

Eugenics and the Clergy in the Early Twentieth-Century United States

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Introduction

When I tell people that I have spent a considerable amount of time doing work in the disciplines of both religion and biology, they almost always ask, "What do you think of evolution?" They are, of course, referring to the controversy that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries between the disciples of Darwinian evolution and those advocating Biblical literalism (Marsden 184–95).

Yet during roughly this same period, an analogous (if less well remembered) encounter took place between the liberal churches of the day and the science of evolutionary biology. This was the encounter of liberal Christianity and eugenics. In this article, I examine the following questions: How did American churchmen and the eugenicists view each other? What role, if any, did the clergy play in the American eugenics movement? Finally, what caused the eventual termination of this relationship?

Some background is called for first. The word "eugenics" was coined by English scientist Francis Galton in 1883. Galton defined the term as the science of improving racial stock through giving "the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing over the less suitable"

(Kevles ix). However, eugenic notions had existed in America even before Galton's definition; as early as 1863, Horace Bushnell had made hereditary references in his bestselling *Christian Nurture* (Bushnell 195–96, 202–03).

Eugenic theory and practice also occurred in John Humphrey Noyes's perfectionist Oneida commune. As early as 1848, Noyes had written that "amateness" should "have its proper gratification without drawing after it procreation as a necessary consequence"; he further argued that men and women should be able to control their fertility until "science takes charge of the business." Noyes later read both Darwin and Galton; finally, between 1869 and 1880, he presided over a eugenic breeding program that he called "stirpiculture" (Oneida Community 52; Parker 254–55).

By the turn of the century, eugenics began moving out of avant-garde reform circles and into the realm of both professional and popular science. In 1903, for example, the American Breeders Association formed for professional breeders and university biologists. By 1906, the group had a eugenics committee, with membership including such notables as biologist and Stanford University Chancellor David Stair Jordan, inventor and audiologist Alexander Graham Bell, University of Chicago sociologist Charles R. Henderson, plant breeder Luther Burbank, eugenicist Roswell

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Johnson, Stanford biologist Vernon Kellogg, and zoologist and eugenicist Charles B. Davenport. Popular articles on eugenics also began appearing in magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and *Popular Science Monthly*. Books aimed at popular audiences bore titles such as *The Task of Social Hygiene* (1913), *The Right to Be Well Born* (1917), and *Racial Hygiene* (1929).¹

What one may ask, what was the *goal* of eugenics? What was it about eugenics that caught the attention of Americans during this period? If we examine the literature produced during the period from roughly 1910 to 1930, we find that the eugenics movement was concerned with more than simply breeding better physical specimens of humanity. Instead, eugenics provided a worldview in which the value of anything—be it a physical object, a social structure, a philosophy, or an individual—could be determined according to the degree to which it furthered the cause of the race, primarily through enhancement of the society's gene pool. Eugenics thus served as a catch-all philosophy for many different social reforms, both conservative and liberal. Most eugenics sympathizers appear to have favored immigration restriction on the grounds that it diluted good puritan racial stock, or that it made America a dumping ground for dysgenic (that is, eugenically unfit) rejects from other countries (Popenoe and Johnson 298–317; Geothe 6–9). War was generally considered to be undesirable because the most “fit” males tended to be killed (Hunt 3–10; Fasten 11–13; Johnson and Popenoe 326–27). The eugenic and dysgenic effects of modern health care was often debated; health care was questioned by some on the grounds that it might allow the unfit to survive more frequently than in the natural state, thus corrupting the gene pool (Fisk 3–7; Rosanoff et al. 16–17).² Birth control, feminism, and advanced education for women were hotly debated; while some argued that educated women would make better, more eugenically sound choices in mate selection, more writers were concerned that advanced education and careers would cause women to neglect their “racial duties” of propagating the race (Little et al. 22–24; Cooper et al. 18–20; “The Woman Movement and Eugen-

ics” 226; Sprague 130–33; Conklin et al. 302–04; Mjoen 323–26; Blanchard, Woodhouse, and Snedden 18–20; Spencer 21–25).

