advance in human dignity, all the other high possibilities largely depend. As I also believe that all the best things in our world flow from the right polarity of man and woman, I feel, in spite of all else, a very great hope for our future.

MICHAEL YOUNG AND PETER WILLMOTT

THE CHANGING FAMILIES
OF EAST LONDON¹THE 'FAILURE' OF THE
WORKING-CLASS FAMILY

THE ONE ASPECT of the working-class family which has been amply described is its failure. Study has been piled upon study, of all the things that have gone wrong instead of right, of juvenile delinquency, and problem families, broken homes and divorce, child neglect and Teddy Boys. Together these have created an

¹ This chapter is based on the authors' study of Bethnal Green and an associated housing estate, the full report of which was published in 1957 as *Family and Kinship in East London*, by Routledge and Kegan Paul.



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impression that working-class families are disunited, unsocial and unhappy. The villain of this sad story is often the man. The woman is presented as struggling bravely on, though worn out by her children, loaded with hardship and old before her time. She shares a house but not a life with a person who is pictured as neither a loyal husband nor a dutiful father. A recent report on London families was true to the tradition of social studies when it said:

In these impoverished families, where the whole of life is one long struggle, it is almost a general rule for the mother to be seen by the children as loving and caring for them and doing her best against difficulties, while the father disassociates himself from the family, takes much less interest in the children, and often only adds to the difficulties of the mother by keeping her short of money.¹

So was an even more up-to-date account of manual workers' families in a mining village when it said that:

Many married couples seem to have no intimate understanding of each other; the only occasions on which they really approach each other are in bed, and sexual relations are apparently rarely satisfactory to both partners. Because of the divisions in activity and ideas between men and women, husband and wife tend to have little to talk about and to do together. . . . Here, in the Ashton family system, is a system of relationships torn by a major contradiction at its heart; husband and wife live separate, and in a sense, secret lives.²

"Keeping her short of money"—to go back to London—how often is this a refrain of the literature! The interest

¹ Slater, E., and Woodside, M., *Patterns of Marriage*, Cassell, 1952.

² Dennis, N., Henriques, F., and Slaughter, C., *Coal is Our Life*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956.

of social investigators has been in poverty, and they have made it clear that, in the working-classes, wives were quite ignorant of their husbands' earnings. Helen Bosanquet, writing of Shoreditch, said in 1896: "But who that knows the London poor does not also know the feebly apologetic smile with which the woman will say: 'Oh, I don't know what 'e gets; I only know what 'e gives me'?"¹ The numerous poverty surveys which followed hard upon one another all agreed that wives only knew about the 'wages', as they were and still are called, which they received from their husbands. Forty years later, in his second survey of York, Rowntree remarked that "Most of the interviews were with women, and frequently a woman only knows what money her husband gives her, not how much he actually receives."² And not only were the wives ignorant of their husbands' earnings, but they often had to make do on fixed housekeeping allowances which did not rise as the size of their families increased. "An interesting point about housekeeping money is that in the individual family it tends to remain unchanged however wages or family needs may alter. Many women have said that they've had the same allowance since they were first married. They have to meet the needs of five or six people out of, say, £2 10s as they had for two."³ The authors were here speaking

¹ Bosanquet, H., *Rich and Poor*, Macmillan, 1899.

² Rowntree, B. S., *Poverty & Progress*, Longmans Green, 1941. Almost identical statements are made by Caradog Jones, O. (Ed.), *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, Liverpool University Press and Hodder and Stoughton, 1934, and Tout, H., *The Standard of Living in Bristol*, Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1938. For a general discussion see Young, M., *Distribution of Income Within the Family*, British Journal of Sociology, Vol. III, No. 4, December 1952.

³ Soutar, M. S., etc., *Nutrition and Size of Family*, Allen and Unwin, 1942.

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of Birmingham in the 1930s; other investigators in other places reported in the same vein.¹

This was not the end of it. Husbands were not only mean with money, spending on themselves what they should have spent on the home, but, we are told, were in other ways profoundly unsympathetic to the cares and concerns of their women. They were callous in sex, forcing a trail of unwanted pregnancies upon their unwilling mates. They were tyrannical to their children. They were violent when drunk, which was often. Even where their troubles were recognised—the struggle for jobs in the jungle of industry, their exhausting work when they were lucky enough to find it—the investigators still drew attention to their blatant selfishness in the home. A report on Lambeth, another London working-class borough, written over 40 years ago, said:

. . . the separation of interests soon begins to show itself. The husband goes to the same work—hard, long and monotonous—but at least a change from the growing discomfort of the home. He gets accustomed to seeing his wife slave, and she gets accustomed to seeing him appear and disappear on his daily round of work. . . . Her economics interfere with his comfort, and are irksome to him; so he gets out of touch with her point of view. . . . He makes his wife the same allowance and expects the same amount of food. She has more mouths to fill and grows impatient because he cannot understand that, although their first baby did not seem to make much difference, a boy of three, plus a baby, makes the old problem quite a new one.²

¹ See, for instance, Rowntree, B. S. (*op. cit.*); Madge, C., *War-time Pattern of Saving and Spending*, Cambridge University Press, 1943, Zweig, F., *Labour, Life & Poverty*, Gollancz, 1948.

² Reeves, M. S., *Round About a Pound a Week*, Bell, 1913.

Husbands, it appears, could neither understand nor sympathise with the lot of those to whom God had joined them.

PRISONERS TO CHILD-BEARING

There is also the harder evidence of the birth and death rates. Women were compelled to follow what was the most dangerous and painful occupation in the world, knowing all the time that if they survived one childbirth, another would follow. Being prisoners to child-bearing, they could not so easily mend their finances for themselves by going out to work. They lived in the dread that even what support their husbands afforded them might be withdrawn by premature death, or, if not by death, by desertion. Bosanquet, describing family life in the East End, said that "as the children grow older the chances are that the burden of maintaining the family falls entirely upon the mother. . . . It is so easy now for the father to disappear and take up life free of responsibility in some of the many shelters or lodging houses in London."¹ If these were the conditions of life, women were indeed the downtrodden sex.

Even though we may think the accounts overdrawn, and distrust the representativeness of the families they describe, we cannot completely ignore this body of historical evidence, all the more so since it tallies with much that people in our own small enquiry have told us about the past. Women were insecure, we cannot doubt, nor can we doubt that this insecurity had an influence upon the kinship system. When married life is insecure,

¹ Bosanquet, H. (*op. cit.*)

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the wife turns for support to her family of origin. It is, to judge by anthropology, almost a universal rule that when the marriage tie is weak, the blood tie is strong. In a working-class district like East London women could



The wife turns for support to her family of origin

not, for the reasons outlined, rely upon their husbands to stand by them while they reared their children. Death, if nothing else, too often removed the prop. So they had to cling to the families into which they were born, and in particular to their mothers, as the only other means of assuring themselves against isolation. One or other

member of their family would relieve their distress, make them gifts, lend them money and share to some degree in the responsibility for the children. The extended family was the mother's trade union, organised in the main by and for women, its solidarity her protection against the hazards of facing the storm alone. But such defensive action, by a cruel irony, may too easily produce the very result it is designed to guard against. If conscious that the wife's over-riding attachment is to her family of origin, if excluded from the warmth and intimacy of the female circle, resentful husbands are only too likely to react by withdrawing themselves to their own consolations outside the home. The fear of his defection may produce what it fears, insecurity breeds insecurity.¹ In East London, even today, social workers still lay the fault for many desertions and divorces upon Mum's influence, which is sometimes far from benign. This two-way repercussion of insecurity upon kinship is not documented by historical investigation. It is rare to find a

¹ Some of the most extreme examples of the maternal family of Mum, daughters and children are to be found amongst negroes in the West Indies and the Southern States of America, where 'husbands' at one time drifted away as easily as they drifted in. See Henriques, F., *West Indian Family Organisation* and Franklin Frazier, E., *The Negro Family in the United States*, University of Chicago Press, 1939. Henriques says that in Jamaica the monogamous family (as distinct from concubinage, grandmother family and keeper family) only exists where there is "irregularity in the man's employment, which gives to it economic stability" (p. 34). Of another place, an anthropologist has written that "Time and again the instability of Hausa marriage and the high incidence of divorce is seen to be closely linked with the attachment of wives to their kin, an attachment which usually over-rides any fondness they may have for their husbands when they conflict, which frequently happens at the instigation of kinswomen of a senior generation". Smith, M. G., introduction to Smith, M. F., *Baba of Kara*, Faber, 1954.

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mention like Lady Bell's: "The affectionate relation between the young married daughter and her own home, indeed, sometimes causes an additional difficulty, as there are cases where the young wife neglects her own house to go to her mother's".¹

But though we cannot document the process, the witness of our informants leaves no doubt that, here at any rate, insecurity and kinship were inextricably linked. The insecurity of the past has, we believe, given a certain cast to the kinship system which can still be observed, in some families, to the present day.

THE NEW DAY

We must admit the historical evidence. What we are not justified in doing is to confuse past and present in the fantasy that life for manual workers, and their wives, is today the same as that which evoked such righteous horror in Mayhew, Booth and Rowntree. There is no confusion in East London. People are well aware of the change which has come upon them in the course of a few decades. Indeed it is because the comparisons they make between the old and the new are so much a part of their mentality, the source of much present exhilaration and perplexity, and because the influence of the old is so clearly written upon the new, that the contrast properly belongs to an account of the impressions we have formed of present-day life. Let us consider a few instances. The birth rate, for example. The birth rate has fallen, and fallen in East London, as in other predominantly working-class districts, no less dramatically than it has in the

² Lady Bell, *At the Works*, Arnold, 1907.

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country as a whole. Table 1 draws the comparison.¹ It shows the average number of children born to women in our general sample who have been married once and who, being at least aged 45, can be taken to have completed their child-bearing.

TABLE 1: SIZE OF FAMILY
(East London borough and Great Britain)

<i>Date of marriage</i>	<i>East London borough</i>		<i>Great Britain</i>
	<i>Average no. of children</i>	<i>Number of women</i>	<i>Average Number of children²</i>
1900—1909	5.8	18	3.4
1910—1914	3.7	22	2.9
1915—1919	3.4	20	2.5
1920—1924	3.1	24	2.4
1925—1929	2.0	27	2.2

This is the emancipation of women. No longer do they, as one old woman described it, have “one child always at the breast and another in the belly.” It has depended upon a change in the attitude of husbands even more than upon the wives:

“Fifty years ago it was different,” said Mr. Johns, one of our informants, “they had more children than they could afford. The pubs were open all day, so far as I can understand. The man would spend all his money in the pub, come home

¹ The data for our small birth rate enquiry were secured by putting extra questions to women in the general sample who were or had been married. In questionnaire and analysis we followed as closely as possible the methods used in the 1946 Family Census, Glass, D. V., and Grebenik, E., *The Trend and Pattern of Fertility in Great Britain* (Report on the Family Census of 1946, H.M.S.O., 1954.)

² Source: Royal Commission on Population Report, Table XVI, p. 28.

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and abuse his wife. There was no birth control in those days, I know, but even then there were ways and means not to have children if you didn't want to have them. And if the women complained, it was hold your nose and give her another baby, and that's the finish."

Such an attitude still survives. When one husband said in an interview, "We wanted the baby," his wife retorted: "*You* may have done; I know *I* didn't", and when asked later if she wanted more children she said: "I don't want them, but you can't tell. You ought to ask him (pointing at her husband) about that. He's the guv'nor." At another interview there was the following dialogue:

HUSBAND: "The baby was my fault. I was to blame for her."

WIFE: "Yes, you were drunk that night."

HUSBAND: "Oh no, I wasn't. I *decided* we ought to have another."

WIFE: "Go on, that wasn't how it was."

Another woman was persuaded by a local social worker to get herself fitted with a contraceptive cap. Two months later she turned up, pregnant once more. Asked what had happened, she said: "My husband wouldn't have it. He threw it in the fire." The fatalism of the past is still reflected, too, in the expression a woman uses when she is pregnant. She says she has 'fallen'. "We had been married eight months before I fell." "I never thought I'd fall so soon." "Once when I found I'd fallen again I said I'd go somewhere about it, but I didn't bother."

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The point is not that the old behaviour survives but that it is now no longer dominant. The younger husband no longer considers that the children belong exclusively to his wife's world, or that he can abandon them to her (and her mother) while he takes his comfort in the male atmosphere of the pub. He now shares responsibility for the number of children, as well as for their welfare after they are born. More common now is the husband who, like Mr. Rawson, says "We decided we wanted two and that's what we've got. We even planned their names, Kevin and Janice. We didn't start until after the war. Kevin (aged 9) would have been 14 by now if it hadn't been for the war." Or like Mr. Manson: "We don't want only two. I'd like three. So would she, but I say wait and see how we get on—with the money, you know." Or like Mr. Williams: "You can look after two—give them the best of everything. If you've got more, you can't do it. You always want to give your children better than what you had. People are more educated today; they know they can have better if they want to." We asked 43 of the couples in the marriage sample whether they had planned to have their first child when they did, and 28 of them replied that they had.

Or consider the effect of the falling death rate. The following table shows the numbers of people in different age groups whose homes were broken by the death, divorce or separation of their parents while they were still children of dependent age, that is, while they were still under 15 years of age.

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TABLE 2: BROKEN HOMES IN EAST
LONDON BOROUGH

<i>Age-group</i>	<i>Not broken</i>	<i>Broken by Death of Parent(s)</i>	<i>Broken by Divorce or Separation</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
20—34	235 (80%)	55 (19%)	4 (1%)	294
35—49	223 (82%)	47 (17%)	3 (1%)	273
50—64	150 (73%)	55 (26%)	3 (1%)	208
65 & over	101 (69%)	42 (29%)	3 (2%)	146

There has been a substantial fall in the incidence of broken homes, almost entirely as a result of the reduction in the death rate, whose importance quite dwarfs the divorces and separations. And if we consider the experience of the people in their own marriages (as distinct from their parents' marriages), then it is clear that in recent years there has been a further fall in the proportion of parents lost to their children.¹ As a result of this change, caused amongst other things by the lessened slaughter of war and disease, and itself partly the result of the fall in the birth rate, both children and parents enjoy greater emotional and financial security than they did. The benefit to wives is obvious. They are not forced, whatever their inclinations, to depend upon their mothers to the same compulsive extent as they did,² and they can,

¹ For this district we would confirm what Titmuss has said: "It is probable that the proportion of broken marriages under 60, marriages broken by death, desertion and divorce, is, in total, smaller today than at any time this century despite the rise in the number of divorces". Titmuss, R. M., *Millicent Fawcett Lecture*, 1952.

² Other evidence suggests that women with young children and without husbands still do depend heavily on their grandparents, much more often when they are separated or divorced than when they are widowed. See Rowntree, G., *Early Childhood in Broken Families* (Population Studies, Vol. 8, Part 3, March 1955.)

when they marry and have children, look forward with rather more certainty to continuing support from their husbands.

THE HOUSING CHANGE

Another big change is in housing. Many homes in East London are still deplorable, but in the old days they were almost universally so and far more overcrowded, uncomfortable and dirty, more often than not being shared with other families. Damp washing draped in front of the kitchen range, teeming children and a tired and disgruntled wife were all that awaited most men after a long and hard day's work. The men's refuge was the "conversation, warmth and merriment of the beer shop, where they can take their ease among their mates."¹ For many men the bar in the pub was as much a part of their living space as the room in their home, with the difference that one was more or less reserved for members of their own sex, which the other was not.² The 'rent' of a seat at the pub, measured in glasses of beer, was so much greater than that of a seat at home that the housekeeping allowance had to suffer. "From the home point of view there was no enjoyment at all for the man," said Mr. Whittle, "so when he did get a bit of money he tended to go round to the pub and spend it there." Mr. Dorking remembered his own father:

¹ Mayhew, H., *London Labour and the London Poor*, G. Woodfall & Sons, 1851.

