Eugenics and the Christian Ethic

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

The father of eugenics is generally acknowledged to be Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), the British clergyman and economist who argued in his famous "Essay on the Principle of Population," published in 1798, that the "power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man." He wrote:

> *Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. . . . By that law of our nature which makes food necessary to the life of man, the effects of these two unequal powers must be kept equal. This implies a strong and constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence. This difficulty must fall somewhere and must necessarily be severely felt by a large portion of mankind.*

In other words, because human population grows so much faster than food production, widespread starvation is inevitable. Malthus believed that this imbalance between food supply and human births was a permanent manifestation of natural law. Somehow, it never occurred to him that food production could be increased dramatically if scientific and mechanical methods were applied to it.

But that is typical of how eugenicists think. Even today we have people like the hysterical Paul Erhlich writing and talking about the population bomb, urging women to stop having children that are polluting the world. Then there are organizations like Zero Population Growth and Negative Population Growth obsessed with overpopulation. The motto of Negative Population Growth is "Fewer People for a Better World." They repeat the Malthusian error by asking the same question that Malthus asked: "How can we put an end to mass starvation and suffering in this world? There is only one answer." The same answer that Malthus gave: fewer people. But there is a much better answer: economic freedom.

In Cuba, food is rationed and people live at a subsistence level because of a communist government. Cuba is one of the world's most fertile countries. But its form of government prevents Cubans from making the most of their own fertile land. Moreover, Cuba is hardly overpopulated. Since the imposition of communism, over a million Cubans have left the island. So, fewer people is hardly the answer to mass starvation.

The long-range goal of Negative Population Growth is to stabilize our U.S. population "at no more than 150 million, and world population at no more than two billion, after an interim period of gradual population decrease." They forget that when we had only 130 million Americans, we also had a depression, with soup kitchens to feed the hungry. Now we have a population of 250 million with so much food that dieting has become a national obsession. Getting rid of 100 million Americans will not make the air cleaner, the water purer, or garbage disposal easier.

It should not surprise Christians that the leading advocates of population control are anti-Christian humanists. Indeed, the Humanist Manifesto 2000 states:

> *Large sectors of the world population still do not enjoy the fruits of affluence; they continue to languish in poverty, hunger, and disease, particularly in the developing world . . . . In 1900 the world had an estimated 1.7 billion people. By the year 2000 it will exceed 6 billion. . . . If population continues to grow as projected, it will lead to a drastic decrease in available tillable grain lands, which may by 2050 shrink to one-quarter of an acre per person in many countries. . . . National*

governments and corporate leaders must abandon short-term policies and support forward-looking planning.

And so, the theories of Malthus are alive and well in the twenty-first century. Apparently, pseudo-scientists have very short memories and tend to ignore those facts that disprove their views. Some of the world's most densely populated countries, such as the Netherlands or Israel, are very well fed. They grow lots of food on less and less acreage, using the most scientifically advanced methods available. But, believe it or not, because of the sharp drop in the fertility rate in Western Europe, Japan, Russia, and elsewhere, demographers see a population decline, not a population explosion in the next 50 years.

Racist Eugenics

After Malthus came Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), the British pseudo-scientist who studied methods of improving the mental and physical traits of human populations by selective mating. He called this pseudo-science of race, eugenics, from the Greek *eugenes* meaning "well born." He defined eugenics as "the study of the agencies under social control which may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations physically or mentally."

In 1884, Galton established his Anthropometric Laboratory. He too was alarmed at the prolific birthrate of the "less suitable races" and the low birthrate of the "more suitable races." Something had to be done about it. He argued that since mental and physical attributes were inherited, superior human beings should be encouraged to have lots of children and measures should be taken to lower the birthrate of the lower classes. He was a cousin of Charles Darwin whose idea of the survival of the fittest agreed very well with the new science of eugenics.

In Germany, it was biologist Ernst Haeckel who brought Darwinism into German intellectual life. He saw social Darwinism as a natural force, and he combined a mystical belief in that natural force with the concept of natural selection, which he applied to the social and political arena, with the result that he became one of Germany's leading ideologists for racism, nationalism and imperialism.

In 1895, the German Social Darwinist Alfred Ploetz invented a concept, which he called racial hygiene. He accused the medical profession of endangering the race by helping individuals who would not have otherwise survived live and reproduce themselves. Social Darwinists in Britain spoke of certain diseases as "our racial friends" because they attacked those with a weak constitution. In 1905 Ploetz founded a Society for Racial Hygiene. In 1907 the word *international* was added to its name. In 1910, Sweden's Society for Racial Hygiene became its first foreign affiliate.