The Founding of the American Eugenics

One group pushing the “eugenics as worldview” perspective was the American Eugenics Society (AES). The impetus for this group's formation was the Second International Congress of Eugenics held in New York in 1921 at the American Museum of Natural History. At this time, Dr. J. A. Mjoen of Norway suggested that each country form central eugenics organizations to advise their governments and to spread popular information about eugenics, race hygiene, race biology, and the advantages and dangers of race crossing (Consultative Eugenics Committee of Norway 1).

A group of Americans seized upon this invitation with enthusiasm. A provisional American committee was immediately established. Calling itself the Eugenics Committee of the United States, the group consisted of Irving Fisher, Charles Davenport, C. C. Little, Henry Fairfield Osborn, Madison Grant, and Harry Olson. Each of these persons was both distinguished in his field and also well connected. Fisher was a political economist who taught at Yale; he was also an early advocate of public health programs. Davenport spent his early career teaching zoology at Harvard, eventually moving in 1904 to direct the Station for Experimental Evolution and the Eugenics Record Office. At various times, he edited the *Journal of Experimental Zoology*, the *Journal of Physical Anthropology*, and *Genetics*; he also served as an officer in the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Zoological Society, and the Eugenics Research Association. Little was a well-known cancer researcher and served as the president of the University of Maine, and later as the president of the University of Michigan. H. F. Osborn, president

of the American Museum of Natural History, was a student of T. H. Huxley and eventually became America's best-known paleontologist, and was a popularizer of evolutionist thought. Grant was a writer best known for his belief in Nordic racial superiority, as exemplified in his bestseller, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). Grant was a staunch proponent of immigration restriction; he was also an early conservationist. Olson was chief justice of the Chicago Municipal Court. Each of these men would be leaders in the eugenics movement for decades, often appearing on the boards of various eugenics organizations (Mehler 306–449).

The Eugenics Committee grew rapidly. By 1926, when the name was changed to the American Eugenics Society (AES), there were 928 members in forty-five states and several foreign countries. A sizable number of these members participated in one or more of the group's subcommittees; these smaller groups investigated matters such as immigration restriction, crime prevention, proeugenic legislation, popular education, genealogy, and social work.

The AES and Religion

The largest and best-funded of these subcommittees, however, came to be the AES's Committee for Cooperation with clergymen. Liberal clergymen willing to accommodate their faith to the new discoveries of science found themselves doubly welcomed by the eugenicists. First, ministers were seen as eugenically superior because it was observed that clerical progeny were much more likely to achieve social eminence than the offspring of laborers (Huntington and Whitney 24–25; Huntington 22–28).³ Second, eugenicists, with their nontraditional views of procreation, desired the moral imprimatur of the clergy. Thus, the bestselling popular science writer Albert Wiggam could write,

Had Jesus been among us, he would have been president of the First Eugenics Con-

gress . . . He would have cried: "A new commandment I give unto you—the biological Golden Rule, the completed Golden Rule of Science. *"Do unto both the born and the unborn as you would have both the born and unborn do unto you"* . . . And eugenics, which is simply conscious, intelligent organic evolution, furnishes the final program for the completed Christianization of mankind. (Wiggam 81, 110–11)

Indeed, three ministers were charter members of the AES's advisory council, which formed in 1923; these were Father John Cooper, a priest and noted anthropologist at Catholic University of America; Bishop William Lawrence, Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts; and Harry Emerson Fosdick, one of the best-known liberal churchmen of this era. Rabbi Louis Mann, rabbi of Chicago's Sinai Temple, joined the advisory council in 1927.⁴ The clergymen's committee, also formed in 1923, contained a number of other illustrious members, including (in addition to Cooper, Fosdick, and Mann) Charles W. Gilkey, Dean of Religion at the University of Chicago; Bishop F. J. McConnell, president of the Federal Council of Churches; G. E. Shipler, editor of *The Churchman* magazine; J. W. Eliot, head of social service work of the Northern Baptists; and Rufus Jones, a leading American Quaker ("Answering Some Critics").

The accomplishments of the clergymen's committee, however, appear to have been much less impressive than the list of members' names would suggest. The subcommittee's primary achievements appear to have been limited to three areas, which I will describe briefly.