² Pubs still have a predominantly male clientèle. The working-men's licensed club in our borough does not admit women or children on Sunday mornings. "It's bad enough letting them in here at all," one man told us, "surely we can keep them out one day in the week."

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“My Dad used to say: ‘I’m the man of the house. Here’s my money. And if anyone wants me, you know where I am—in the pub.’ ”

Since then standards have risen. For one thing, fewer families have to share houses. In 1931 there were three households to every two dwellings; 20 years later there were five households to every four dwellings. New building, the higher earnings which have made it possible to afford higher rents, and the great migration have given more immediate families a home to themselves. And within the home, whether shared or not, living space is less cramped than it used to be. In 1911 one out of every three people in our borough lived more than two to a room, and by 1931 one out of every four was still doing so. By 1951 the proportion as overcrowded as this was only three in 100. In these 20 years, though the number of rooms in the borough was much the same, the population was halved by migration. Today home is less overcrowded and more comfortable. The pubs are still there in quantity, one to every hundred dwellings, but all the publicans lament the loss of trade. The men do not go so often. Instead they stay at home with wife and children. “If they want a drink of beer now,” said one woman, “they go and fetch a bottle in, so they can watch the telly at the same time.”

Or consider the effect of the fall in working hours. Men used once to work all the hours there were. Mayhew’s omnibus driver who worked 12 hours a day, seven days a week, was no exception 100 years ago, and even 50 years ago the working week was still very long. The reduction after 1918, and even more after 1945, has made a difference to every family. The spread of the five-day

week, moreover, has created the 'week-end', a new term and a new experience, for the working-man. With it has come the strange new sight of young fathers wheeling prams on a Saturday morning, taking their little daughters for a row on the lake and playing with their sons on the putting green:

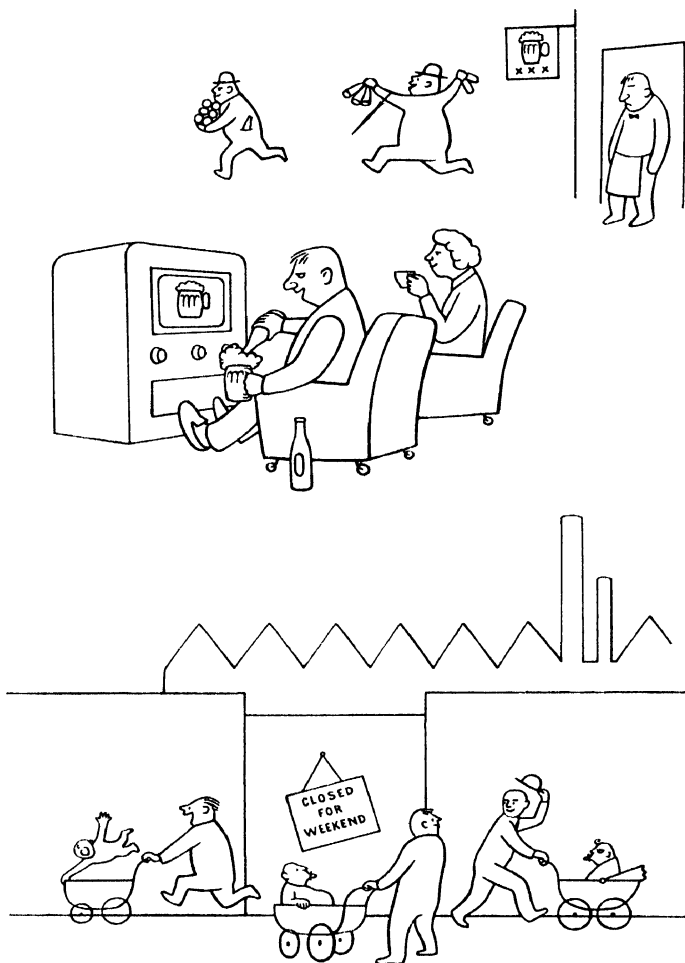
"One good thing," said Mr. Townsend, "is that we have much shorter hours now than before the war. I'm all for the five-day week—the 40-hour week. I remember my father used to work 72 hours one week and 60 the next. He was on shifts. The week he did the longer hours was in the day. We didn't see anything of him. I was in bed when he got back at night. People get more time with their families now."

His role as a worker no longer prevents the man from also being a husband and a father. He does not need to reproduce at home the harshness by which he was once treated by his boss in the savage world of work; he has more time; he has more energy; he is more considerate.

THE EMERGING PARTNERSHIP

Number of children, length of life, commodiousness of houses, arduousness of work—how could families, and especially husbands, be the same after all these changes? We do not want to overdo it—these changes have not worked a revolution. New couples live close to parents where ideas were formed before the great depression. History has its influence through the parents. In a place characterised by continuity of family residence there cannot be a complete break with the customary outlook

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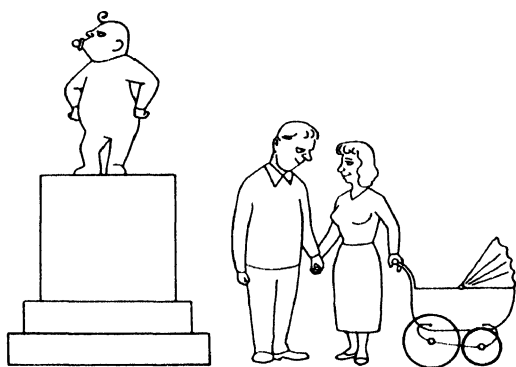


Leisure and pleasure shared at home

of the past, and this even though the *Daily Mirror*, the cinema, the radio and now the television are constantly introducing new influences into the local culture. The old segregation of man and woman has not ended yet. It accounts for one of the defects of our enquiry. We began our interviews by asking about husbands' earnings. But it soon became clear that many wives still do not know what their husbands' wages are. "Who that knows the London poor"—Helen Bosanquet would still recognise the apologetic smile. And if, in our search for reliable facts, we asked the husbands in the presence of their wives (in practice it is impossible in this kind of research to see the husband alone, since when he is in, in the evening, so is she) for the figure of their earnings, some of them either mentioned a sum suspiciously round and general or became obviously embarrassed. Even when we asked wives, when themselves seen alone in the daytime, they were sometimes taken aback. "Oh no, he wouldn't want me to say anything about his wages. That's his business." The older men and women were less forthcoming than the younger. Since we did not want to offset any slight value the results of the research might have by creating discord between our informants we decided that we could not properly continue to ask questions about earnings. Even if we had persisted we could not have trusted the accuracy of the answers. Our only finding is a negative one—we have no reason to believe that the ignorance mentioned so often by Rowntree and the others responsible for the poverty surveys is markedly less than it was in the past.

Yet in other respects we cannot reconcile our impressions with the stereotype of the working-class hus-

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Father was once a figure of terror

band. The tradition may still be strong that the man's earnings are his affair, but when it comes to the spending of the money, his part of the wages as well as hers, husband and wife share the responsibility. "To be truthful," said Mrs. Sanderson, one of those interviewed before we dropped the question, "to be truthful, I don't know how much he earns, I only know what he gives me." But she later went on to describe the discussion she and her husband had recently had about whether to buy a television set, which he would pay for, and to mention that "My husband does a lot of the cooking; he's a good cook." In the home there are still 'men's jobs' like cleaning windows, mending fuses and decorating, and 'women's jobs' like cleaning, cooking, baby care, washing dishes and clothes, and ironing. There are still plenty of men who will not do 'women's work' and women who think "it's not a man's place to do it." But for most people, it seems, the division is nowadays not a rigid one. Thirty-two of the 45 husbands gave some regular help to their wives with the housework; 29 had, to take an index trivial enough in itself but perhaps significant, done the washing up one or more times during the previous week. Booth and Rowntree do not mention men washing up.

"IT'S ALL FOR THE KIDDIES"

The sharing of responsibility is nowhere more obvious than over the children. The father was once a figure of terror.

"There's certainly been a change. I whack mine now, but not the beatings like we used to have. When I was a boy most

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of us feared our fathers more than we liked them. I know I feared mine and I had plenty of reason to."

"In the old days the fathers were quite different. Children were supposed to speak when they were spoken to and Bob's your uncle. My father was a dictator and my mother just had to trail along. As long as they brought the wages home, there their responsibility ended."

"I had a very strict father although he drank. When I came home from school at dinner-time he put me to work making the dolls. I had a long loose frock put over my other clothes to keep them clean so that the work would be hidden from the school. When I got back again at tea-time he started me on it all again until seven, when I went to bed. On Saturday nights we had to crawl under the table to get out of his way."

Nowadays fathers as well as mothers take a hand in the care of the children. "It used to be thought very undignified for men to have anything to do with children. You'd never see a man wheeling a pram or holding a baby. Of course, all that's changing now." He no longer automatically gets the first pick of everything. "Dad used to be very strict with us," said Mrs. Black, "we're different with our boy. We make more of a mate of him. When I was a kid Dad always had the best of everything. Now it's the children who get the best of it. If there's one pork chop left, the kiddy gets it." Schools no longer have Boots Funds for barefoot schoolchildren,¹ because

¹ "Thus, in 1938, the London County Council's school nurses found that the clothing and footwear of elementary school children was 54.6 per cent good, 45.1 per cent fair and 0.3 per cent poor. A study of the returns for individual metropolitan boroughs discloses a very low proportion of 'good' ratings in certain areas, notably Bethnal Green 7 per cent, Poplar 13 per cent and Stepney 13 per cent". Titmuss, R. M., *Problems of Social Policy*, H.M.S.O. and Longmans, 1950.

fathers as well as mothers not only have more money, but take a pride in their children's turn-out.

Fathers as well as mothers now share in the hopes and plans for their children's future. They now both have an interest in education, which was once the prerogative of the mother alone if it existed at all. More parents are keen, not just that their children shall get a job, but get a better job, and school, no longer a somewhat regrettable whim of the State, is increasingly seen as a means to this end. Parents who want their children to enter white-collar occupations know that a grammar school is the essential qualification, and one which is no longer quite beyond their reach. Here are some of the things that fathers said to us about their sons—educational aspirations for daughters are as yet more rare.

"I'd like him to take up chemistry. It's completely unproductive and therefore well paid."

"I want the boy to be a doctor or a farmer, not to work in a factory or be a porter like me."

"I don't want him to be in manual work. I'd sooner he worked with his brains than his hands."

Such ambitions, perhaps themselves the source of new strains and disappointments, are not, of course, held by everyone. We did, in our small enquiry, repeat an earlier national study of the prestige-ranking given to occupations by people who were predominantly non-manual workers, with the difference that our informants were nearly all manual workers. We found that a sizeable minority of men took a very different view from the white-collar people, placing jobs such as company director and chartered accountant towards the bottom of

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the ladder and manual jobs like agricultural labourer, coal-miner and bricklayer towards the top. Business managers were regarded with disfavour because "They're not doing anything. They get their money for walking around", and as for civil servants—"I could find other ways of using my money." Agricultural labourers, on the other hand, were valued highly because "you can't do without grub", coal-miners because "without coal, industry stops", and bricklayers because "you've got to have food and after that you've got to have houses". But even some of the men who took this, the traditional working-class view, were anxious that their children should get as good an education as possible at a technical or other school. We asked the parents with children under 11 what sort of secondary school they wanted the eldest to go to and 25 of the 43 fathers, as well as the mothers, wanted a grammar or technical school, anything other than what one woman called the 'ordinary'.

THE NEW MAN-AND-WIFE PARTNERSHIP

We cannot but conclude that for these reasons—and if we pick out one dominant change which is as much symptom as cause, it would be the birth rate—the old style of working-class family is fast disappearing. The husband portrayed by previous social investigation is now only a stereotype. The tyrant has gone. In place of the old comes a new kind of partnership, a new kind of companionship, between man and wife, reflecting the rise in the status of the young wife and of the children which is the great transformation of our time. There is now a nearer approach to equality between the sexes, and though

each has its own peculiar role, its boundaries are no longer so rigidly defined nor is it performed without consultation. Husband and wife are now partners in more than name.

Earlier on we drew an analogy between kinship and trade union. One, we said, was needed to protect the woman, the other to protect the man, from insecurity. If we are right in our analysis, the woman, being more secure within it, no longer needs the same degree of protection from outside her marriage. But this is not to say that the kinship group, consisting of grandparents, uncles and aunts, and grown-up brothers and sisters, has lost all its purpose. In this new East London it still has functions to perform. To pursue the analogy, we should say that its development has been the opposite of that of the trade unions. They began by being friendly societies for mutual aid of all kinds between their members as well as protective organisations, but in the course of time, as the Welfare State has grown, the first function has become less and the second more important. With the kinship group, by contrast, protection has given way to the friendly society. This friendly society still yields advantages in sociability, mutual aid and sympathy which most of the women of this district, at any rate, are loth to lose, advantages which are by no means incompatible with the new kind of marriage partnership.

EDWARD BLISHEN

*

“THE LAST REFUGE OF FAMILY
FEELING”

THE SCHOOL

STONEHILL STREET is not an exceptional district. It is one of the results of that urbanisation of England that took little account of anything but the most essential needs of an expanding economy. A tangle of ill-natured streets, it is almost without trees, and you must hunt hard in it if you would find a flower. The homes of the Stonehill Street people are either long sooty terraces of nineteenth-century ‘workmen’s dwellings’; or hideous high houses where once the Pooters lived, now much subdivided; or yellowing pre-fabs; or huge and strictly utilitarian blocks of flats.

If you look down on it from the pleasant groves of Plush Park—which a geographical irony has placed next to it—you will notice that the district is dominated by a belfry: one that, as it happens, is now mute. You will be looking at Stonehill Street Secondary Modern School. It is many things: a building expressive of what can only be

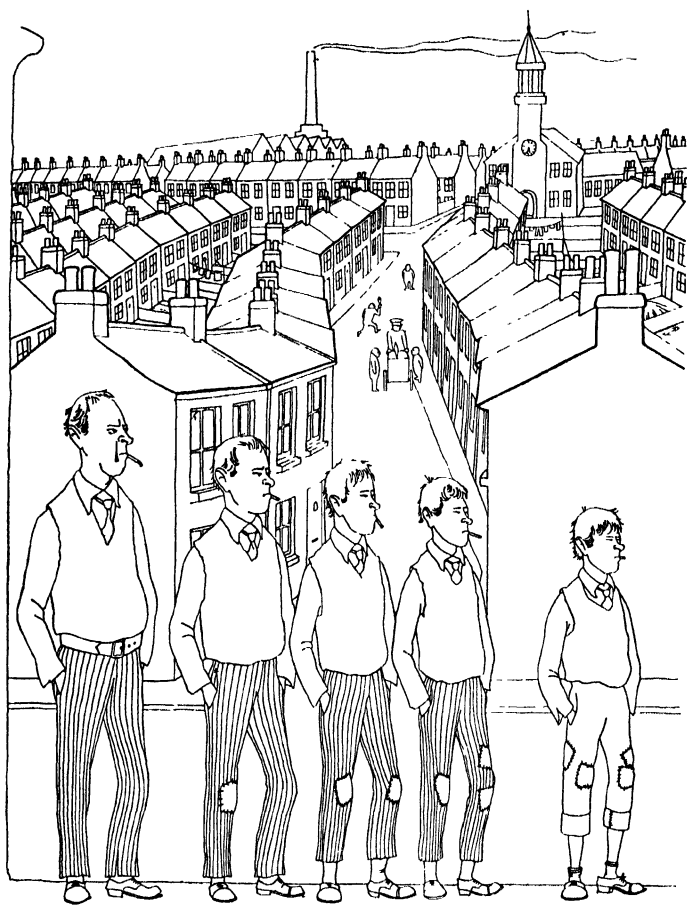
called architectural surliness, a 'dustbin' (its local nickname), a roaring, blundering institution that the grave gentlemen who conduct the Plush Park Grammar School might be hard put to it to recognise as a school at all. It is also, so far as much of Stonehill Street is concerned, the last refuge of family feeling.

