

STERILIZATION

A Christian Approach

by

THE REV. J. P. HINTON, B.A.

and

JOSEPHINE E. CALCUTT, B.A.

Diploma in Economics and Political Science (Oxon)

Social Science Certificate (Oxon) with distinction

Foreword by

REV. LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD, M.A.

Author of "The Mastery of Sex," "Psychology and Life,"

"Psychology in the Service of the Soul," etc.

LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD

MUSEUM STREET

FOREWORD

By REV. LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD, M.A.

It is a pleasure to commend this able and thorough piece of work on a most difficult but very important subject.

By sterilization is meant the act of making men and women incapable of producing children. Obviously the very suggestion of such an operation needs the most careful preliminary enquiry, and, if the operation be recommended, extremely strong reasons must be given for that recommendation. The reader will find in this book an admirable survey of the whole subject, and, in my view, arguments which overcome all mere prejudice and problems, and which convince him that the well-being of the whole community demands some such action as is contemplated in these pages.

It is said that there are over a quarter of a million persons in England and Wales who are definitely defective mentally. As things are at present nothing is done towards limiting their procreative ability. Already one notices that one rarely comes across a case of mental disorder where the patient's mental history has been good. In my own work I find that a patient, however neurotic, rarely becomes psychotic unless there is a weak link, mentally, in the ancestral chain. In other words most mental disorder is passed on from one generation to another. Curiously enough the families of defectives are larger than normal families and a serious situation is developing which in time will, if nothing be done, assume alarming proportions.

Added to this aspect of the problem, what should be done in cases where defect, other than mental, is liable

to be passed on? It is indubitable that certain physical diseases are hereditary. Any acquaintance with the horror of a young person who discovers that he has inherited epilepsy, congenital cataract, deaf-mutism, syphilitic and other diseases stirs one to ask for legislation to prevent innocent children from suffering the mental and physical tortures of hereditary disease. I feel this so strongly that when people ask me to marry them I always ascertain whether there is, on either side, any disease which could be passed on. If there is, I feel justified in certain cases and after consultation with medical authority, to refuse to marry them unless they give certain guarantees in regard to procreation. They can go and get married at a registry office I know, but I hold that the Church should not give her blessing to a union which is going to bring into existence other lives which will be damned at the outset to years of pain and misery, a burden to themselves, a heartbreak to their parents, and possibly an economic responsibility which the State will be asked to bear both during school years and after.

I value this timely book immensely. It is scientific in the best sense and religious in the best sense. It talks about sex in a scientific way. It also takes the religious viewpoint without becoming sentimental or sloppy. I hope it will awaken the community to the very serious situation in our life together, a situation which can be very simply stated.

1. In view of hereditary defect, mental and physical, the misery it causes to the individual and the burden to the State, sterilization is desirable in many cases.

2. Sterilization can now be carried out by surgical means which in the case of a man do not amount to an operation more serious than, say, the removal of tonsils and in the case of a woman the removal of the appendix.

3. Following such an operation, sexual activity and desire remain the same. Intercourse can be indulged in. No physical or psychological symptoms follow the operation. The only difference is that no child can be born.

4. The State could easily frame precautions lest sterilized persons in the community should threaten morality. In point of fact in countries in which sterilization is in vogue immorality has decreased not increased.

5. In the present state of the law in England the operation of sterilization *merely* to prevent defective children being born is illegal, and no doctor for that reason alone could safely carry it out. Yet the Brock Committee's Report says definitely, "We have failed to find any evidence unfavourable to sterilization, provided that proper care is exercised in the administration of the law."

All these points, and many others are worked out by the authors of this book, both of whom are adequately qualified to write on this subject. I regard their chapter on "The Proposed Method of Administration in this Country" as being of special importance.

I hope this book will have a wide circulation. I hope it will stir the public to realize that steps must soon be taken to deal with this urgent and important matter. I see no argument, scientific or religious, against the measures suggested here, and I believe this book will do much to bring about a greatly needed reform.

AUTHORS' NOTE

MANY people are ready to theorize on the problem of the multiplication of the unfit but are often unaware of the actual lives of the people who constitute the problem. Others have seen the difficulties at first hand but lack either the time or the inclination to attempt a constructive solution. As we show, the many schemes of relief, offered by the State and voluntary organizations, are necessary, but they are after all only palliatives. They do nothing to arrest the development of the problem in the future.

It should therefore be the duty of all thinking men and women, particularly town councillors, clergy, social workers and the like, seriously to consider wherein their action should lie. It is the aim of this book to assist them, not by reciting harrowing stories—we need only look around us for these—but in an objective way, by endeavouring to lead them to an attitude of mind which we believe is not incompatible with the Christian ethic.

Any who have had real contact with the troubles of the men and women, many broken in mind and body, who live in the crowded streets of our big cities or even in our agricultural villages, can fully realize their need. This book will have served its purpose if it should rouse a few of the more fortunate members of the community to attack the canker of hereditary suffering at its source.

This note would be incomplete if it did not record our very real gratitude to E. H. F. Smith, Esq., M.A., Tutor

of St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, both for his advice on several points and for his labour in preparing the manuscripts for the printers. Our thanks are also due to Mrs. C. B. S. Hodson for giving us the benefit of her several years' study of sterilization in Europe and America, and to W. Donald Peock, Esq., M.B., for looking over the medical sections of Chapters II and IV. Several friends have assisted in various ways, but sympathy and real thanks are given to "New June" for their patience and skill in translating illiterate scrawl into perfect typescript.

J. P. H.

J. E. C.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
<i>Foreword</i>	5
<i>Authors' Note</i>	9
I. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM	15
i. The population of the future	15
ii. Its relation to the figures for mental deficiency and physical defect	18
iii. Eugenics	22
iv. Christianity and the family	25
II. HEREDITARY PHYSICAL DEFECTS	28
i. Alleviation by social services	28
ii. Common hereditary diseases	33
III. MENTAL DEFICIENCY	39
i. Definitions of mental deficiency and disorder	39
ii. The part of heredity as a causal factor	45
iii. Mental disorder	49
iv. Ascertainment	52
v. Is mental deficiency increasing?	56
vi. Present methods of dealing with mental defectives	60
vii. The flaw in the present system	69
IV. THE LEGAL AND MEDICAL ASPECTS OF STERILIZATION	72
i. Other methods of conception control	72
ii. The uncertain legal position	73
iii. The nature of the operation	78
iv. Sterilization and mental disorders	81

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL RESULTS OF STERILIZATION	85
i, ii. Psychological	85
iii. Social: relation to segregation	89
iv. Promiscuity resulting from sterilization	95
VI. STERILIZATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES	97
i. Early experience	97
ii. Countries where legislation in operation or proposed	100
iii. Results	110
VII. THE PROPOSED METHOD OF ADMINISTRATION IN THIS COUNTRY	115
i. Those to whom the right of sterilization should be extended	115
ii. The comparative advantages of compulsory and voluntary methods	118
iii. The machinery of a voluntary measure	125
VIII. THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST STERILIZATION	130
i. Roman Catholic	130
ii. General	141
IX. THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW	150
i. Values	150
ii, iii. The creativeness of Christianity	152
iv. Fulness of life	156
v. Marriage	157
vi. Natural rights and sacrifice	161
vii. The Kingdom of God	166

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
X.	RESPONSIBILITY	13
	i. For the individual	168
	ii. For the community	175
	iii. For the Christian	183
	<i>Appendices</i>	188
	<i>Index</i>	195