The first of these was the subcommittee's sponsorship of two national sermon contests, one in 1926 and another in 1928.⁵ Indeed, with the possible exception of the AES's magazine, it appears that of all of the activities of the clergymen's subcommittee, the sermon contests were the most effective in actually bringing the eugenic gospel into the churches. Historian Daniel Kevles has estimated that the first contest inspired about 300 eugenics sermons around the country, with about sixty actually being submitted to the contest (61).

These sermons drew upon common eugenic themes, including the problem of a low birth rate among the educated classes, the need for sterilization of the eugenically unfit, the opportunity for eugenics to provide for increased self-fulfillment of the individual through increased mental, physical, and moral capacity, and the opportunity for a less well-defined “racial fulfillment.”

An example is found in Phillips E. Osgood's prize-winning sermon, “The Refiner's Fire.” Drawing a parallel between eugenics and God's refining fire as spoken of by the Hebrew prophet Malachi, Osgood spoke of human bodies as being “stewards of an undying stream of lifestuff,” “a River of Life from out the Throne of God.” Osgood then contrasted the exceptional achievements of the family of Jonathan Edwards with the “idle, ignorant, lewd, vicious, pauper, diseased, imbecile, insane, and criminal” individuals comprising the Jukes clan.⁶ The minister closed his sermon asking for a rehallowing of marriage, emphasizing not only “wholesome love,” but also sex education, a delay period between marriage license application and marriage, and “civil certificates of sexual cleanness before marriage.” Another winning sermon by Kenneth C. MacArthur condemned war on the grounds that it pruned “the most vigorous branches of the tree of life” (6–9). MacArthur later served briefly as head of the Committee for Cooperation with Clergymen.

These homilies comprise a fascinating body of literature that deserves separate treatment. For our immediate purposes, it is sufficient to note that one contest judge, although admiring the vigor, openness, and clear logic of the sermons, also complained that most of the authors used identical sources, quoted the same passages, and used the same illustrations. He concluded, “The lack of originality both in matter and in manner is rather appalling” (Sharp).⁷

The second accomplishment of the clergymen's committee was the holding of a luncheon in New York City in 1929. Although hailed as the “first major eugenical event” of the year, the response was rather poor. Despite having a talk given by the bestselling author and eugenicist A. E.

Wiggam, the 1,500 invitations sent out yielded only some thirty-six attenders.

The third achievement of the clergymen was in the form of contributions to the American Eugenics Society's tracts, and especially to the organization's magazine, *Eugenics: A Journal of Race Betterment* (*EJRB*). This magazine, aimed at making eugenics accessible to the average person, was published between 1928 and 1931, with a circulation of 1,100 in 1929 (“Expansion” 26). For example, a sermon number featured prize-winning homilies from the 1928 sermon competition. Eventually the magazine added a regular religion page, “Eugenics and the Church,” written by the chairman of the clergymen's subcommittee.⁸ Indeed, religion often found its way into the pages of the AES's magazine, with several cover stories on subjects such as relationship of eugenics to the Roman Catholic Church. Ministers and rabbis were often asked to contribute remarks on various topics, such as intermarriage, the effect of contraception on the birth rate of genius, and whether eugenics was a form of “race snobbery” (Davenport et al.; Cooper et al.; Whitney et al.).

The Depression and Its Aftermath

In 1931, the American Eugenics Society had a reversal of fortunes. The Great Depression resulted in a dramatic drop in the society's membership, and an ensuing budget crunch resulted in the suspension in publication of the group's magazine. During the early 1930s, the AES and its subcommittees were fairly inactive. In 1935, the group abolished its advisory council, thus severing already inactive ties with the clergymen in this group.