THE UN-CHILDREN

Let me explain what I mean by describing Perksie: who always kicks every desk as he walks across a classroom, just to show where he stands. His real name is Perks; but his nature is Perksie—'ol' Perksie'. Very ol' Perksie; he is 14 but he might well be 40. He has never been a child. To see him and his three brothers and his father together is to see five fathers—or five sons; they all look the same—big sulky creatures neither child nor adult. The only difference between them is that Perksie père is definitely the ruler. He rules with his belt and his fist. Family conversation, consisting of growls, never for long manages to keep amiable. Fist and belt are always in play. Perks once told me about it. "My dad?" he said, with a not particularly accusatory grin: "'E's always bashing us. Fer nothing." It wasn't a complaint; the complaining is done by what Perksie *is*. Bullied himself, he bullies others. Himself unable to make headway against an adult who uses belt and fist, he is ready to take his revenge on any adult whose methods of discipline are gentler. He is a terror to fresh teachers; and older hands don't really know what to do about him.

So far as Perksie is concerned, the family is a punitive organisation. Such fatherly services as he ever obtains—

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They all look the same

in the happier sense—come to him from teachers. As a teacher, one must be Perksie's father.

Like the district, Perksie is not unique. Indeed, when I think of the boys I have taught, it is he who seems to represent so many of them. Somehow, very few have ever been children. Even in their dress they are not children. They wear labourers' jeans, or very sad old flannel suits, and many of them would do anything to avoid wearing a school cap. ("We ain't college boys," they say.) They have no child's liking for bright colour in the dress. They belong to a world in which everyone is indifferently an adult of some kind. Their culture is shared with the grown-ups: television, cinema, the semi-pornographic week-end papers.

Listen, for a moment, to their talk: to that shouting, jeering, never quietly enthusing talk of theirs that makes so pitifully plain the pattern of their lives.

"I'm going to see that X tonight," bawls Johnson.

"What! Pictures!" cries Turpin. "You want to come out with us, boy. Round the streets. Fun, that is. Every night we do. Knock up some birds we know. Throw stones at their windows. You ought to see." In his attempt to convince Johnson, Turpin kicks his friend heavily on the ankle.

THE HOMES

"The other night!" says Johnson, anxious to justify himself, to show that he isn't just an intellectual softie who spends every evening watching X certificate films, "you should have seen. Load of us round the flats. An ol' girl was going up the stairs. Every time she comes to a

"The Last Refuge of Family Feeling"



A crowded, angry place

landing—cor, laugh!—ol' Smithie lets out a roar. Cor, you should 'ave seen 'er jump! Lets out a roar, 'e does, an' the ol' girl jumps!"

With dismay you listen, trying to imagine the homes that allow their children to live like this. You ask Turpin if he never spends an evening indoors, reading or talking, and he looks at you with tolerant scorn. "What!" he says, "in our 'ouse!"

No: 'our 'ouse' is a crowded, angry place—something to get out of. In 'our 'ouse' the great thing is to grow up quickly, quickly; to avoid being a child at all. When these boys are thirteen they begin to hasten the process. You notice it first by the change in their hair. Suddenly it is very long; great wings of it have to be accommodated on the sides of the head, sometimes meeting on the crown. These wings, so heavy and so likely to collapse, have continually to be scooped back into position. Suddenly you realise that your class looks like the cast of *The Vagabond King* in mufti. Suddenly you realise too that some of the smaller boys have become quite grotesque, weighed down by their surpluses of hair. You feel moved almost to offer them support. And at times you look up during a lesson and see furtive combing going on at the back of the room, one boy barbering another.

And then come the duffel coats. There's the day when the vagabond heads suddenly merge, from the collar downwards, into pure quarterdeck. And Smith's small grubby face grins at you, proud and bashful, from a monkish cowl. And they swagger, putting into their swagger all their hatred of childishness and school, all their longing to be seen as part of the undifferentiated adulthood of Stonehill Street.

"The Last Refuge of Family Feeling"

It comes to this: that many homes are less harsh than Perksie's, but that nearly all of them are opposed to the child, as such. The child is a nuisance. School is a nuisance because it is devoted to the idea of childhood as an important process. Stonehill Street longs for its children to be 15.

I would say that for one in three of these children no adult has really cared. Cared, that is, steadily and thoughtfully and responsibly. Instead, it is a matter of angry commands or indifference. Again and again I have noticed that when a boy is writing family dialogue in a composition, it is all gruff growling: all "Do this!" and "Do that!" and "I've told you not to!" and "I'll knock your block off!" As for indifference, every teacher in every Stonehill Street knows of many cases where a father or mother has been genuinely unaware that a child was playing truant; sometimes for weeks on end. The adult goes on in his engrossed narrow way and there just isn't room in that way for all the complications and all the demands for restraint and thought that a child represents.

And that is why, for many of its children, the Stonehill Street school is a last refuge of family feeling; for there only is effective concern shown for their destiny.

THE MOTHERS

"He's rude to me," Simpson's mother said, echoing many of the Stonehill Street mothers. Observers have been known to deduce from the commonness of this cry that the Stonehill Street children are lacking in gratitude. They take their parents for granted. They are a bad generation. And so on. But the truth is that many of

them do not lack gratitude, but lack reasons for gratitude. I knew a headmaster of a Stonehill Street-type school who used to say that his first task with most parents was to persuade them to think, not of themselves, but of their children. "I can't put up with him no more!" "He drives me frantic." "I dunno why he's like it, and, honest, I can't be bothered with it no longer." What is plain from all these statements—made again and again in the Stonehill Street corridors—is that the lives of the parents who make them have never really been arranged to include children. For them, children are penalties imposed on married pleasure. One hasn't to work in Stonehill Street for long to be quite sure that many of its men and women are too indifferent and clumsy, too hopelessly uninformed, to take into account the responsibilities that may spring from that pleasure. In a neighbourhood that is itself a product of the worst period of thoughtless expansion in our history, they lead their unplanned lives; and their children come upon them as unlucky harassments. That is the cruelty that lies behind stories like Simpson's. And that is why a boy like Simpson can be driven to tears by a gentle word from a teacher when all the words in the world from members of his own family will leave him hard and obstinate and untouched. A teacher may be the only person in his life who shows a disinterested care for his welfare or a delight in his nascent abilities; he may also be the only person who doesn't approach the boy in a mood of acute irritation.

"*Always* rude to me," Simpson's mother cried; and it struck me then that, in a school where rudeness was not exactly unknown, Simpson had never been rude to me once. Indeed, a phrase that I should have had to use in

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any official description of the boy would have been, "Very polite". And it wasn't a discreet politeness for school use only; he was naturally good-mannered. As a matter of fact, having seen a conversation between parents and son that Simpson had once written, I could only marvel that his mother was able to distinguish one strand of rudeness among so many. An inflamed dissatisfaction with one another was the common mood of the whole Simpson family. Sometimes it has seemed to me that it is the common mood of the whole of Stonehill Street.

Beyond all doubt, the intractability of most of Stonehill Street's bad children is caused largely by the undue antagonisms they are called upon to face in homes where anger is the only known solvent of problems. Because they live in angry families, among angry neighbours, they become angry themselves; and so they inspire anger in ever wider circles—in the schools, in the community as a whole. If I were asked what was common to all except a few who appear to be innately ill-natured, I would say it was *soreness*. The problem, for those who deal with them, is how to mollify this soreness without merely pandering to them. It is a problem that calls, and only too often in vain, for all one's patience, tenderness and ability to resist the authoritarian not only in other people but in oneself. It's so easy to feel that Perksie ought to be beaten, that Turpin must be shouted at, that the thing to do with Simpson is coldly to disapprove of him. But the fact is that nearly all of these children become quiet, ordinary, un-angry human beings if you exclude from your manner every hint of censure or of hostility in reserve. Perksie himself is tractable enough, and will even

settle down to work, if you shed every sign of readiness to be angry with him. It means you must swallow much. You must not be horrified if, as the crocodile he is leading nears the school on its return from some expedition, he



Let's look through this for some dolls

says: "Cor, that bleedin' place—makes me shudder every time I see it!" You must be prepared to smile if, having found in the art room the remains of an old history of art, he says loudly to his neighbour: "Oi, muggins! Let's look through this for some dolls!" You have to smile and be gentle and interested and helpful, because it is precisely the absence of that sort of approach that has made Perksie what he is. . . . He and all the other

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children like him are starved of association with people (especially in their own families) who are unlikely to quarrel with them.

THE FAMILIES

There was always a Simpson in the school, and usually a Perks. Not a few of the Stonehill Street families are large—so large that, each passing through the school one



"Yes, they'll be coming to you, sir, too"

boy at a time, they give a teacher the feeling that he has been caught up in several simultaneous three-generation novels, somewhat accelerated. There is always, for instance, a Doxey. One morning I met our current Doxey on the way to school, and clinging to his hand was a junior Doxey, with an infant Doxey clinging to *his*. "My goodness, Doxey!" I said, and he gave me a look of very deep sympathy and said: "Yes, they'll be coming to you, sir, too." Whereupon I asked about the Doxey who'd just gone into the Army and the Doxey about to be married and I thought of their mother, bright, harassed Mrs. Doxey to whom children occurred with such wearisome facility; though one couldn't imagine *when* they occurred, since she was always to be seen bustling off somewhere, off to do some cleaning or some minding of other people's sparser babies, anything to keep somehow afloat with a colony rather than a family dependent on her. They are pleasant, the Doxeys, for they've all inherited Mrs. Doxey's busy sharpness of mind and her air of fatigued half-amusement. But they seem to know how much easier life would be were there fewer of them. They have the look of people in a crowded railway carriage who see newcomers squeezing in at every stop.

The Crosses are not so pleasant; of them there are even more; and they are dim and crushed by incessant duplication. They are never very clean; and one has only to imagine what it is like in the small Cross home in the mornings to understand *that*. I never learned (any more, I think, than they did) to distinguish one Cross from another. If they were not pleasant it was because, with the best will in the world, one couldn't feel much warmth—only great pity—for children so faded, so tired and

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grey. Thinking of the Doxeys, one admired them for the vitality with which they fought their losing battles; but thinking of the Crosses, one felt only bitter impatience that so many suffering creatures should emerge in *that* pattern.

One doesn't often see parents *en masse* in Stonehill Street—but there is an occasional evening meeting at the school. I had a colleague who used to look forward to these meetings with fierce hopefulness. Now, surely, he would come face to face with the parents of a boy called Grimes, who could do nothing right because, quite patently, he had always been told at home that he did everything wrong. "If ever a boy has been crushed . . ." my colleague used to murmur. "Oh, I'm looking forward to telling those two a few home truths." This, alas, he was never to do. The Grimeses never came. With few exceptions, the parents we really wanted to see, the parents of all the difficult and daunted boys, never came.

The result was that one had an absurd affection for the good parents. I was always pleased even to see Mrs. Pribble, who never allowed us to remain in ignorance for one moment of the moral fluctuations of her son's character. "Oh," she would say, meeting me at the school gate of a morning, "I'm ever so worried about Tom's getting so dirty. I'm sure he don't wash properly before he comes to school—and he's getting that big, I can't rightly do nothing about it . . ." Tom had never seemed to me anything but outstandingly clean. I would tell her so and she would go away happy, not having really been bothered about his cleanliness, but wanting always to keep in touch, to show that she was a 'good mother'. And a good mother she was—even if rather an oppressive

one. For all her nervous over-enthusiasm, she had *chosen* to have her children—Tom had a sister—and she had *chosen* to care for them. The eccentric forms taken by her carefulness were due probably to her dread of becoming like so many of her neighbours. . . . One morning I had left her (“Tom’s awfully upset he can’t get to school, but I’ve been up with him all night—his temperature was 200 this morning, awful”) and I was joined by a colleague. “Mrs. Pribble again,” he sighed, “that woman . . .!” “That woman?” I said. He sighed again. “You’re right,” he said. “Rather a hundred Mrs. Pribbles than one Mrs. Grimes.”

You hadn’t to work long in Stonehill Street before you could tell, without reference to record cards, which were, like Tom Pribble, the wanted children: the children who, being happy at home, had no need to hurl themselves against the school in puzzled anger and frustration. It is the parents of one of these boys who typify, for me, those evening meetings. The first time I saw them I knew they were Hutchings’s father and mother: just as, seeing the figures six and three, you would think of two. Like the boy’s, their noses twitched self-deprecatingly, their voices were soft; and they wanted to know at once whether their son ought to be, as he was, in an A class. Was he really good enough? Each of these modest persons had a turn at asking this question, and then each took refuge in the other, their noses twitching and their smiles apologetic. I couldn’t answer for a moment because I had to find some quiet paraphrase for the reply that was jubilantly uttering itself in my head. Was he *good* enough? Were they *good* enough? There being no way of saying what I wanted to say, I rushed them into a classroom where tea was being

"The Last Refuge of Family Feeling"

served and secured for each of them two of the very best cakes available.

THE FOSTER FAMILIES

But they are rare, the Hutchingses and the Pribbles. They are rare, the small, deliberate, manageable, carefully managed families. Inside those dingy little terrace houses, those big unprivate blocks of flats, every kind of family distortion is to be found. There are the children who live with their grandmothers, or with one parent and a grandparent, or with a grandparent pretending to be a parent, or with an aunt, or with some indefinite relative for whom the title of aunt has been chosen. There are the children who are the only legitimate members of their families, and the children who are the only illegitimate members of their families, and the children whose parents keep drifting apart and coming together again. Teaching in Stonehill Street, you are never able to forget these often tortuously complicated causes of insecurity that lie behind the backward pen, the inattentive face, the trouble-maker and the child who sits at the back of the room and, terribly, does nothing at all, is just grey and silent.

In the teachers' room there are often to be heard outbursts of anger against bad parents. Yet few teachers would doubt that the prime cause of this awful ruining of children is not the bad parent—not even Mr. Perks, with his belt, or Mr. Simpson, with his indifference—but the social condition that produces him: the accumulated ignorance and insensitivity of Stonehill Street itself. To work there is to be made to feel how helpless most of its people are; they form a pocket of intense social back-

wardness, where it is unsafe to assume that anything whatever is known or understood. And one of the ironies of our time is that popular media of entertainment and of quasi-information—the radio, the cinema and some newspapers—enable the people of Stonehill Street to *appear* to participate in the general culture of the nation, so that the true extent of their backwardness is concealed. What they acquire, in fact, is knowingness without knowledge. In their children this is to be seen *raw*: their knowingness is horrible, the thinness of their knowledge pitiable. Many of them simply do not know enough to be able to grapple with ordinary day-to-day problems. A teacher in Stonehill Street learns that, if he is to say anything to a child, he must say everything. There can be no assumption of general knowledge.

DISTRUST OF EDUCATION

All this would be bad enough even were it not accompanied, as it is, by a profound hostility towards education as a means of acquiring knowledge: at best, acute distrust of it. And here we encounter the terrible vicious circle that spells early grey hairs for so many Stonehill Street teachers. Handicapped by being born in a neighbourhood where knowledge and understanding are not easily acquired, the children soon come to feel intellectually incapable; so that they quickly pick up that hatred of learning and thinking that was the cause of their own handicap. In Stonehill Street it sometimes seems impossible that there is a way out of this closed circle. Then it is—on a Friday night, possibly—that a teacher becomes a nihilist. He dreams of clean sheets and fresh starts, and

"The Last Refuge of Family Feeling"

as he walks homeward through the district he thinks of gunpowder.

For how, he wonders, can these children of incapable parents be prevented from becoming incapable parents themselves?