In 1908, Galton founded the Eugenics Society of Great Britain, and in 1912 an international congress on eugenics was convened in London. In 1907, Indiana passed the first laws allowing sterilization of the mentally ill and criminally insane. By the late 1920s similar laws had been passed in 28 states, sanctioned by a 1927 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Buck v. Bell*, which held that it was constitutional to involuntarily sterilize the developmentally disabled, the insane, or uncontrollably epileptic. Oliver Wendell Holmes, supported by Louis Brandeis and six other justices, wrote the opinion. As a result, by 1930, 15,000 individuals were sterilized in the United States.

Galton also had a very profound influence on American progressive educators, those members of the Protestant academic elite who no longer believed in the religion of their fathers. They put their new faith in science, evolution, and psychology. Science explained the nature of the material world, evolution explained the origin of living matter, and psychology permitted man to investigate human behavior and develop the means to control it. Thus, the progressives found Galton's scientific racism to be very compatible with their strong belief in evolution and behavioral psychology.

Racist Liberals

James McKeen Cattell, father of modern educational psychology, considered Galton to be "the greatest man I have ever known." In fact, Cattell developed mental tests based on Galton's pioneering efforts to devise the means of measuring racial superiority. One such test was developed and conducted in 1895 by an American, R. Meade Bache. His "Reaction

Time with Reference to Race" used an "electro-magnetic physiological apparatus."

Bache tested three groups of males: Caucasians, American Indians, and American Negroes. They were tested for the speed with which they reacted to several items.

The results showed the Indians to have the fastest reaction times, and the Caucasians the slowest. The blacks fell between the two other groups. How did Bache interpret the results? He wrote:

> *Pride of race obscures the view of the white with reference to the relative automatic quickness of the negro. That the negro is, in the truest sense, a race inferior to that of the white can be proved by many facts, and among these by the quickness of his automatic movements as compared with those of the white.*

In other words, quicker physical reactions are sure signs of racial inferiority! That's pseudo-science showing its true racist bias. And this is the kind of pseudo-science that was used by the progressives to construct a curriculum for the public schools in which the Negro child was relegated to an education befitting his inferior status.

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Thus, the idea that man was made in God's image went out the school window. Both Cattell and Thorndike had fathers who were Christian ministers. So they knew the Bible very well. Their apostasy destroyed American education. Thus, with America's top educators adapting the ideas of eugenics to the problems of education, eugenics as scientific racism acquired widespread respectability. It should also be noted that the I.Q. test was a direct result of the eugenics enterprise, serving as a means of sifting out the mentally superior.

Racist Feminists

One of the individuals attracted to the new science was a woman by the name of Margaret Sanger (1879-1966). In 1910, she, her husband, and three children moved to New York City where she became immersed in the radical bohemian culture of Greenwich Village. She and her husband joined a circle of left-wing, communist, and anarchist intellectuals that included Max Eastman, John Reed, Upton Sinclair, Mabel Dodge, and Emma Goldman. She also joined the Women's Committee of the New York Socialist Party.

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In 1915, Sanger returned to the United States. The government's case against her was dropped, so she embarked on a nationwide

tour to drum up publicity. In 1916, she opened the nation's first birth control clinic in Brooklyn, New York. After nine days of operation, the clinic was raided, and Sanger and staff were arrested. She spent 30 days in jail. However, the publicity surrounding the clinic provided Sanger with a base of wealthy supporters from which she began to build an organized birth control movement.

In 1917, Sanger published a new monthly, the *Birth Control Review*, and in 1921 she embarked on a campaign to win mainstream support for birth control by founding the American Birth Control League, the forerunner of Planned Parenthood. She focused her efforts on gaining support from the medical profession, social workers, and the liberal wing of the eugenics movement. Havelock Ellis had converted her to the eugenics creed. She saw birth control as a means of reducing genetically transmitted mental or physical defects, and supported sterilization for the mentally incompetent. She advocated "more children for the fit, less from the unfit — that is the chief issue of birth control."

In 1922, Sanger married oil magnate James Noah H. Slee, thus insuring her financial independence. Slee, who died in 1943, became the main funder of the birth control movement. By connecting with the eugenics movement, Sanger was able to gain the backing of some of America's wealthiest people.