Yet there was to be one final encounter between eugenics and religion. This was a clergymen's conference in 1939 on the subject of “Eugenics and the Church.” The list of expected conferees contained over 140 names. In addition to the speakers, the list included such notables as Henry Sloane Coffin of Union Theological Seminary; Rabbi Sidney T. Goldstein; Father John

LaFarge of the Jesuit-run *America*; Bishop Francis J. McConnell; Dean H. E. Fosbroke of General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church; Reverend Walter M. Howlett of the Greater New York Federation of Churches; Brigadier Agnes McKernan of the Salvation Army; C. F. Potter of the First Humanist Society of New York City; Rabbi Stephen S. Wise; Father John M. Cooper; social reformer Father John Ryan; and Norman V. Peale of the Marble Collegiate Reformed Church (American Eugenics Society, "Conference on Eugenics"). This gathering also appears to mark the final parting of the ways between the eugenics movement and the clergymen. Four papers were presented during this conference by the Roman Catholic Father Francis J. Connell, Dr. Leland Foster Wood, Rabbi Louis E. Newman, and Reverend Charles Stanley Jones. A round table discussion followed, scheduled to be opened by Harry Emerson Fosdick.⁹

Only Father Connell's paper and a partial transcription of comments from the closing round table discussion are extant.¹⁰ The latter discussion merits especially close attention. Dr. George Hall of New York's St. Thomas Church was called upon to present a synopsis of the papers presented. Hall concluded that Christians and eugenicists were in agreement on the "ideals of the home"; persons lacking in health, intelligence, time, and money should not have children. Similarly, the purposes of marriage was four-fold: providing happiness for the couple, propagating the race, and providing for the physical needs and education of the offspring.

The acting president of the American Eugenics Society, Frederick Osborn, was then called upon to respond. Instead of commenting on Hall's synopsis, Osborn stated,

I think I find myself more bitterly discouraged than I have ever been in the years I have been working and thinking about eugenics. There is nothing that has been said here that might not have been written, or said, 20 years ago . . .

Osborn went on to express his dismay at the expected shortfall of people to replace the current

generation, and the clergymen's failure to recognize this new menace. He concluded,

I am embarrassed. I did not mean to make this kind of speech. If the Churches cannot teach us the true values of life and the beauties of life, where are we going to learn the lesson?

At this point, Rabbi Newman observed that very little had been said during to conference about either the "economics of human betterment" or of love. Newman also claimed that slum dwellers with a seeming hereditary taint could be almost miraculously redeemed with fresh air and education. A Dr. Huntington—probably Ellsworth Huntington—countered, pointing out that families listed in *Who's Who* did not reproduce quickly enough to keep from dying out. Osborn responded to this by saying that "superior families" did not refer to Fifth Avenue, but rather to "the decent, competent people of every society." Father Connell then asserted that the Catholic Church offered "no compromise," that any person practicing birth control could not be a good Catholic, and that *Who's Who* did not represent "better Catholics."

The last statement recorded at the conference came from Dr. Hall, who lamented the lack of any eugenic activity within the churches at the institutional level. He concluded that the Church had always been a follower, but also hoped that it might become a leader. He concluded,

It may be the last opportunity the Church will receive . . . The world has stood a great deal from us clergymen . . . I do not know how much more it is going to stand. The Eugenics Society offers an opportunity for us to be leaders and I hope we will not fail. (American Eugenics Society, "Conference on the Relation" 4)

A synopsis of the clergymen's conference was published as the lead article in the following month's issue of *Eugenical News* (Osborn, "Philosophy"). Osborn wrote the article himself, omitting mention of the final dispute and saying only that the time for discussion had been too short. Osborn carefully stated what he felt to be the present crisis of eugenics: the lack of enough

people to ensure a future generation. He also called for a future two-day-long conference, which does not appear to have ever been held. Occasional statements by ministers continued to appear occasionally in the *Eugenical News*, but no further concerted effort ever appears to have taken place.

Conclusions

We may now attempt to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this article. First, the eugenicists, ministers, and rabbis tended to see each other as a means to an end. The eugenicists tended to see religion purely from a utilitarian standpoint. Clergymen were valued for the social and moral authority that they wielded, and for their supposed ability to produce eugenically superior offspring. However, clerical assertions referring to noneugenically oriented extrarational truths were either humored or ignored. Rather, it was hoped that ministers and rabbis, as spokesmen of truth, would become mouthpieces of a new, scientific, eugenic gospel shorn of superstition, and help their congregations move from the worship of a personal, loving, small, and jealous God to the veneration of a vast, impersonal Reason and all-pervasive intelligence of which everything is a part (Sherbon).