THE 'PANGLOSSY' REPORT

What is to be done about Stonehill Street: about its inefficient families, and the mentally and emotionally stunted children they produce?

First, the problem must be properly understood. This is made difficult by the fact that, even in the middle of the twentieth century, a district like Stonehill Street is virtually *terra incognita* to the people who live outside it. Everyone who has worked in such a district has known what it is to have his most commonplace anecdotes about life there received incredulously by his middle-class friends. The problem must be understood in terms of pity and of a sensible determination that things must change; not in terms of scandal and revulsion.

I believe that, in obtaining an alteration in the terms in which the problem is understood by laymen, the official ought to play a greater part than he does. Most teachers in districts like Stonehill Street are restively aware of a gulf between their own appraisal of the situation and that of the administrator. Alas, it is the instinct of the administrator to minimise the statement of difficulties; his aim is the Panglossy report; his desire is to say that all is well, or is very much better than it was. Cries of horror do not come naturally to officials. But horror is a strictly suitable reaction to much of what goes on in Stonehill Street, and it ought to find its way into official utterances.

Edward Blishen

It should not be left to amateurs to point out what social misery still hangs like a fog about our bright new world.

Second, the physical disappearance of our Stonehill Streets must be hastened. Those who cry that delinquency and family unhappiness are primarily, or even largely, affairs of the spirit ought to be made to live for a while in Perksie's dark little house, or in those mammoth blocks of flats in which, never free from one another, the Simpsons and the Dokeys and the Crosses exist. They ought at least to be made to walk through Stonehill Street in the evening and to ask themselves how valiant the spirit must be that could withstand the pressure of so much urban sordidness. Then they might pass into Plush Park, where still a few Georgian squares linger, where the villas, if dull, are neat and clean, where there are green spaces and bright shops. To some degree or other Plush Park was thought out, some sense of orderliness went into it; so that at least some suggestion of the need for thought, some idea of order, is in its very air. In the air of Stonehill Street is only the idea of plain dreary ugliness, only the suggestion that life can be utterly and bleakly thoughtless.

Finally, the fact ought to be faced that much really savage suffering occurs in mid-twentieth-century England because unwanted or half-wanted children are produced by parents who, in very many cases, simply do not *know* how to choose for themselves a suitable family pattern; who, many of them, do not even know how to set a manageable limit to their families. Their view of sex rests on a handful of untender words. Their view of family responsibility is less clear than perhaps it has been to any social group in history.

J. M. MACKINTOSH

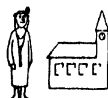
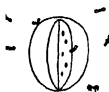
CHANGING ATTITUDES WITHIN
THE FAMILY

THE ROLE OF 'PUBLIC HEALTH'

IN A RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK¹ it is suggested that death control should proceed hand-in-hand with birth control. "The latter step," the authors say, "involves many practical difficulties, above all, great cultural adjustments; but none of them need be found insuperable provided one assumes—and experience of death control and technical assistance entitles one to assume—that mankind can be persuaded in the long run to follow a given course of action if it is plainly shown that it is necessary, practical, and just."

In most countries death control has been first in the field, usually long before the notion of birth control has reached the level of national consciousness, let alone approval. One result of this has been an ever-accelerating increase in world population before any restrictive measures have been made effective. Further, death control, whether through the elimination of certain

¹ PEP: *World Population and Resources*, Allen and Unwin, 1955.



widely-spread diseases or the promotion of positive health, is generally regarded as beneficial, while its companion is looked upon with suspicion, if not hostility, as a usurper of Nature's laws. Many widely publicised theories lie behind this—religious, military, political, and economic—but generally the immediate and most powerful motive lies deep within family life.

Many books have been written on the subject of population since Malthus created a stir at the end of the eighteenth century by arguing the need for restraint. In recent years the most comprehensive reports dealing with individual countries (*e.g.*, Sweden and Great Britain) have reflected anxiety about a fall in the average size of the family. Reports dealing with the *world* situation, however, express something like alarm over the prospect of uncontrolled growth, especially in countries generally regarded as underdeveloped.

In Great Britain the campaign for death control—the struggle for public health—opened as early as 1838. Within a generation the most villainous of Death's highwaymen, cholera and typhus, had been overcome. Meanwhile the population increased at an inordinate speed, mainly because of the higher survival rate of children in the large Victorian families. To account for this increase the economic gain to be derived from children was a factor to which considerable importance was attached, as it still is in some of the less industrialised countries of the world. The early age at which children could add to the meagre family earnings might have led to a conscious effort on the part of families to have children galore. This, at any rate, was the view taken by the Hammonds in their great book, *The Town Labourer*. It was

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tempting to project this as a motive; but only a few years earlier it was commonly believed that the allowance system, based on the number of children in the family, was a major factor in the rapid increase of the population. Yet in the Northern counties—which were almost free from the taint of the notorious ‘Speenhamland decision’—the increase in population was substantially greater than in the heavily affected South. Arguing from the ideals of a group accustomed to thinking ahead, we tend to lay too much stress on conscious effort.

On the other hand, two changes took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which would be likely to affect the birth rate in any epoch, whether the people had some capacity for planning or not. The first of these was the enclosure of common land and the engrossment of farms, which altered the status of the agricultural worker from resident to day labourer. This led to earlier marriage. In the rising industrial towns a similar result was achieved by the decay of the apprenticeship system—a process accentuated by the rapid development of factories. The second change was associated with the housing situation. Even in the early nineteenth century efforts to keep down the poor rates in parishes led to the destruction of many cottages, so much so that the Poor Law Report of 1840 admitted that marriages were regulated more by cottage room than by any administration of the Poor Laws. In the old days the farm labourers lived in, almost as members of the family; but the disappearance of the small farmer forced them out, to find a wife and a cottage of some sort as soon as they began to earn. In this way rural slum-building was stimulated, and the young couples set out with dismal omens.

A similar process took place in the towns, where the spawning of factories let loose a flood of uncontrolled slum-building. The factory workers began to earn their full wage when hardly out of adolescence, and often from the age of 18 years "assumed the most important office of manhood at the earliest age which nature or passion prompted."¹ In this connexion it is interesting to notice that Malthus in his use of the term 'moral restraint' was thinking mainly of postponement of marriage. It is also worth observing that in the year 1949 Lewis-Faning, reporting on family limitation to the Royal Commission on Population, refers to early marriage as one of the most important causes of the large family; and the Commission itself adopts this view. It is certain, at any rate, that the increase in the size of families at that time was not concerned with health in a positive sense or with better living conditions; and I doubt very much whether the economic value of children was seriously considered by young people on the threshold of marriage. It is equally clear that an advance in the standard of living, whether through increased wages, better food, or improved housing, tends to reduce the number of children in the family. Beatrice Webb put this point neatly:²

To one who had been brought up in the political economy of Malthus, and taught to believe that every increment of income and security would inevitably be accompanied by additional children in working-class families, it was disconcerting to discover that the greater the poverty and over-

¹ Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1840, p. 688. H.M.S.O.

² Webb, Beatrice, *My Apprenticeship*, Chap. V, Longmans Green, 1926.

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crowding, and especially the greater the insecurity of livelihood, the more reckless became the breeding of children; whilst every increment in income, and especially every rise in the regularity and security of the income in working-class families, was found to be accompanied, according to the statistics, by a more successful control of the birth rate.

QUALITY VERSUS QUANTITY

Similar experiences have been repeated again and again in countries in which the standard of living has risen to any considerable extent, especially when the advance has been associated with improved education and better means of securing the healthy survival of children. In other words, these improvements are reasons, not for having more children, but for giving better care and attention to the right number. The planning motive is strengthened when good results can be foreseen, when the parents know that their effort in home-making is worth-while.

The year 1870 was a turning point in the history of the population of Britain. During the eighteenth century the population grew steadily, mainly because of a fall in the death rates. From about 1800 onwards a striking acceleration took place, to as much as 10 per cent in 10 years. During the last quarter of the century the growth began to slacken. Couples married in the mid-Victorian era produced on the average 5.5 to 6 live-born children. Among the couples married in 1925 the figure may be estimated at 2.2. This reduction has been achieved by the substitution of one- and two-child families for families of five, six, or seven children as the common sizes, and the virtual disappearance of families of more than six children.

The Royal Commission on Population,¹ in giving these figures, discusses very fully the causes of the fall in family size. It concludes that there is no positive evidence of a decline in reproductive capacity and that the main cause of this fall, and very probably the only cause, was the spread of deliberate family limitation. This view is, of course, reinforced by the fact that the decline began with the higher occupational groups and spread most quickly among them. Among couples married between 1900 and 1930 the families of manual workers have consistently been about 40 per cent larger than those of non-manual workers, the average for the most recent groups being 2.5 and 1.7 respectively.

THE LANDSLIDE IN PUBLIC OPINION

We have seen that in the first half of the nineteenth century children could be regarded as an economic asset. So long as the family in rural areas was a stable unit, supported to some extent by home industries, a substantial number of children could be reared without undue strain. This was true in a more tragic sense in the towns, so long as children were employed as wage earners from an early age. But the decay of rural prosperity in the '70s on the one hand, and the legislation in favour of limiting child labour in the factories on the other, actually had the effect of making children an increasingly recognised liability. Children became in fact the chief cause of poverty.

The change began to affect the higher income groups some time before the last quarter of the nineteenth

¹ P. 219.

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century. In a recent book¹ J. A. Banks gives this account of the movement:

Although in no single factor was the cost of children greatly advanced during the second half of the nineteenth century, taking them all together the effect was quite marked. . . . Children's fare was still relatively plain and cheap, but the fact that more of them now reached adulthood at a period when more and longer schooling was becoming important, increased the household budget. . . . Some form of education became recognised as a *sine qua non* for entrance to the 'gentlemanly' jobs, and these now seemed within the reach of all who were prepared to make the effort. At a period when incomes were expanding this could hardly have required much retrenchment in some other field of expenditure, but when later the social differential became less easy to maintain, outlay deemed essential for the children's future could hardly be curtailed.

Banks takes the view that these considerations were possibly one factor in preparing the way for the change in the publicly expressed outlook on family limitation, as achieved by contraception, between 1868 and 1877. There is no doubt that the publicly expressed outlook lagged behind the practice, but even at that it is surprising to find the change so sudden and so widespread.

The Royal Commission of 1949 set out in some detail the causes which combined to create the landslide of public opinion set in motion by the Bradlaugh-Besant trial of 1877. They point out that changes in economic organisation were reducing the importance of the family as a productive unit, while at the same time the Factory

¹ Banks, J. A., *Prosperity and Parenthood*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954.

and Education Acts were extending the period of child dependence on their parents. The struggle for security and social promotion in the industrial field was becoming more intense, and in this conflict the families which travelled light enjoyed an increasing advantage over the large families. As time went on, the fear of overpopulation became a live issue in discussion, and the growth of science made it easier to break down the prejudices against contraception. "The improvement of the status of women must also have contributed; to both husband and wife it became increasingly evident that an unlimited family threw an intolerable burden on the mother."¹ It is evident that the forces referred to by the Royal Commission have increased in strength since the beginning of the present century; and fresh motives have come into operation with the development of mass entertainment, and widely advertised leisure activities, both in the home and outside.

THE RISE OF FEMINISM

Within the family it is by no means easy to assess the relative importance of the motives which have been listed above. It is highly probable that the rise of feminism was a more vital factor than is generally allowed. The movement weakened the traditional predominance of men—a change desirable for its own sake—but it did far more than that: its whole trend was to focus interest for the first time on the welfare of mothers in pregnancy and childbirth, and on the saving of young children. The accepted idea of child-bearing as a predestined burden

¹ Royal Commission, p. 220.

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gave way to the feeling that it was a worthy human function, a normal process and not a disease. The earliest fruits of the changing attitude to women were gathered in campaigns for better midwifery, in steady pressure on Governments to secure essential health conditions for children, and to dispel the dense fog of ignorance and prejudice that lay over the whole subject of maternal and child welfare. This was not merely a rise in the status of women, as the Commission suggests, but a positive policy of leadership among women of education and character designed to bring help to the poor and the weak. It is significant that the first important statute of the twentieth century was the Midwives Act of 1902, to promote the better training of midwives and safer childbirth.

ADVANCES IN MEDICAL CARE

It is barely a century since the medical journals of this country expressed outraged horror at the idea of medical men being expected to give advice on birth control methods. Many forward movements had to take place in medical and social thinking and practice before a significant change in outlook was achieved. Fortunately a number of health factors were already at work. The notable improvements in environmental sanitation which grew from the great Public Health Act of 1875 led people to expect the State to take some responsibility for such essential matters as housing, water supply, drainage, and the protection of food. No doubt the changes were in practice slow in filtering down to working-class households, but at least they were seen by men and women of goodwill as goals to be achieved. In clinical medicine

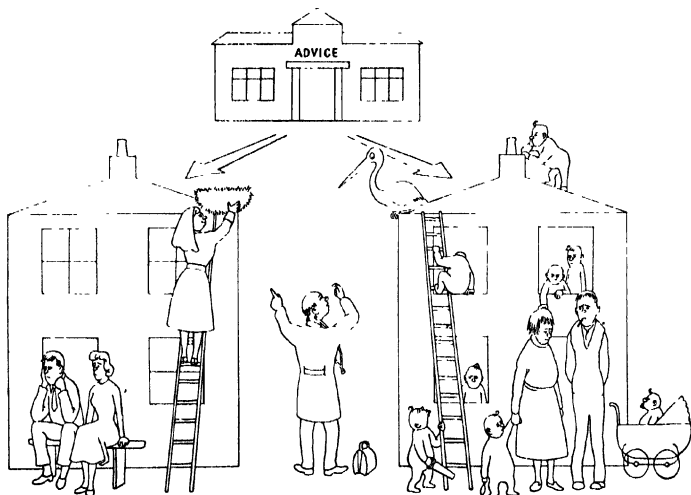
great improvements were being made through the development of the science of bacteriology and an understanding of antiseptic techniques in surgery and midwifery. In the early twentieth century new knowledge about nutrition was being applied, and greater skilled attention given to the care of children.

Among the landmarks of progress in the health services were the introduction of school medical inspection in 1907, the campaigns against tuberculosis and venereal disease in the second decade, and the widespread development of maternity and child welfare clinics in the 'twenties. It is not to be forgotten that the infant mortality rate at the beginning of this century was in the region of 150 per thousand live births and that its gradual fall to 25 or so today was due to advances all along the line in health and public education rather than to any single piece of legislation or medical practice.

The ever-growing interest and skill in the care of children has led quite naturally to a further step—a demand for more thought and care in the design of the family as a whole. It has become clear, for example, that the spacing of children is a vital factor in their successful upbringing, and that the right kind of parenthood is voluntary parenthood. For a young couple the planning of their family is a fascinating and rewarding pursuit. Planning does not always mean the restriction of births; in the carefully thought-out scheme it may be discovered that the real difficulty lies in not getting as many children as are desired. The result is that medical help will be sought while there is still time. In recent years the clinics which have been established for family planning devote a great deal of their work to the problems of sub-fertility.

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Indeed, as the knowledge of modern contraceptive methods spreads more widely, the principal functions of the clinics are to advise and offer practical help on matters that are essentially medical.



The F.P.A. shows the stork the way

In the past the Ministry of Health has taken up a somewhat timid attitude towards the powers and duties of local authorities in relation to birth control. The Royal Commission adopted a bolder and more realistic policy, recommending that advice on contraception to married persons who want it should be accepted as a duty of the National Health Service, and that existing restrictions imposed on public authority clinics should be removed. The initial duty to give advice should rest with the family doctor.

Some of the most important recommendations of the

Royal Commission rest on their conviction that the National Health Service opens up new prospects of increasing the contribution of public health to family welfare. It places non-earning mothers and children for the first time on an equal footing with wage earners and reduces the costs of medical care within the family. As the Commission suggests, the National Health Service should help to co-ordinate the maternity services and bring in as a member of its team the family doctor.