In 1921, the Second International Congress of Eugenics was convened at New York's American Museum of Natural History under President Henry Fairfield Osborn. While Major Leonard Darwin, son of Charles Darwin, had been president of the First Congress of Eugenics in 1912, none other than Winston Churchill had been its vice-president. The Second Congress drew an equally impressive number of attendees: Herbert Hoover, soon-to-be President of the U.S., Gifford Pinchot, future governor of Pennsylvania, Robert M. Yerkes, chief psychologist of the U.S. Army, and Edward L. Thorndike, chairman of the psychology department at Teachers College. The principal benefactress of the Congress was Mrs. E.H. Harriman, wife of the railroad magnate and mother of Averell Harriman. The Congress was dedicated to saving America by increasing the fecundity of its best breeding stock. The complaint was that the New England stock was not holding its own.

Immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe was seen as the great threat to WASP dominance and therefore had to be curtailed. At the close of the Eugenics Congress, the exhibits were transferred to the U.S. Capitol in Washington, where Congressmen could ponder the terrible effects that unbridled immigration was having on America's Anglo-Saxon and Northern European genetic pool.

Much "research" had gone into creating these exhibits. In 1904, Harvard Ph.D. Charles Benedict Davenport (1866-1944), a leading eugenicist, set up his Laboratory of Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York, with help from the Carnegie Endowment. He established a Eugenics Record Office financed by Mrs. Harriman. Davenport promoted the idea of Aristogenics, the selection and mating of individuals with superior blood to produce a new American race of Super-Nordics. Years later, Marxist Hermann J. Muller would advocate collecting sperm from a few outstanding males to be used in artificial insemination, producing large numbers of superior offspring sired by the same man.

Davenport's publications had a profound effect on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, which finally got Congress to enact its Immigration Act of 1924. The Act severely limited immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. This was quite a victory for the eugenics movement.

In 1930, Sanger opened a family planning clinic in Harlem with the approval of the Negro leadership, including communist W.E.B. DuBois. Beginning in 1939, DuBois also served on the advisory council for Sanger's "Negro Project." The financial support of Albert and Mary Lasker made the project possible. In 1966, the year Sanger died, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "There is a striking kinship between our movement and Margaret Sanger's early efforts."

In 1930, Pope Pius XI condemned eugenics in his encyclical *Casti connubii*. In 1933, Germany passed its own sterilization law. The Nazis simply changed the voluntary one proposed by the Weimar Republic to one that permitted compulsory sterilization. From 1934 to 1937, an estimated 400,000 sterilizations took place in Germany. In the United States,

about 30,000 had been sterilized on eugenics grounds by 1939.

In October 1939, Hitler began a euthanasia program. He secretly authorized doctors to grant a merciful death to patients judged to be incurably ill. A key justification for this was to be found in the book, *Release and Destruction of Lives Not Worth Living* (1920) by Alfred Hoche, a professor of medicine, and Rudolf Binding, a professor of law.

In 1935, British physicians founded a Euthanasia Legalization Society, which submitted a bill to allow voluntary euthanasia. However, the British were not quite ready for that. Meanwhile, the war with its racist horrors gave eugenics and racism a bad name. So the American Eugenics Society became the Society for the Study of Social Biology. In 1950, the American Society of Human Genetics was established and, in 1954, the *American Journal of Human Genetics*.

Abortion

From the end of World War II to the present, Planned Parenthood has become the world's largest and most powerful enterprise promoting birth control and abortion. It was greatly helped by two U.S. Supreme Court decisions: *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965, which legalized birth control among married couples, and *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, which legalized abortion nationwide.

Legalized abortion became the slippery slope leading to fetal tissue experimentation. Actually, fetal tissue transplantation in a patient had been tried as early as 1928. Now, it is routinely done privately. Planned Parenthood states:

> *A woman's choice to donate to medical research a fetus she has aborted begins and ends with her . . . . Knowing she can donate her aborted fetus to potentially lifesaving medical research may help a woman turn an unintended pregnancy of which she may feel a sense of loss into a social good.*

In 1998, nearly 5 million individuals, including teenagers, received some kind of "reproductive health services" at Planned Parenthood. This includes 167,928 abortions performed in the organization's 850 clinics. In 1998, 1,333 affiliate staff and volunteer educators provided 100,000 educational programs — from preschool to universities.

Meanwhile, the free love that Margaret Sanger enjoyed as a socialist bohemian has become the recreational sex movement of the New Age. It has had a devastating effect on the health of young Americans. According to Planned Parenthood, at least 65 million people — more than one in five Americans — are believed to be infected with a viral STI other than HIV. They include genital herpes, human papilloma virus, and hepatitis B. In 1996 there were an estimated three million new cases of chlamydia making it the most prevalent bacterial STI in the United States.