Liberal ministers and rabbis, on the other hand, viewed eugenics in an equally utilitarian manner. Eugenics offered an ideological avenue through which the physical Kingdom of God on earth could be brought to fruition, while promising a solution to seemingly intractable social problems such as poverty and retardation. Most of the clergy showed enthusiasm for eugenics in the abstract, while displaying a relatively low level of commitment to the cause as a whole. Ministers instead used eugenical notions as a vehicle to promote their own particular interests and pet projects. Examples of this are found in the clergymen of the advisory council; the only article that Rabbi Mann contributed to *Eugenics: A Journal of Race Betterment* was a short piece con-

demning women having children out of wedlock for allegedly eugenical reasons. Neither Bishop Lawrence nor Fosdick contributed anything substantial to the AES's journal; rather, Fosdick appears to have lent his name primarily out of his interests in overpopulation and birth control. Lawrence, on the other hand, feared both a loss of Anglo-Saxon cultural hegemony and the growth of a mentality of mass-production that seemed to stifle American individualism (Miller 430–31; Inman; Lawrence 26, 31–33).

A second reason for the ministers' endorsements of eugenics, coupled with their overall lack of involvement, may be found at a more personal level. Most of the ministers who participated in the eugenics movement occupied positions serving the more urban, affluent members of American society, or else held posts on seminary faculties. Most of the clergymen and their congregations (and the scientists) were generally isolated from the persons most affected by the eugenics programs; those sterilized usually were not asked their opinion.¹¹

The distance between the clergymen and the eugenicists was likely aggravated by the structure of the American Eugenics Society. The central leadership of the group was virtually an oligarchy, with the same leaders trading offices from time to time. The clergymen's committee, on the other hand, went through three chairmen. Only the last of these, Reverend George Reid Andrews, achieved a position of prominence within the group's hierarchy. However, Andrews was fired from this position in 1936, and there is no mention of a replacement for his clergymen's committee post.

New blood and fresh ideas finally crept in only in the middle to late 1930s, when the original leaders of both the AES and their religious compatriots began to retire.¹² The new leader of the AES was Frederick Osborn (nephew of Henry Fairfield Osborn). Osborn may have been influenced by both the experiences of the recent depression and by disturbing reports of civil rights violations in Germany. Whatever his personal motivations, however, he began striving to make eugenics more scientifically respectable while

embracing a more populist ethic of human “decency,” or at least an ethical, nonracist meritocracy. To these ends, he began to move the AES away from making prescriptive statements and toward studying descriptive demography. Osborn (“Philosophy”) also downplayed sterilization in favor of birth control, and advocated improvement of the home environment so that parents could “raise themselves above their neighbors.”¹³

I began this article by referring to the conflict that took place between fundamentalists and evolutionists during the 1920s. It seems appropriate to end on the same subject. Historian George Marsden has described how the fundamentalists came to occupy an increasingly marginal role in American life, especially after the Scopes trial. Marsden further pointed out that fundamentalists opposed the teaching of evolution not only because of conflicts with the Biblical texts, but also because Darwinism made counterintuitive claims resting upon inference rather than direct observation. Thus, lacking both Biblical support and empirical evidence, evolution seemed to fly in the face of common sense. Fundamentalists similarly saw truth as unitary; thus, they tended not to accept the suggestion that there might be different kinds of truth, one scientific, the other religious. They were thus willing to subordinate inferential scientific claims to the supposedly empirical claims of the Bible (Marsden 212).

Liberal churchmen during the 1920s were in some ways merely the flip side of fundamentalism. They too were inclined to see science and religion as unitary. However, they were much more inclined to accept scientific claims based upon inference, and to allow the claims of science to influence their views of Biblical texts. In this view, the liberals were always doomed to play catch-up with the advancement of empirical science.