THE HOME AND THE FAMILY

It is difficult to assess the influence of housing on family life because war and economic insecurity have been responsible for many setbacks. Nevertheless the general movement in housing has unquestionably been in a forward direction if only because people have become so much more conscious of the value of good housing conditions. For the present purposes it is enough to say that three quarters of all slum dwellers improve out of all recognition when they are moved to a better environment. The present drive for slum clearance is bound to have a good effect on family life, one of the most notable elements being that the younger members, at any rate, of families removed to a new environment quickly begin to adopt the habits and standards that their new surroundings suggest to them. The acquisition for the first time of three bedrooms does not as a rule become a motive for adding to the number of children; indeed, it usually operates in the direction of limitation. The higher rents and greater transport charges on new housing estates no doubt exercise further restrictive influence.

Changing Attitudes Within the Family

At the present time many currents sway across family life to weaken its ties; our main duty today is to counter this with stabilising influences. Some of these, such as the return to religious practice, the reorientation of education, or the more formative influences in the press, radio and television, are beyond the scope of this essay; but housing, at any rate, can be made into a condition favourable to family life. The real problem is to make housing an ally and not the enemy of the family: we must therefore avoid trying to fit the family into a preconceived unit of construction but rather build round the family needs of today. The essential purpose of housing is to provide the conditions of comfort, health and enjoyment needed for making a home and the nurture of a family. The word 'home' in this context means a family living in a separate dwelling as an organic unit of society and permeated with human feeling. I use 'comfort' in the ordinary physical sense meaning warmth in cold weather throughout the house, and the provision of modern amenities (lumped together in the advertisements as 'all mod. con.'). The word 'enjoyment' expresses a far more complex idea, going beyond convenience and labour-saving to the sense of abounding satisfaction in being a member of a family and the deep-rooted feeling of security inherent in family life.

We have to remember that all associations of bad housing and overcrowding are weighted most heavily against the child and especially the young child. It is not quite so serious for schoolchildren. Of the psychological effects of overcrowding too little has been said; yet they are often more urgent than the physical. Perhaps the greatest hazards to health are due to insufficient sleep in

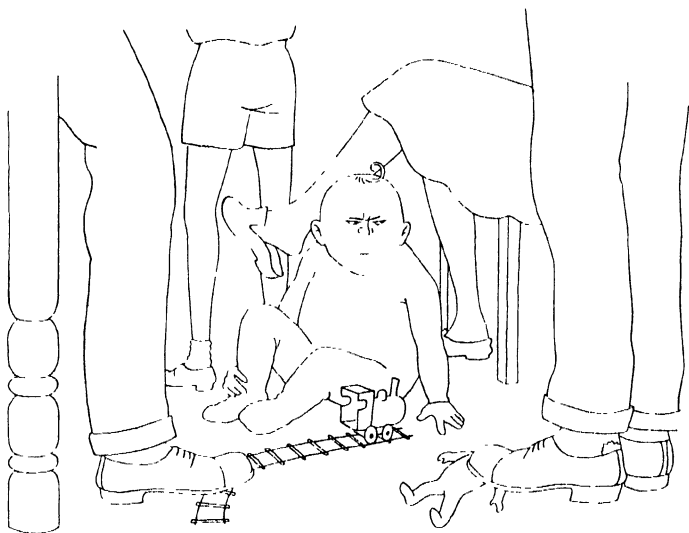
early school life. Further, adults and children constantly encroach upon each other's time in the overcrowded home with unfavourable results for both. For the toddler and pre-school child there is insufficient play space and so development is thwarted by incessant control and by the child's normal activities coming into conflict with the mother's everyday household duties. A more recent difficulty has arisen from the introduction of television. In the house that is overcrowded or too small this means inevitable conflict between work and play and perhaps between adults and children. And lastly there are the obvious and serious moral questions relating to adolescence and precocious sex experience.

THE FAMILY AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

Among the many influences on family life and the planning of children the most important and the most neglected is the tendency to adopt the standards of the neighbourhood. This applies, for example, to the cultivation of gardens, the curtains on windows, the masts on the chimney heads, and the number of children. It may be said that young people, when they marry today, marry the customs of the neighbourhood in which they are to live. This applies to the continuation of part-time work for the wife, or whole-time, if part-time work is unobtainable; the limitation of children; and the making of a home that will maintain the accepted standards of the neighbourhood. There is nothing to be ashamed of in these desires, but the decision is often taken within the home, and perhaps half-consciously accepted as what 'is done'.

Changing Attitudes Within the Family

The desire for a higher standard of living may of course encourage family limitation from selfish motives, but parents are increasingly aware of the need to provide reasonable conditions of life and education for their

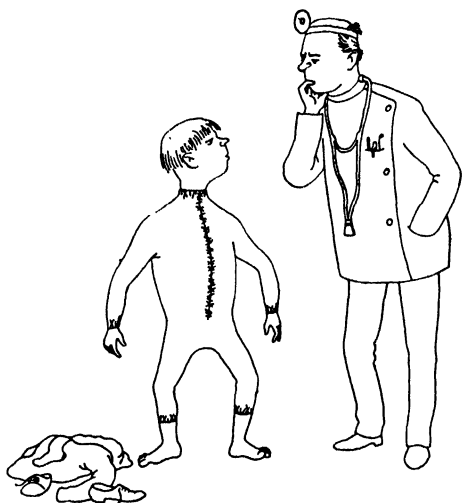


Living room

children. They may go too far in this respect. The same desire may well lead to later marriage, or at least the postponement of the first child until there is a risk of total loss. The commonest reason given (in response to enquiries) for not having more children is insufficient income. This is often a simple rationalisation to indicate the demand for higher standards, and the desire to be on a social level with the neighbourhood.

Health as a reason given for family limitation includes the hope of securing the best conditions for the children,

but the more definite plea is concern over the effects of child-bearing on the mother, or anxiety about the risks of childbirth especially on the part of older women. Certain diseases such as rheumatic heart conditions and tuber-



Sewn up for the winter

culosis of the lung are contra-indications, but the medical pressure is not so strong in modern times as it was a generation ago, on account of the diminished risks of child-bearing. On the other hand relatively minor health considerations play an important part in the work of family-planning clinics, which can often allay anxiety and deal wisely with marriage problems seeming at first to offer gigantic obstacles to the creation of home and family.

Fashion and the changing ways of life have a much

Changing Attitudes Within the Family

greater influence on health and on the idea of home and family than is generally supposed. Those who can look back over a generation of health progress cannot fail to be aware of many changes in our ways of living. Perhaps the greatest of these in this country has been the increase in cleanliness, and in the pride that parents take in the health and brightness of their children. In my early days as a school medical officer, just after the end of the First World War, it was a commonplace to see a child tightly sewn up for the winter; and when I was working as a tuberculosis officer I used to gaze sadly at the succession of tidemarks round the necks of my young patients, who were mainly adolescents. At that time infestation by vermin was a major problem for the health officer. All this has changed, and the principal reason for change has been fashion rather than positive health education, or sanctions.

During the First World War fashion began to dictate for young women short skirts and short hair, and the habit spread slowly through the people of all groups. When the war was over, increasing opportunities for open-air and seaside holidays became associated with light and attractive clothing, and more daring bathing suits. If you want to wear light clothing, then you must be clean. It is always difficult to say exactly how one change led to another, but it is certain that the advance in cleanliness in both sexes was associated directly with the growing custom of open-air bathing both at the seaside and in swimming-pools throughout the country. The cult of short hair, although a temporary fashion, probably lived long enough to establish the habit of cleanliness. By no means all hair styles are promoters of health and clean-

liness. The battle for lighter, healthier clothing, however, has been won; and for this we owe a great debt to nylon and similar fabrics.

RATIONALISING THE CAUSES OF CHANGE

Now what has all this to do with family planning and the intelligent spacing of children? A great deal. People often imagine that such vital matters as family life and home-making must necessarily be related to some deep philosophies in human relations. They search for profound causes to account for changes in family size, and not infrequently they search in vain. The operative causes of action are often relatively trivial. Today, it may be, we are all for having babies, but tomorrow the wind changes to the north, and we choose television sets.

There are some who limit their family because they want to have a good time—and a number of childless couples fall into this group. They usually have vain regrets as they grow older. Others find counter-attractions overwhelming; they might have been good parents, but the lure of the motor-car, the television set, the dance hall, or elegant furnishings has been too much for them. In after years they indulge in pleasant rationalisations and are statistically recorded as having been restrained by economic pressure, ill-health and whatnot. Others again prefer dogs to children, but more frequently the dog or other pet represents a substitute for a child which was wanted. In real families selfishness of this kind is not a common reason for not having children at all. The parents when they marry look forward to children as the crown of their union. They are devoted to them and

Changing Attitudes Within the Family

proud of them and their family life is made perfect through them. These real families would like to have more than two or three children, but education has to be thought of and its incidental expenses are considerable. The standards of living, including housing, food, clothing and, above all, better opportunities for success than their parents, have to be carefully thought out from every aspect. With such families a fundamental unselfishness is a stronger motive for the spacing of children than any self-regarding sentiments.

JAMES LANSDALE HODSON

*

THE DARK SIDE OF THE STREET

“The anomaly that allows the well-to-do to get rid of the unwanted child without danger to life or reputation, yet denies such relief to the poor, is a stigma to which society is at last awakening”—LORD HORDER.

THE WORLD OF THE UNBORN

WHEN I WORKED on the *Daily News* 26 years ago I was asked to collaborate with Edward Lyttelton, D.D., in conducting a discussion on Birth Control and the Family. We called the series of articles ‘The World of the Unborn’.

My knowledge of what women would do—and still do—to bring an unwanted pregnancy to an end dates from that time. I became aware that there is immense suffering, both physical and mental, at the very heart of the nation—among its mothers—and that a vast amount of it need not be.

During this quarter of a century I have referred once or twice in my books to the tragedy that surrounds the problem of criminal abortion and I shall do so again in a

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novel I am now writing. To make myself better informed I have lately read various books and reports, and talked to surgeons and others. I do not know half as much as I could wish, but enough, I hope, to allow me to write here as a novelist and observer of what goes on. This then is what I have to say.

DESPERATE PREGNANCIES

Imagine a situation in which, every day of the week, several hundred women are trying to bring their pregnancy to an end, trying usually by crude and violent means and under conditions that are often unhygienic and barbarous. Consider the secrecy in which the attempts are made, the feelings of guilt these women have, of anger, of dismay, of being at war with themselves, possibly with their husbands, and with life itself. So much at war that their death sometimes results. And this suffering occurs principally among wives who, more often than not, have borne children already, but who for various reasons—among them poor health, sickness, poverty, bad housing conditions or an unhappy home life—cannot face having another child. Moreover, so far as I can judge, this immense suffering occurs, certainly in part, because as a nation we shut our eyes to it and pretend it is not there; we keep a conspiracy of silence about it. This tragedy at the core is not mentioned by politicians on public platforms or written about, except very rarely indeed, in newspapers or periodicals. Another contributory reason for the suffering is that the law is gravely out of date and gravely out of line with enlightened medical practice. It is 18 years since an Interdepartmental Committee

presided over by Mr. Norman Birkett (now Lord Justice Birkett) desired that the law be amended to make it unmistakably clear that a medical practitioner is acting legally when in good faith he procures the abortion of a pregnant woman in circumstances which satisfy him that a continuance of the pregnancy is likely to endanger her life or seriously to impair her health. The law has not been amended. It is true, however, that a judgment of Mr. Justice Macnaghten in 1938 has profoundly influenced much medical practice and led to a situation in which, when two medical men of repute agree that abortion ought to take place, and one of them performs it, it is extremely unlikely that either will be prosecuted and probable that, if he is, he will be acquitted. But this is not Statute Law and many a doctor declines to act even when he thinks he should, or, if he acts, does so in fear and apprehension. A woman doctor at a London hospital told me this: "Whenever I recommend the operation, I visualise myself in the dock and I therefore always, in my mind, go over my defence and what my reasons are for advising the abortion." She ought not, to my mind, to have to undergo this mental strain, and would not undergo it were the law amended. That law is archaic. Women often take dire steps and—which seems to me doubly tragic—they take them in secrecy, when, if they were aware of the influence on medical practice which Mr. Justice Macnaghten's judgment had, they might get proper help, quite openly, in a hospital or elsewhere. To this extent there is a law for the rich and another for the poor. The upper and middle classes know and can help themselves or get help. The other women who bear most of the country's children are, unwittingly or wittingly,

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kept in ignorance. On this, in my judgment, both Government and newspapers are blameworthy. A woman has the right to go to her doctor and to expect a sympathetic hearing and a proper examination on whether her health—and this includes mental health—will stand another pregnancy. But the truth is that whether an anxious and worrying woman receives any help may depend on no more than which part of the country she lives in, what religion is predominant in her neighbourhood, and what religion her own doctor follows.

THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

What is the extent of the tragedy and the suffering? Nobody can say with precision. How many criminal abortions take place in the United Kingdom every year? Again, nobody can say. In the Interdepartmental Committee Report of 1939 an estimate was given which, when I work it out, comes to 148 every day. A Harley Street doctor gave me the figure for today of 250,000 a year; another doctor and statistician puts it at 100,000. At first glance both these are large figures, but they are not so large when they are compared with figures for other countries. In Japan, with a population less than twice ours, induced abortions number 2,000,000 or more a year; in France the figure is put at between 300,000 and 1,000,000; in Sweden in 1951 there were 6,328 *legal* abortions, and if we in this country acted as they act and for the same reasons, we, with our larger population, would have between 35,000 and 40,000 legal abortions a year.

If we were to split the difference between the estimates

of 250,000 and 100,000 criminal abortions a year, we should arrive at about 400 each day. A statistician who has examined a Government analysis of certificates of incapacity submitted by working women in England and Wales for the year ending June 1954 informs me that a daily average of 550 working women a day were off duty owing to abortion. These were not all criminal abortions nor were they all different women each day, for clearly some women were off work for several days. But he concludes that between 100 and 200 working women on any given day are off duty with induced (or criminal) abortions. Nor does this figure include ordinary housewives who do not go out to work. He believes these figures are on the low side because doctors certifying incapacity do not always report abortion as abortion.

The Royal Commission on Population has recently said that at least 17 per cent of abortions are induced, and Mr. Albert Davis, a gynaecological surgeon, in an article in the *British Medical Journal* of July 1950, wherein he surveyed 2,665 cases of abortion that came under his care at St. Giles's and Dulwich Hospitals, recorded his impression that the great majority—perhaps 90 per cent—of all abortions were induced in one way or another. The Interdepartmental Committee on Abortion (1939) came to the conclusion that four out of 10 abortions may be due to illegal interference; and in a survey into marital and family relationships of the English woman carried out in 1956 (popularly known as the Chesser Report) it is stated that one in four of all married women have attempted abortion at one time or another.

Whichever estimate may be nearest the truth, the size of the tragedy and amount of suffering involved is very

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great. I would judge the figure of several hundred women each day suffering mental torment and taking drastic steps to be well justified. But while this is true—and the remedy lies to a considerable extent in our hands—it is also true that the size of the tragedy is considerably less than it was 17 years ago. I mean in numbers affected. One mother's tragedy is still one mother's tragedy and her own is not diminished because there are fewer in the street. The knowledge of birth control has spread; the size of families has tended to fall; the courageous work of those seeking reform of the law and the spread of light and knowledge has borne some fruit; medical men have been readier to act in deserving cases, so that one has heard a surgeon say: "If you had told me 20 years ago—or even 10—that we should be doing what we are doing now, I would not have believed it"; and another, ironically: "A woman now has only got to have one foot in the grave before we act."