The Loss of Christian Culture

When one surveys the history of the eugenics and birth control movements, one must conclude that never has Christian civilization sustained a more relentless and devastating assault on its principles and values. Humanism, socialism, communism, statism, nourished by the theory of evolution and its atheist implications, have reduced Christianity to fighting a defensive rear action campaign to maintain its influence in American culture. Although a large majority of Americans claim to believe in God, religion has become relegated to a few hours of Sunday church service and periodic observance of traditional holidays, which have become more and more secularized over the years.

Andrew Sandlin has summed it up very nicely. He writes: "What is termed the 'culture wars' really constitutes religious wars fought on cultural battlegrounds. It is a conflict of religious visions.... Secularism could obtain cultural hegemony only by marginalizing another establishment of religion, Christianity. Culture wars are really just the wide, public manifestations of religious wars over what the character of society should be."

And so, the secular juggernaut in the form of eugenics, birth control, and population control all bear on how we regard human life and human origins. If we are products of the primordial ooze, then we have no rights other than those our betters confer on us. But if we are made in the image of God, then our rights are unalienable, endowed by the Living God, and governments are made by men to secure these rights. Christians have no choice but to resist what is contrary to God's law as given us

in Holy Scripture. If we don't, then we give up the security of our God-given rights.

Today, Americans live lives of extreme contradiction. We want both the blessings of God and the pleasures and conveniences of secularism. Like open marriages, we want the security of marital fidelity and the pleasures of extramarital relations. We want the love of children and the right to kill them in the womb. We want to be both virtuous and sinful, obedient and disobedient, good and bad. And that is why so many Americans today are in some form of psychotherapy, or taking some kind of mood altering drug. The gnawing guilt that comes from sinful behavior cannot be wished away. Many now come to Christ in the hope that their sins can be washed away in the blood of the cross. The burden of guilt has become too heavy.

But that is also why so many Americans turn to atheism and humanism. They prefer to deceive themselves rather than admit of the existence of God. That is why they are perfectly willing to believe in the theory of evolution, even though the complexity of genetic organization makes godless evolution an impossibility. Intellectual pride can make self-deception a very satisfying way of life by simply distorting reality.

So where are we headed? The Christian remnant, as small as it is, grows in strength every day through the quality of the individuals and families that become part of it.

Biblical religion is making its comeback because of the moral blind alley that secularism is leading us into. The unrelenting attacks on religion, like the unrelenting attacks on the Second Amendment, are stirring up resistance among those thoughtful enough to recognize the dangers to freedom inherent in these attacks. The idealism of the progressives has been replaced by the cynicism of the establishment. What made the eugenics movement acceptable in the early part of the twentieth century was destroyed in World War II.

There is more reason to be hopeful about the future than there has been in years. More people are studying the Bible than ever before simply because modern philosophy has led humanity into an intolerable dead end. So we return to the Bible because it endures, because its wisdom is timeless, because God's Word will prevail above the din, today, tomorrow, and forever.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld is the leader in U. S. home schooling and phonics, and he has lectured on these subjects from coast to coast and abroad. State school authorities once called him statist education's "public enemy number 1." He can be reached at slblu@netway.com.

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But that is typical of how eugenicists think. Even today we have people like the hysterical Paul Erhlich writing and talking about the population bomb, urging women to stop having children that are polluting the world. Then there are organizations like Zero Population Growth and Negative Population Growth obsessed with overpopulation. The motto of Negative Population Growth is "Fewer People for a Better World." They repeat the Malthusian error by asking the same question that Malthus asked: "How can we put an end to mass starvation and suffering in this world? There is only one answer." The same answer that Malthus gave: fewer people. But there is a much better answer: economic freedom.

In Cuba, food is rationed and people live at a subsistence level because of a communist government. Cuba is one of the world's most fertile countries. But its form of government prevents Cubans from making the most of their own fertile land. Moreover, Cuba is hardly overpopulated. Since the imposition of communism, over a million Cubans have left the island. So, fewer people is hardly the answer to mass starvation.

The long-range goal of Negative Population Growth is to stabilize our U.S. population "at no more than 150 million, and world population at no more than two billion, after an interim period of gradual population decrease." They forget that when we had only 130 million Americans, we also had a depression, with soup kitchens to feed the hungry. Now we have a population of 250 million with so much food, that dieting has become a

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