By the late 1930s, however, new voices began to emerge within American liberal Protestantism that would render the churches more cautious of promises of cultural utopias. This movement, dubbed “neo-orthodoxy” by its critics, rejected the former era’s unified and at times uncritical view of self, society, and history. Young theolo-

gians such as the Niebuhr brothers, Wilhelm Pauck, and others in the late 1920s and early 1930s signaled the beginning of a “self-critical” phase in American liberalism that called into question large segments of Progressive optimism—an optimism that had lent support to a faith in eugenics. This opened the way for educated middle- and upper-class churches and theologians to reaffirm more traditional notions of a transcendent God, divine revelation, and sin. This new way of thinking included a degree of healthy self-doubt largely missing from the writings of earlier religious progressives; neo-orthodoxy implied that even well-educated and well-intentioned social reform programs were human products, and thus fallible and deserving of careful scrutiny. Pauck, for example, wrote, “Modernism has attempted to interpret religion in all its aspects—philosophical, historical, psychological, doctrinal, and practical—from the point of view of anthropology. In spite of all its theoretical and practical knowledge, it has lost God” (Pauck 57; see also Fox 106, 112; Hutchison 288–98). Although claiming to take scientific discovery seriously, such Christian neo-orthodox claims tended to break the world into a transcendent sacred realm to be dealt with by theologians, and a profane realm governed by scientists. Morally, this movement paralleled that of the fundamentalists in that it represented a return back to a “common sense” morality grounded in fairly traditional Judeo-Christian ethics. At the same time, neo-orthodoxy respected the sovereignty of science and did not encroach on this domain.¹⁴

Christian neo-orthodoxy seems to have tacitly assumed value-neutrality of science and technology, while still allowing criticism of the political uses of certain applications of the same science. For example, nuclear research is morally permissible, while nuclear proliferation could be criticized. This attitude may have worked well for a number of years, especially for “big science” projects (nuclear weapons, superconducting supercolliders, space exploration, and so on) that require government support and regulation. However, this same success may have left later neo-orthodox mainline American religion

unprepared to deal with subsequent scientific advances, such as developments in reproductive technology, genetic manipulation, cloning, and similar technologies. Unlike the national-scale social and political movements of the past, the new “technologies of personal choice” would appear to fly beneath the radar of traditional neo-orthodox religiosity. When viewed from this perspective, one might wonder if the much-maligned fundamentalists of the 1920s were early to recognize, at least in a simplistic manner, the personal and social implications of science.

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Notes

1. Havelock Ellis, *The Task of Social Hygiene* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913); W. E. D. Stokes, *The Right to Be Well Born or Horse Breeding in its Relation to Eugenics* (New York: C. J. O'Brien, 1917); Thurman B. Rice, *Racial Hygiene: A Practical Discussion of Eugenics and Race Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1929). Terms such as “race hygiene” and “social hygiene” were often used interchangeably with the word “eugenics.”

2. Writers in the AES's official publication, *Eugenics: A Journal of Race Betterment*, often took differing views on this issue. Some favored including “euthenics” (improvement of environmental conditions) in the eugenic program, others suggested that a eugenic aristocracy be developed, while still others pointed out the need to permit generally unrestricted marriage to maintain social solidarity and national morale in spite of occasional eugenic setbacks caused by the “wrong” people breeding.

3. Huntington and Whitney calculated that it took either 48,000 unskilled laborers, 16,000 skilled laborers, 690 farmers, 46 professionals, 20 clergymen, or 7 Unitarian clergymen to produce one son or daughter in *Who's Who*. *Who's Who*-based arguments appeared with some frequency in American eugenics literature.

4. The reason for the delay in adding Mann is unclear. Mehler suggested that the committee may have had trouble finding a rabbi

who would support Jewish immigration restriction prior to the immigration restriction act of 1924. Additionally, rabbis may have been reluctant to participate in a group lead by Charles Davenport and Madison Grant, both of whom had published books containing strongly anti-Semitic passages. Mann was a founder of Planned Parenthood and the National Conference of Christians and Jews (Mehler 64–65, 397–98). For more about Jewish involvement in the American eugenics movement, see Rosen (85–109).

5. Though credited to the Committee for Cooperation with Clergymen, the first contest appears to have been administered by Leon Whitney. Whitney was field secretary at this time. (See also “Sermons on Eugenics”; “Prize Winners in the First Sermon Contest”; and “The Sermons”). A third contest was announced in March 1930, but it is uncertain whether it was actually completed (“Sermon Contest”).