Here are figures got out for me of the operations performed at a London hospital during the past 17 years: in this period 434 pregnancies have been terminated—161 on psychiatric grounds, 112 because of tuberculosis, 55 because of heart disease and 106 for other medical reasons, including 10 of epilepsy. Whereas in the four years 1938-41 the total number of pregnancies terminated was 42, in the last four years for which figures are available the number was 154.

Not every hospital is as enlightened or energetic as this by any means, and I should not be surprised if they felt they were carrying too much of the burden, that other hospitals ought to relieve them of part of it. But the trend is clearly shown. It is shown even more clearly in this:

whereas in 1937 the deaths attributed to abortion in the Registrar-General's report were 307 with a further 104 associated with abortion, the comparative figures for 1954 were 76 and five. All these figures err on the low side, inasmuch as many deaths due to abortion are ascribed to other illnesses—to some branch of pneumonia or blood poisoning. But the decline is, I think, quite certain.

THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Here then are some fragments of the verbal or written statements made to me which will emphasise, better than I can otherwise do, how difficult this problem, how perplexing and complicated it is, how deeply it involves the mind as well as the body, how often operations are performed in conditions that are shameful to any civilised community, and how many a doctor or skilled midwife finds himself or herself acting, often from the best of motives, in a way that is surreptitious, sordid and close to a sort of gangsterism; and again how some doctors steer clear of having anything to do with the problem, but often at some cost to their consciences.

A woman doctor, a psychologist who deals with the emotional aspects of pregnancy and childbirth, and who is attached to a hospital:

From my investigations among various social classes I would say that among certain sections of the top class—professional and intellectual people—abortion may be socially acceptable and abortions are carried out quite often. One professional woman I know has had seven illegal abortions. These women go to doctors or skilled midwives. The risks they undergo are small. In the second class, among skilled

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artisans, clerks and so on, who live in the suburbs and on new housing estates, abortion is not socially acceptable. Of course, the married women do take steps to end pregnancies but they do it themselves and keep it to themselves. In the third class, the lesser-skilled workers and labourers, abortion is again acceptable and is usually done by quacks or by a woman who has for a short time been a nurse. The risks these married women take are pretty considerable, for the abortionists often do not know the safest time to do the operation or how best to do it.

I have a number of case histories, among them girls of 15 and 16 years old who have had abortions their mothers have arranged. One such girl describes how she was taken to a large block of flats and conducted down many corridors till she did not know where she was. A curettage was performed without anaesthetic while the radio blared loudly to drown any cries she made. She was then sent away with instructions to go to hospital if serious bleeding started.

One might call it 'standard practice' to start the abortion and then to seek admission to hospital on the ground that a normal miscarriage has begun. It is, of course, a risky method. In my view probably six out of seven abortions that came to a hospital in London, where I formerly worked, were really criminal abortions, either self-induced or criminally induced.

I do not myself believe that even under good conditions an abortion is no more risky than any other operation. There are too many inexplicable sudden deaths for that to be so.

There are many 'enlightened' hospitals in the country where the operation is performed when the medical grounds are sufficiently strong; but I have come across cases where, to my mind, the operation has been done when the grounds were too frivolous.

A London physician and surgeon of very great experience in this problem:

This is the only branch of medicine in which there's no preventive medicine.

During the past ten or twenty years the position has been pretty well revolutionised in the direction of performing the operation when right and proper medical grounds exist—I mean in London, less so in the provinces. And again, less so regarding the poor than the well-to-do. But the gulf between rich and poor, so far as this problem goes, is narrowing.

We still badly need the law reformed to bring it into line with enlightened medical practice. But it must be only a small reform—it must not be left to women to decide for themselves; they are often not the best judges.

Wives and husbands should feel they have the right to go to their doctor and to get good advice on this subject—they should not go cringing.

There are diehards who will suggest, and agree to, taking a woman into a mental hospital when she is pregnant and so distressed that she has threatened to take her life. I find this abominable.

To me, 'preservation of life' needs to include mental, emotional and psychological health. Mind and body are indivisible.¹

The whole question is difficult and complicated. In considering termination as a therapeutic measure it is not a choice between good and evil but between two evils and deciding which is the lesser.

I remember a married woman whose pregnancy I recommended should be terminated. She decided, instead, to have the child, but later the strain of coping with it proved too great and she took her life. On the other hand there are unwanted children who, afterwards, are dearly cherished. Interrupting a pregnancy of that sort can be followed by

¹ A reference to the grounds upon which, as Section 58 of the Offences against the Person Act 1861, is interpreted an abortion may be non-criminal.

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depressive reaction fraught with danger while it lasts, for the patient can feel she has connived at murder. I can recall many cases where decision to terminate was right; others where I declined and where subsequent history showed that termination would have been correct.

We must let our patient know what the law is and that in many cases termination is legally sanctioned. It is shocking that sometimes doctors are restrained, by fear of misrepresentation, from exercising their judgment. The doctor cannot always recommend termination but his sympathy and understanding can often do much to reconcile his patient.

A London gynaecological surgeon:

I think that all children proved to have been raped before the age of consent should be relieved of pregnancy if the parents agree. Another real reform would be provision for the prevention of the birth of a deformed child, meaning deformed physically or mentally. There are some for whom the outlook is all but certainly hopeless. For example, I have aborted a woman who had German measles before the eighth week, and would do it again, though at present the law does not recognise abortion as justified for eugenic reasons.

The really difficult problem is popularising the knowledge among the poorer people that abortion is legally possible in certain circumstances. It is probable that debate in Parliament would give an opportunity for the press to discuss the problem. But when all this has been done you can imagine the kind of reception, by a busy general practitioner, of one working-class woman after another, pleading for abortion!

A woman gynaecologist of wide experience, working in the provinces:

The need for reform of the law is absolutely vital.

It is always difficult for working women to get adequate

help with the legitimate termination of a pregnancy, and this is true whether they're in the provinces or in London, unless they have special knowledge of sympathetic general practitioners.

I don't think any pregnant woman should decide entirely by herself and without medical advice to terminate her pregnancy. It is more than possible factors might exist which, in the heat of the moment, she would disregard.

In the north-east of England, for a large proportion of the population, the reception given to a request for termination, when the grounds were thoroughly justified, would still be discouraging. That is why reform of the law is urgent.

It is high time this country brought itself into line with more civilised and progressive countries—such as Sweden, for example.

A surgeon of long experience:¹

Most of us know that the problem of induced abortion has troubled Western Europe for nearly 2,000 years, that the Ancient Greeks practised it without moral censure and that Socrates, Plato and Aristotle often refer to it and that Aristotle favoured it for all women over forty. At other stages in European history the unborn child has been counted equal to the mother, sometimes even more important than the mother, with the penalty for abortion, death. The conflict has been unending and goes on today, the bulk of people now taking a middle course between thinking *no* abortion is ever permissible and the other extreme of thinking the woman should be allowed to discard her pregnancy for any reason that appeals to her.

In spite of the severity of the British Act of 1861 many claim it allows sufficient latitude in the interpretation of the

¹ Much of this quotation is published by permission of the *Medical World*, wherein it first appeared.

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word 'unlawfully' to permit remedial abortion where the indications are firm. On the other hand, doctors are often uncertain about this and find the shadow of the Act menacing. A further difficulty is the reluctance to do this hateful operation, which inhibits most of us even though we feel, deep down, that pregnancy should be terminated. We all know the atmosphere of regret, even depression, which affects all those in the theatre. There is no talk, just a performance of the work. How different from the interest and often enthusiasm which is the mainspring of the surgeon's normal work.

It is seldom that a case arises in which life is actually in peril if pregnancy is unrelieved. The practical difficulty is the woman who may not have any named disease, yet who is exhausted perhaps by rapid child-bearing combined with domestic slavery, and oppressed by the prospect of still another child who will demand her care. The appeal of this woman, usually thin, toneless, and hopelessly depressed, not only to our sympathy but also to our conviction that bearing another child will make her still more a human wreck, is very strong; yet, in the present state of the law, can we operate, sure that we are not offending? A further difficult group is the near-psychotic. It is the unstable, highly emotional borderline case, who often attempts the blackmail of the suicide threat, which exercises all our judgment. The psychiatrists are often readier than some of us would expect to advise abortion, but then they are not called upon to perform the operation!

It is not fully realised that termination in the early months and especially during the middle of a pregnancy, even by skilled hands, is potentially dangerous. Many cases have been recorded of sudden death. For the near-psychotics there is the later and not uncommon torture of remorse.

I believe a merciful addition to the present law would be the

admission of abortion for girls below the age of consent who are pregnant because of proved rape. Imagine, if you can, the beaten child conceiving in helpless pain and terror, the ever deepening shadow of bewilderment and the 'climbing sorrow' of the long slow months of pregnancy, finally to be ended by the mental torture of labour. Should a rigid, unbending doctrine compel her sacrifice?

The Head of a University Obstetric Clinic:

For many poorer women it is still very difficult for them to have an abortion performed. There is no doubt that if one has the money there seems to be little difficulty in having a pregnancy terminated. What is so distressing is the woman who has already several children and who goes to the back-street abortionist. It is this member of the community—such a vital member so far as the family is concerned—that requires help. I have been told by an enlightened pathologist, who does my coroner's autopsies, that it is the above woman who may come to the post-mortem room having died as the result of a criminal abortion. There must be, also, many near deaths, and a good deal of invalidism following unskilled attempts to induce an abortion.

A MUDDLED MIXTURE OF RELIGION AND MEDICINE

Among the other expressions of opinion and tales of experience that I have encountered, especially in relation to the back-street abortionist trading on the tragedy of despair, none has impressed me more than the widespread feeling that (to quote one letter):

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If a woman faced with social disaster through fulfilment of her natural destiny seeks the help of the abortionist, it is not for me to condemn her terrible choice.

"It has never been fear of the pains of childbirth," said one doctor, "that has brought women to me; parents,



Social opinion has always been the bugbear

employers, or social opinion have always been the bugbear." So long as motherhood can bring disgrace or serious economic hardship, in fact, abortion will continue; and society will have no right to condemn it or penalise it. "It is a queer law," one woman said to me, "which is broken 200 times a day in homes as good as yours or mine."

Another common attitude to "this muddled mixture of religion and medicine" takes the form of an enquiry as to the possibly harmful effects on children born after various attempts to terminate pregnancy—attempts which made



What one woman does goes all down the street

the mothers ill—have failed. "It would probably be difficult to find a fertile woman," I was told, "poor and uninstructed, who hasn't made some furtive and crude attempt at abortion at some time or other; I've known women take beer, stout or gin containing iron filings. Or they send for stuff through the post, and what one woman does goes all down the street. They're very loyal to one another. If it keeps them 'losing' it's all right, but that's very weakening. They won't go to a doctor because, they say, 'He'll give me a strengthening medicine

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and then I shall fall again: I'd rather be as I am.' I've heard them say they don't mind if they grow old so long as the change comes."

There is also a general awareness that the argument against abortion that it is "against the will of God" has also been used—is indeed still used—of chloroform and birth control. No one, in short, *advocates* abortion any more than they advocate amputation; they ask only for the legalisation of medically endorsed abortion.

While the diminution in the deaths attributed to abortion, and the authoritative opinions quoted, leave me convinced that a vast change for the better has occurred in the past 20 years, an examination of the press-cuttings covering the past year or two throws light on the depth of the tragedy that is still there. Nobody can glance through them unmoved; or without being appalled by the small, vivid, searing details. One wonders what Charles Dickens would have been saying and writing.

SOME PRESS REPORTS

The cuttings before me report eight cases in which death occurred during a period of four months ending January 1956. One girl was aged 18 and two others were 23. They were single women. A woman of 43 who had two children, and was pregnant by a man other than her husband, died after a self-induced abortion. A fifth woman died after her husband attempted to operate on her with an instrument. A sixth woman who died had two small children and underwent the operation to prevent being separated from her husband, who had a post overseas. The abortionist here was a 'beauty

specialist' of 24. She was to receive £50 if the operation succeeded.

At a provincial assizes a doctor in his 40s was sent to prison for 18 months for using an instrument on a woman who had already had five children. The doctor pleaded that she gave him the impression that she would commit suicide if she did not get rid of her new pregnancy. The judge said that he accepted that the doctor was a man of kindly disposition who wanted to help people. He added there was no suggestion the doctor had acted in any way for reward.

A London man and his wife aged 27 were given a conditional discharge after he had procured an instrument and assisted his wife to use it. She had had five children in seven and a half years, living in three rooms one of which was uninhabitable owing to damp. The judge said: "I am very sorry for both of you, but you must understand the law does not allow you to destroy life in this way. I beg of you not to do it again."

When I turn over the press-cuttings of 1953 and 1954 I come upon the death of a woman at Leamington who, at the age of 35, had had six children; the death of a woman in hospital at Lancaster who had been taking six pills a day because she was 'expecting again'; and of a woman who persuaded her husband to obtain a syringe for her. (He was sentenced to only two days' imprisonment.) It is clear that whereas judges are sometimes very severe—a coal-miner's wife at Wiltshire Assizes was given five years' imprisonment, and a London doctor sent to prison for three years although the judge said: "No resulting harm occurred. You have previously done useful work in the world of surgery," for seven offences—

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it is also plain that other judges behaved on several occasions with great humanity. At Warwick a woman charged with manslaughter by abortion was put on probation for three years because the judge was satisfied she was only trying to help other women; at Sunderland a woman who operated on her niece, who died, was discharged. She had acted only after great emotional scenes. The judge said: "I am satisfied that out of love and affection you finally succumbed to temptation."

One finds a varied assortment of abortionists: a tailor; a secondhand clothes dealer of 68; a police officer; a bacteriological technician; a retired schoolmaster known as 'the doctor'; an industrial chemist; a woman of independent means; a doctor aged 86; a circus ringmaster's wife; a herbalist; a youth aged 16; and a Royal Air Force officer charged with attempted blackmail in the sum of £6,000. The abortionists' fees named in the courts are £1, £4, £7 10 0, £8, £15, £20, £28 10 0, £30, £75, £80. Housing conditions are given in several instances as a contributory or even a principal reason for the abortion: "I had to go down three flights of stairs for water and everything"—"There's no sanitation—I have to go 50 yards to fetch water"—"I'm living in one room. If I have another child I believe I shall be turned out." Eighteen years ago the Interdepartmental Committee put the abortionists' fees as ranging from half-a-crown to a hundred guineas, with three guineas fairly common. They spoke of women with poor incomes spending large sums on pills and concoctions and using drugs such as apiol, pennyroyal and quinine, oil of savin and ergot. In certain areas lead contained in diachylon plasters was being scraped off and made into pills.

The Committee listed a variety of crude and dangerous metal instruments which women themselves, or quacks, were using.

Both men surgeons and women doctors have said to me: "I hope you will not forget that we live in a world whose laws have been principally made by men, in which most lawyers and doctors are men. Quite often the doctor feels the lawyer does not understand and the lawyer feels the same way about the doctor; and women feel that neither can understand."

A woman psychiatrist said to me: "All gynaecologists I know of are men. Priests are men. Surgeons are usually men. Yet it is the woman who carries the baby in very truth. It is justice for women that we want. Wasn't it Stanley Baldwin who once said: 'If men had to bear the children, not a single family would have more than one child'? And somebody else: 'If the wife had to bear the first child and the husband the second, there would never be a fourth.' "

THE UNMARRIED

I have said little or nothing of the unmarried women who wish to end their pregnancies. There are tragedies among these, too, though they may not stir one's heart like those of the worn-out mother. But consider an instance such as this. A gifted girl, not yet 20, came from overseas to study at an art school in London. Soon after she arrived she found she was pregnant, the father a student who had made love to her at her farewell party. She went first to a London hospital, where they could not make up their minds whether to operate or not, and finally to another

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hospital, where, as it was too late now to operate anyhow, the child was born. Her father was without sympathy; the girl lacked both the money and the time to look after her baby if she were to continue her studies; and she agreed to the baby being adopted. But she longs for her baby and she goes about looking into half the perambulators she sees, searching for it.

What is one to say to a woman who is very hard up, in poor health and with a large family, and to whom this new pregnancy seems not a blessing but a curse? She may be already physically exhausted from too much child-bearing; or true affection between her and her husband may no longer exist and the pregnancy may have been forced on her. Do you tell her it is her duty to bear the child because the unborn child is more precious and valuable than she is? Or that it is her duty to the community, although most of your friends who are infinitely better-off than she is and more fitted to have children have a family of one or two children only, or even none? Do you remind her that the child may prove to be a genius and that this chance—about as probable as winning the big prize in the football pool—should count with her? Do you tell her it is the will of Divine Providence, even though she knows the real reason was that her husband was half-drunk and she was powerless to resist him? But, of course, it *is* true that genius has sprung from conditions such as these, and that many an unwanted child has been wanted later on; and even though the risks of childbirth after the fifth child greatly increase, yet in our fathers' or grandfathers' time, families of six to twelve children were common. I am an eighth child and I cannot believe I was passionately wanted.

It is also true that when a battalion of men is shot to pieces, or a ship sinks, or a colliery disaster occurs, feats of self-sacrifice and courage will be performed that lift mankind towards the heavens. But we do not justify dire calamities on that ground nor pray they be sent down upon us. And similarly I, for one, cannot tell the ailing, distraught woman that there's no help for her, that here's a chance to show she's made of finer stuff than her sisters who, being so much better-off, do not have this tragic situation to bear. As for strengthening the family and preserving it, I cannot myself believe that a dreaded extra pregnancy does anything of the sort, or that choirs of angels sing when it occurs.

II

SHERWIN BAILEY

*

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY: SOME THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE NEW CONCERN FOR FAMILY WELFARE

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT and encouraging features of our time is the concern shown by society for the welfare of the family. However anxiously or self-consciously it may be displayed, it does at least bear indisputable witness to the conviction that a sound and healthy family life is a factor of vital importance to the stability and well-being of the community. If this concern was less articulate in the past, it was chiefly because the dangers which always threaten the integrity of the family were then neither so obvious nor so potentially disruptive. Today the family is menaced on all sides. Social and economic changes have affected its unity and independence, while the legislative facilitation of divorce and all the insidious influences of modern life have conspired to undermine its cohesion, and to jeopardise its fundamental importance in the structure of society.

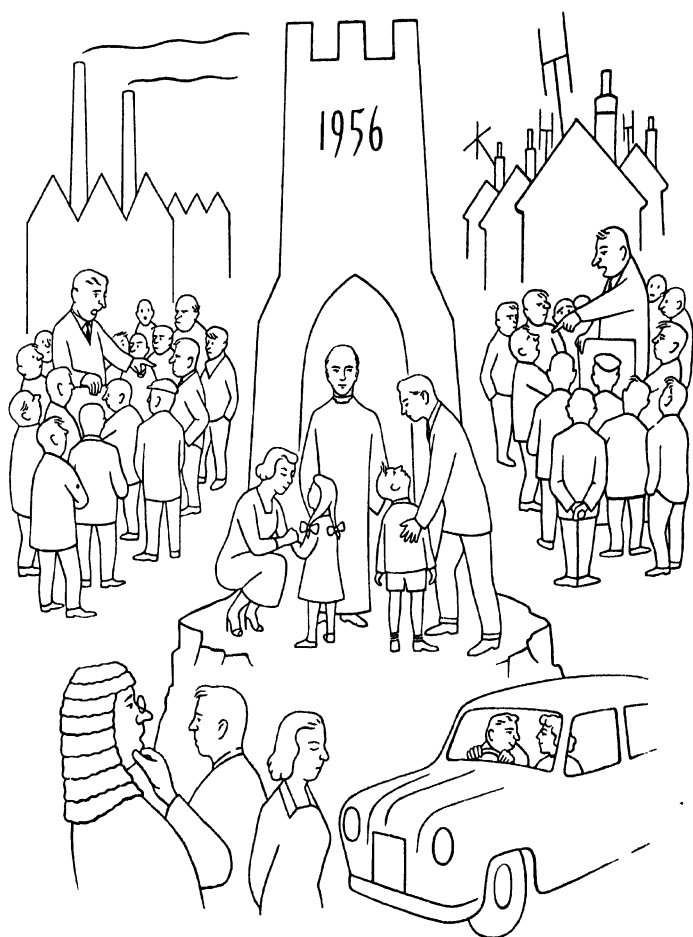
Against all that is hostile to the family the Church has always stood firm; and now the resources of the nation

have also been gradually mobilised in its defence, with the result that many statutory and voluntary agencies are engaged in valuable educative, welfare, remedial, and research work. Inevitably, however, the challenge has been met on practical rather than on theoretical lines, and although sociological studies are making an increasingly important contribution, insufficient attention has yet been paid to the ontological questions which belong to the realm of theology. These, nevertheless, are directly and basically relevant, and must not be neglected if the total well-being of the family is to be promoted—for the latter is more than a social unit; it is constituted under the ordinance of God and consists of persons who have an eternal destiny, and in whose relationships humanity finds its deepest and most characteristic expression. It is to a consideration of some of these questions that I wish to devote this essay.

From the viewpoint of the sociologist and the anthropologist there is, no doubt, substantial truth in Westermarck's dictum: "We may truly say that marriage is rooted in the family rather than the family in marriage."¹ There is good reason to assume that the social institution of marriage gradually emerged from the basic organisation of the family. But evolutionary or historical priority does not necessarily indicate ontological priority, and in his own sphere the theologian cannot accept Westermarck's conclusion as valid, for the essential order of progression is from sex to marriage, and thence to the family. Consequently a theological understanding of the family must always be reached by way of a consideration of the nature and purpose of sex; it cannot be attained by investigating

¹ Westermarck, E., *A Short History of Marriage*, Macmillan, 1926.

Marriage and the Family: Some Theological Considerations



Against all that is hostile to the family the Church has always
stood firm

the development of the historical family, or by attempting an empirical evaluation of the contemporary family.

THE MEANING AND IMPACT OF 'SEX'

Every discussion of sex must be approached with the realisation that few words are now more misunderstood and misused. When applied to Man, 'sex' primarily denotes either of the two classes of beings, male and female, which comprise the human race—and this was originally its only meaning. By a progressive restriction of its connotation, however, it has now come to signify man and woman considered principally with reference to their primary and secondary 'sexual' characteristics. Underlying the modern use of 'sex', in other words, is the belief that male and female human beings can be sufficiently differentiated by the structure and function of their reproductive systems—that the latter constitute, in fact, their most characteristic distinctions. In popular and colloquial usage, and increasingly among serious writers, this limitation and distortion of meaning is emphasised by the identification of 'sex' almost exclusively with copulation and venereal¹ activity. Thus 'sexual intercourse' denotes coitus—as if men and women knew no other mode of reciprocal relationship.

But more has happened to 'sex' than a mere alteration in meaning. Not only has it acquired a predominantly venereal connotation, but it has gathered regrettable

¹ 'Venereal' is another useful word which is now liable to be misunderstood, and deserves restoration to general currency. Most people associate it only with disease, but it really denotes all that is connected in any way with coitus or physical sexual desire.

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adventitious associations; it is one of those terms which arouse an immediate and automatic emotional reaction. For various reasons, which need not be discussed here, it evokes in some people feelings of embarrassment, fear,



“Sex . . .” evokes embarrassment, fear, disgust, anger, mild interest, lascivious excitement

disgust, or anger, and in others a response which will vary between mild interest and lascivious excitement or expectation. It is obviously, indeed blatantly, employed by certain sections of the press in a deliberately salacious sense.

The effect of this unfortunate change in the meaning of ‘sex’ has been to obscure the fact that in human beings

sexuality cannot be treated exclusively in terms of procreation or venereal behaviour. In Man it is much more than a reproductive device. 'Animal' sexuality is assumed into and transformed by personality in such a way that the biological, generative function appears simply as one aspect of a complex creative dynamic which is by no means exhausted in the perpetuation of the species.

SEX AND THEOLOGY

Since sex is a property of humanity, a theological understanding of its meaning and purpose can best be sought first in the inspired accounts of the creation of Man with which the Old Testament of the Bible begins. The two complementary stories in the first and second chapters of Genesis are to be read, not as statements of historical fact, but as revelations of the fundamental spiritual truth underlying the creative act of God which they describe in mythological language. They tell how He made Man in His own image,¹ and ordained that male and female together should constitute the true 'Adam', or Man² (the Hebrew '*ādām*' really means 'Man' or 'Mankind', and not the human male). Christian insights and God's further revelation of himself enable us to develop and expand this primitive attempt to elucidate the nature of humanity. We understand that just as God himself is a unity of divine Persons in relation (Father, Son, and Holy, Spirit), so Man, reflecting in terms of finite and temporal existence the eternal Being of his Creator, is likewise a unity of

¹ Gen. i. 26-27.

² This is expressed even more clearly and emphatically in Gen. v. 2.

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persons in relation—male and female, each complementary to, yet radically dissimilar from, the other.

In the second chapter of Genesis there is another and earlier creation story in which the writer attempts to describe, among other things, how God brought sex into existence. The myth tells how He formed an 'Adam', or prototype of humanity, which He cast into a deep sleep during which the male and female principles in Man were brought to concrete realisation in the creation of a man and a woman¹—for this is what the incident of the rib really symbolises. The deep sleep is significant, for it reminds us that what was done while the 'Adam' was in a trance is God's secret. He alone knows the meaning of sex; it is something of which Man has no intuitive understanding and about which no abstract formulation can be made. Sex, in the metaphysical sense, does not explain itself; it is one of the fundamental mysteries of human life—and a mystery, moreover, which cannot be dispelled by reading about what is commonly called 'sex', or by indulging in venereal experiments. In an age which thinks that it knows 'all about sex', this cannot be emphasised too strongly.

Because the meaning of sex is God's secret, Man is not therefore doomed to remain in a state of ignorance concerning this enigma of human existence; but he can only attain the knowledge he desires in the way appointed by God—and this the myth goes on to disclose. God brings man and woman together in order that through relation, and supremely by becoming what the Bible calls 'one flesh' in marriage, they may learn what He did in Man's deep sleep, and may thus grow in understanding of

¹ Gen. ii. 7 and 20 ff.

the meaning of their sex—that is, of masculinity and femininity.¹

THE HEIGHTS AND THE DEPTHS

The basic premise, therefore, of a theology of sex is that God created Man as a duality of male and female whom He destined to live together in harmonious and creative partnership, finding the meaning of humanity (that is, of manhood and womanhood) in a manifold variety of relationships. Sexual differentiation in Man is thus a metaphysical as well as a biological fact, and its primary significance can only be expressed in terms of personal endowment and encounter. Man's sexuality, says Brunner, is not "something purely natural"—he "does not know the animal sex instinct"²; hence the heights and the depths, the lights and the shadows, the beauty and the ugliness of human sexual experience, and the tremendous possibilities which sex holds, both for good and ill.

Moreover, since male and female are at once mutually complementary and profoundly different, they are not only drawn together in relation, but experience in every genuine encounter a tension which is released either creatively or destructively. In this tension engendered by their metaphysical polarity lie both the integrative and the disruptive powers of sex, and the inner quality of each relationship determines its effect upon the individuals

¹ Limitation of space has precluded any thorough discussion of the sexual significance of the biblical Creation myths, and of the many interesting problems which they pose.

² Brunner, E., *Man in Revolt*, Lutterworth Press, 1939. p. 347

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concerned and upon the community to which they belong. Although all sexual relation discloses to man and woman something of the meaning of the enigma of sex, the fullest experience of this unique kind of self-knowledge and of the partnership for which they were created is generally attained only through the central and exemplary relation of union in one flesh. It is as husband and wife that they grow into a special understanding of the image of God as it is realised in human confrontation. Hence a theology of sex is fundamental to a comprehension of marriage, and to treat the latter solely or mainly as an institution is only to obscure its essential character.

LOVE AND RATIONAL CHOICE

Both the theological and the popular conceptions of marriage would agree in regarding it primarily as a personal sexual union, but they would doubtless vary considerably in their interpretation of the relationship, and especially of the love upon which it is based. 'Love', like 'sex', has been narrowed and debased by use, and has acquired both a vague venereal overtone and a deep colouring of fatalism and sentimentality. To speak of love, therefore, as the foundation of marriage is always to invite misunderstanding, and it will be advisable to define the sense in which it is used here.

Love is a very complex experience involving an attitude to someone of the complementary sex, in which several different elements can be distinguished. There is altruism—a willingness to give oneself entirely to and for the

other; and the Christian, on St. Paul's authority, finds the pattern for this in Christ's self-sacrificial love for the Church—a love demanded by the Apostle only from the husband,¹ but due no less from the wife. Conversely, there is desire—not merely physical, or for any particular quality or attribute, but for a total person who is recognised as one's complement, and with whom one wishes to live always. There is friendship, too, which finds expression in complete and mutual sharing of every interest and concern in life, and of all aspects of the relationship—a friendship which deepens in quality and significance with the passage of time, until it seems to embody the quintessence of love itself. There is also a 'sexual' element, in the narrow sense—a compulsion to express the meaning of this relationship in specifically venereal acts and, above all, in coitus itself. And finally, there is an affection which suffuses the entire relationship and imparts to it a distinct and characteristic warmth and humanity. This rough analysis does not exhaust the content of sexual love, but it does at least emphasise its essential features.

One important aspect of love, however, has not yet been mentioned. Being in the fullest sense a human experience, it is above all rational; it is neither a blind mating instinct nor a fatal compulsion of destiny, but a relationship founded on deliberate and responsible choice. Love is supremely a free decision made by a man and a woman who understand one another, who give themselves wholly to one another, who accept each other just as they are, and who believe that they act rightly in seeking to be joined in the permanent life-fellowship of

¹ Eph. v. 25.

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marriage.¹ It is a choice made in faith and continually affirmed through fidelity.

Despite the many apparent reasons for marriage breakdown, the ultimate cause in most cases is simply an imperfect comprehension, if not a complete ignorance, of the nature and obligations of the love upon which matrimony is founded. No doubt the welfare of children and the proper interests of society themselves demand that the union of husband and wife should be life-long, but it is important to understand that the permanence of marriage is not dictated by institutional or expediential considerations. It belongs, as Christ taught, to the very nature of union in one flesh.² The theological doctrine that according to the ordinance of God marriage is in principle permanent and exclusive follows inevitably from the nature of love itself. This love, from which the union derives its interior validity, is absolute in that it demands from husband and wife a mutual self-committal from which there is no retreat. It rests upon a fidelity so complete as to make dissolution of the relationship impossible. Such a love must essentially be a thing of the will no less than of the emotions—and it needs at all times the sustaining power of the grace of God. It is precisely here that the modern idea of love is so weak and impoverished. When physical attraction, sentimental feelings, and self-interest are so often the determining factors in the relationships which lead to marriage, it is hardly surprising that breakdowns occur so frequently.

The quality of the one-flesh union has an important

¹ All this is expressed in the familiar words of consent in the Service in the Book of Common Prayer.

² Mark x. 6-9.

bearing upon the family and its well-being, just as the family contributes to the developing life of the one flesh. But the intimate connexion between the two must never be allowed to obscure the fact that husband and wife necessarily have an existence of their own which is separate from, and impenetrable by, the family. They are the procreators of their children, and around them as a centre the life of the family is organised; yet within the group they live a life apart—a life which can never be submerged in or subordinated to that of the larger community. In any consideration of marriage and the family, therefore, it is imperative to stress the continuing importance of the one-flesh union, and it should be the concern of all who care for the family to protect also the separate and interior life of the couple themselves.