6. The Jukes were often cited in eugenics literature as being an example of a dysgenic family (Kevles 71; Haller 21–22). The Kallikak family was used in this way as well; a review and critique of the eugenic studies done on the latter family is found in Smith (3–19). See also Rosen (25–52).

7. The judges for the first contest were Charles Davenport, William L. Phelps of Yale University, and O. S. Davis of the Congregationalist Chicago Theological Seminary. Interestingly, Davis himself declined to join the society, claiming limited salary and prior obligations (Davis). The second contest was judged by H. H. Laughlin of the Carnegie Institute of Washington; Edmund D. Soper, president of Ohio Wesleyan University; and Dallas L. Sharp of Boston University.

8. This column was written by sermon-contest winner Rev. Kenneth C. MacArthur. The “Eugenics and the Church” column reported recent pronouncements by churchmen and denominational hierarchies on the subjects of eugenics and birth control. MacArthur also used the page to print short homiletic pieces speaking of the efforts of progressive Protestantism, as exemplified in the Federal Council of Churches, to build the kingdom of God on earth. See also Rosen (171–73).

9. Whether Fosdick actually attended is not known. There is no record of his speaking, and A. E. Wiggam led the final discussion. The conference was held on a Monday from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. (American Eugenics Society, “Conference on the Relation”).

10. Father Connell stated that the Church recognized the individual's right to choose to marry, and the selection of whom to marry. Connell also drew on the encyclical *Casti Connubii* to condemn all forms of birth control except abstinence and sterilization, except out of medical necessity (Connell 1).

11. See, for example, Carver (3–7). Note also the religious affiliation of the members of the advisory board; the representation is strongly biased in favor of denominations with more affluent memberships. Of those whose faith could be identified, there were sixteen Episcopalians, thirteen Unitarians, twelve Congregationalists, nine Presbyterians, five Baptists, one Catholic, one known practicing Jew, and “a few” Lutherans and Quakers. Of the 151 listed conferees at the 1939 conference on eugenics and the church, there were six rabbis and six Catholic priests. Indeed, the Catholic Church's experience with recently arrived immigrants (in addition to a general reluctance to embrace sterilization even prior to *Casti Connubii*) may be one reason why Catholic priests were so underrepresented. By the end of 1931, over twelve thousand sterilizations had taken place in the United States. By the end 1958, this number had risen to over sixty thousand. Haller claimed that the persons were sterilized not only for eugenic purposes, but also for social reasons such as poverty, promiscuity, and dependence on state aid. Mehler noted the rather disturbing tendency not to ask persons involuntarily sterilized what they felt about the matter. After the 1927 landmark *Buck v. Bell* case in which American eugenic sterilization laws were upheld as constitutional by the US Supreme Court, the person sterilized

(Carrie Buck) was not asked her opinion until interviewed by the Richmond *Times-Dispatch* in 1980 (Mehler 148; Haller 83, 140–41; Kevles 111–19, 329–30).

12. The Catholic contingent was an early casualty. In December 1930, Pope Pius XI issued *Casti Connubii*, an encyclical condemning birth control and sterilization. Father Cooper resigned about three months later. However, the reason for this was not the encyclical, but the AES's publication of a book entitled *Organized Eugenics* in 1931. In a letter to Leon Whitney, Cooper stated that he felt that the book promoted a eugenics program that was unscientific and socially undesirable (Cooper). See also Rosen (139–64).

13. Frederick Osborn was to continue on this path for decades, eschewing the earlier social movement aspects, with its overt racism and classism, and advocating contraception among “those elements of the population least likely to raise competent children” (Osborn to Boffey; Osborn to Barrows; Haller 174–75). Mehler contended, however, that the earlier racism was now merely cloaked in the scientific language of demography despite Osborn's desire to purge the discipline of racial bias (Mehler 285–86).

14. Rosen also mentions the influence of the Niebuhr brothers, though she focuses more on Reinhold Niebuhr's belief that theological liberalism was too uncritical in its embrace of secular and scientific solutions to social problems.

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