THE PLANNING OF A FAMILY

As procreators and nurturers of the family, husband and wife have special responsibilities towards it; but they have also responsibilities towards the community. It is not my purpose here to discuss the full range of these dual obligations, but one aspect thereof requires particular consideration in the present context, and in the light of problems which have become acute only during the last hundred years. I refer, of course, to the duty incumbent upon husband and wife to plan their family with due regard to the welfare of their children and the good of society.

It may be taken for granted that the duty of family planning as such is obvious and unexceptionable. To what considerations, then, must husband and wife pay

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regard in limiting and spacing their children? They have first to reckon with the parental instinct itself—a powerful impulse which is normally intensified by the conscious recognition or the intuitive sense that the one-flesh union is also enriched and stabilised by the experience of parenthood. Furthermore, they will appreciate that children are an essential contribution by the married to the continuance and the vitality of society; the Graeco-Roman conception of marriage as existing in order to provide citizens to serve the State and to worship the gods was thus far sound. Finally, Christians will reflect that children are a blessing promised and ordinarily bestowed by God upon husband and wife, and that it is His will that they should seek His gift.

It is one thing, however, to establish the duty of parenthood, but quite another to determine the optimum size of a family, and no hard and fast rules can be applied. In the past, infant mortality and the value of children as an economic asset made numerous offspring desirable, and of the many born it often happened that few survived to maturity. But medical science and a changed economic and social situation mean that the married now approach parenthood with a different conception of the size of the family for which they can provide; income, personal circumstances, and housing facilities are only some of the factors which affect their decision. And they act not only as individuals but also as citizens; consequently the number of their children should be determined with reference, on the one hand to the maintenance of the population's replacement rate, and on the other to avoidance of the dangers of over-population. Finally, they will not forget that in producing future citizens

quality matters as well as quantity; and as Christians they will recall that it is their duty to educate their children to love and serve God and to be loyal and active soldiers of Christ. Their ability to discharge these responsibilities under the conditions of modern life will also play a part in deciding the size of their family.

Christians in general are agreed upon the need for responsible family planning, but they differ in regard to the means by which this may be accomplished. All would condemn abortion and the practice of *coitus interruptus*, and very few would be found to maintain, with certain extreme rigorists, that coitus should never occur unless a child is desired, and should cease immediately it is evident that conception has occurred—a view inculcated by no official Church teaching. These methods apart, however, there are three opinions which command varying degrees of support.

Some would hold that coitus may occur as and when mutually desired by husband and wife, consistent with the rule of chastity or due moderation in the right use of the privileges of marriage. For the purpose of family planning they would allow advantage to be taken of the so-called 'safe period', so long as parenthood is not evaded or the family unduly restricted; but they would condemn the use of any form of contraceptive method. This is substantially the view taught by the Roman Church.

Others would not wholly exclude the use of contraceptives, but would regard this as an exceptional measure to be reserved for cases of special necessity. This, broadly speaking, is the import of Resolution 15 of the Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1930, which commended abstinence as the "primary and obvious" means

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of family limitation, but recognised nevertheless that there might be circumstances in which the employment of artificial methods could be considered morally justifiable. In laying it down that the question must "be decided on Christian principles" wherever there is "a clearly-felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and . . . a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence," this Resolution has been widely and not unreasonably interpreted as leaving the decision to the informed conscience of the individual believer. Others again would not admit the qualification with which this permission is hedged, and would regard the responsible use of contraception for the spacing and limitation of children as fully warranted on moral grounds. It may be suspected that a large proportion of non-Roman Christians in this country does in fact endorse the latter view.

The immediate point at issue is, of course, whether or not contraception is intrinsically a moral procedure. Its opponents assert that the primary end both of marriage and of coitus is procreation, and that any frustration of this end by artificial means cannot but be gravely sinful. Its advocates, on the other hand, have generally taken their stand upon the welfare of the one flesh and of the family, and upon the personal significance of coitus in the life of the married. While the arguments of the former have generally been based upon the traditional principles and method of moral theology, and upon a traditional conception of the nature of marriage and of coitus, those of the latter have frequently been weakened by what has appeared to be merely an appeal to expediency or sentiment. Consequently there has been very little discussion of the question in purely theological terms, and it has not

sufficiently been appreciated that the fundamental issue is not the morality of contraception, but the meaning and purpose of marriage. Once this is understood, however, the controversy over what is somewhat infelicitously called 'birth control' (which is really the task of the gynaecologist or midwife at parturition) resolves itself into a debate upon the theological significance of sex and of union in one flesh.

THE PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE

Full discussion of all the theological questions involved would be impracticable here, but it may be useful to review some of the considerations of which the theologian ought to take account in attempting to make an impartial and constructive assessment of the problem of contraception.

First, as to marriage: it is no longer possible to rest content with the traditional assumption that its chief purpose is to populate earth and heaven. Ontologically, as the nature of sex itself implies, marriage is a unique, unitive relation of male and female in one flesh, characterised by a distinctive and all-embracing common life to which alone the act of coitus belongs. Of the manifold enterprises of this common life, one in particular distinguishes it from all other human associations—namely, the founding and education of a family. Yet though children, as we have already seen, may greatly enrich marriage, they do not affect the inward truth or the ontological character of the one-flesh union. They are to be regarded rather as a blessing bestowed upon marriage than as its sole or principal *raison d'être*, for even the

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childless union, considered in its essential character as a personal relation, is not ontologically defective—though it may (or may not) be impoverished accordingly.

It is arguable, therefore, that the responsible use of contraception by husband and wife does not defeat but rather helps to promote the true purposes of marriage. It enables them to plan their family thoughtfully, and with full regard to all the economic and other factors which affect the well-being of their children, while at the same time continuing the coitus which is not the least significant feature of their common life. But here we reach the crux of the whole matter—for Christian tradition has always maintained that the purpose of coitus, considered *per se*, is generation. Provided generation is not artificially excluded, however, it has long been allowed that coitus is also permissible for the relief of fallen Man's concupiscence, while latterly it has been conceded that it may serve for the expression of love, the safeguarding of the home, and the comfort of husband and wife. Can the traditional view of coitus as primarily generative be upheld?

Careful consideration suggests that coitus has, in fact, two distinct purposes, neither of which can be given precedence over the other. It is at once conceptional and relational, for in addition to promoting generation it is also the means whereby the one-flesh union is established and consolidated, husband and wife express and deepen their mutual love, and the sexual impulse is relieved of its destructive potentialities by expending itself in acts of affection. It is regarded as allowable to select against the conceptional and in favour of the relational purpose of coitus by taking advantage of woman's periodical

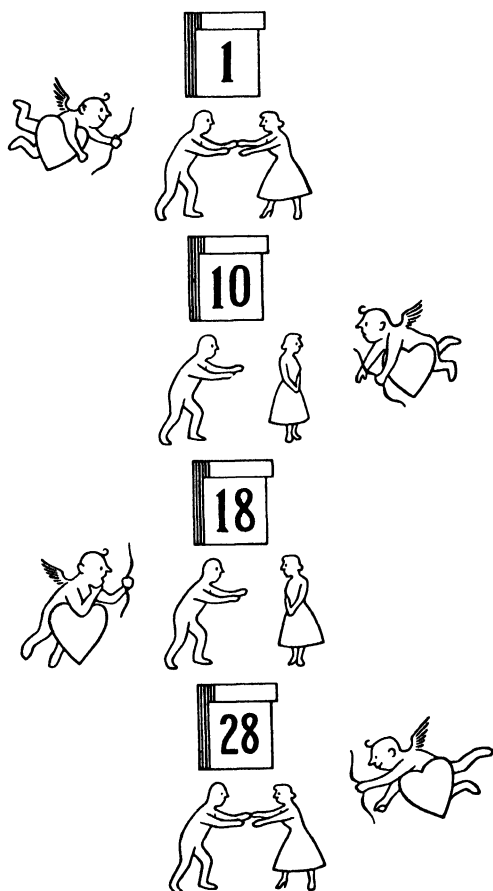
infertility; may selection also be effected by artificial means?

The argument against contraception rests principally upon the contention that protective devices render coitus 'unnatural', and therefore sinful. This view is supported by traditional moral theology, which determines the morality of an act by reference to its 'object'—a technical term not to be confused with 'purpose', since it relates to that which defines an act as that particular act and no other. Contraception, it is alleged, so alters not merely the biological effect but also the entire character of coitus that it is no more what God intended it to be. Here, however, we must ask whether it is possible any longer to accept a definition of the 'object' of coitus which was framed before its relational significance was properly appreciated, and which concerns only one of its aspects.

The word 'natural' inevitably begs large questions, and its use in a venereal context is peculiarly liable to be misunderstood. An act is not humanly 'natural' simply because it is characteristic of mammalian behaviour in general, or is practised by a majority in any particular society or culture. For the theologian the 'natural' act, broadly speaking, is the act which conforms to God's will for Man as declared by revelation and as perceived by right reason. In this case revelation affords us no guidance, but it is arguable that right reason, taking cognisance of the personal aspect of marriage and the relational purpose of coitus, forbids us now to dismiss contraception as 'unnatural' in terms of our definition.

For many years the case against contraception has been urged with much cogency and persuasiveness, notably by Roman Catholic controversialists; but practically no

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The rule of the calendar destroying spontaneity

attempt has been made to present theological arguments in favour of contraception. It will be useful, therefore, to consider some of the points which might be adduced in support of a sound method of contraception as a legitimate and moral method of family planning. First, we may ask why the use of the 'safe period' is unsatisfactory. Omitting the various practical objections, which in themselves are weighty, it should be observed that this method, though mechanically 'natural', can in other respects be regarded as 'unnatural'. In particular, it enslaves men and women to their physiological and biological processes, subordinating the most intimate aspect of personal sexual relation to the impersonal functions of the body. It requires them to order by the calendar an act which derives its relational significance from factors which are independent of ovulation and unamenable to times and seasons, and which loses much if not all spontaneity as an expression of love if it becomes (as with this method it must, to a certain extent) calculated and premeditated.

"TO ENDEAR ONE ANOTHER . . ."

There is force in the contention that contraception, far from being inherently unnatural, is only one of many means whereby Man is now able both to assist nature and to articulate more completely that dominion over nature with which God has invested him—for if the Creator has indeed "put all things in subjection under his feet",¹ there is no reason why the bodily processes should be excluded from this lordship. One point, however, needs to be

¹ Psalms, viii. 6.

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stressed with the utmost emphasis, for it can only be neglected at Man's peril. The dominion over the creation conferred upon him by God is not an absolute dominion, but one exercised in the capacity of a vice-regent answerable to his sovereign. It carries with it the correlative responsibility to use the creation for God's glory and the benefit of humanity; exploitation of nature is an abuse of Man's authority for which, as we have seen in more spheres than one, he pays dearly.

But contraception, used responsibly and conscientiously within marriage, does not exploit or abuse human sexual nature, but rather enables it better to achieve its generative and relational ends. Thus husband and wife can enjoy coitus for the enrichment of their life as one flesh and, in the words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, in order to "lighten and ease the cares and sadnesses of household affairs, and to endear one another,"¹ at times when they do not desire conception to occur—provided always that it is understood that such coitus is morally legitimate only when the duty of parenthood has been fully and willingly accepted.

Unfortunately much of the polemic directed against contraception in the past has appeared to assume that it is nothing but a device to enable the married to indulge themselves licentiously while shirking parenthood. Underlying this attitude there seems to be something of that deeply-rooted suspicion and fear of physical sexuality which infiltrated into the Church at a very early stage with other dualistic notions from Hellenism and the Orient. Christian sexual thought in the past has too often assumed that coitus, if not directed deliberately and even dis-

¹ *Holy Living*, II. iii., Rules for Married Persons . . . 2.

passionately to procreation, must be prompted by lascivious motives. Unworthy imputations of this kind only obscure the real issues, and discredit those who revive or perpetuate them. It must therefore be emphasised that contraception is not merely a means of ministering to lust, but rather, a responsible exercise of human freedom, aided by scientific discovery, to select against one legitimate purpose of coitus and in favour of another no less legitimate.

Contraception has often been denounced as a frustration of the procreative ends of marriage and of coitus, while little has been said about continence as a possible frustration of their relational ends—but it has not sufficiently been appreciated that contraception can actually assist the fulfilment of the procreative purpose of marriage, properly understood. Procreation is more than the begetting and the bearing of offspring; it is (as the Church has always taught) nothing less than creation on behalf of God himself. Now the creative task of parenthood is not discharged until all the children have attained adult age—and it is a commonplace today that nothing helps their successful growth towards maturity more than the love of their parents and the stability of their home. In promoting marital, and therefore domestic, harmony, regular coitus normally plays an important part; its beneficial effects are not confined solely to the one-flesh union, but contribute indirectly to the well-being of the family as a whole. In so far, therefore, as contraception makes possible between husband and wife at all times the relational acts of coitus which cement and deepen their love, relieve their natural sexual tensions, and bring to a focal point of realisation the meaning of their common

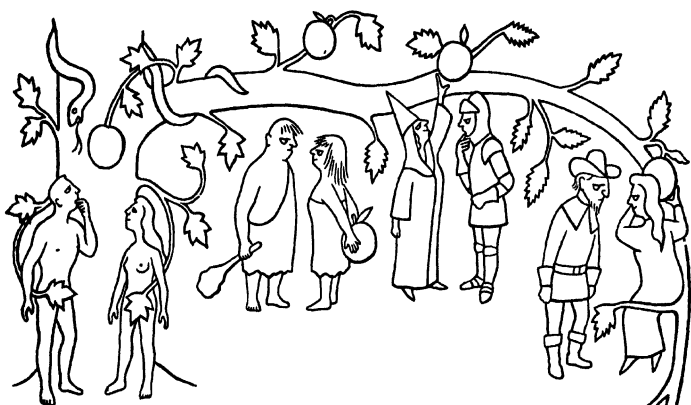
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life, it may justly be regarded as assisting rather than frustrating the procreative purpose of marriage.

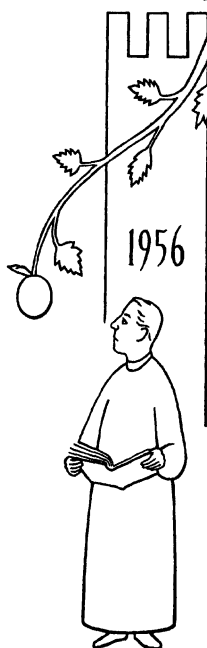
THE NEED FOR CHRISTIAN STUDY AND RESEARCH

Here I must conclude this brief and necessarily incomplete survey of some of the theological considerations which bear directly upon marriage and the family, and which can illuminate as nothing else the nature of sex and of relationship between man and woman. I hope that I have succeeded in showing how wide of the mark is the all-too-common humanistic and scientific assumption that Christian theology is negative and outmoded in its approach to sexual questions. Like other studies concerned with such questions, it has its own proper principles, categories, and disciplines; but in terms of these it can speak with profound insight, realism and relevance to men and women of our time. All who are anxious to promote healthy sexual attitudes and happy homes and marriages ought, therefore, seriously to take account of what theology can say about these matters, *as it is presented by the theologian*—for all too frequently the Christian view of sex and marriage is known and judged either by obsolete expositions, or by the amateurish and often factually inaccurate statements of writers who are obviously (and sometimes confessedly) biased or hostile.

But if a Christian theology of sexual relation is to have the fair and sympathetic hearing which it deserves, and to which it is entitled by reason of its intrinsic and its practical importance, it is essential that the Church shall do all in its power to encourage study and research to this end. And in particular it must consider whether its



traditional assumptions in the realm of sex are always correct or fully warranted, and whether its teaching is always happily and convincingly adapted to the needs of evangelism and apologetic in the twentieth century. There is a challenge here to the Church, to develop a hitherto neglected but highly significant aspect of the Christian doctrine of Man.



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