

THE CONTROL OF PARENTHOOD

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The control of parenthood by Various

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INTRODUCTION

By THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM

No one can be doubtful as to the usefulness of this book. We are living in days when all are confessing the responsibility of Parenthood, but we find it difficult to know our duty because we get such different guidance, and because there seems sometimes to be conflict between that which is true biologically or economically, and that which appeals to us from the religious or social point of view. It is well then that we should have all sides put before us by those who are experts in particular subjects, so that whatever decision we may come to, we may be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us.

We are clear upon certain central facts as to marriage and parenthood, which one may attempt to summarise. First—Marriage should be the

outcome of a pure love and be entered upon with the most sacred intention that perfect union shall follow upon the vows spoken on the wedding-day. The union must be both physical and spiritual, and each completes the other. The physical union is mere passion when the whole nature is not alive to the oneness of the two souls ; the spiritual realises its perfect completeness only when the parents tend and cherish the child which is the outcome of their two natures. Second—It is admitted that in an ideal state of society the intention of the All Father is that people should mate in early adult life, and that they should bring into this world healthy children to be reared up as useful citizens. Third—It is unfortunately true that the circumstances of present-day life do not allow of such happy mating. We are cursed by man-made social conditions which make it impossible for young folk to marry at the natural age, and which frequently cause marriages to be arranged for purely worldly reasons. Hence come irregular unions and conditions of life leading to immorality and to prostitution. Fourth—Consequent upon this unsatisfactory

state of things, we find that books have to be written, conferences have to be held, judgments have to be formed to meet 'the present distress,' as we cannot act with the perfect freedom which should be associated with the true ideal of marriage. What are the problems which face alike the religious teacher, the social worker, the eugenist?

There is first the antechamber to matrimony. How are the young to be taught the sacredness as to body, the purity of heart and the whole-souled offering of themselves implied in the word *love*? Marriage is not to be the satisfaction of rash desire, or the calculated assurance of a comfortable home, it is the union of twin souls. Here the parents, the religious and the secular teachers, coupled with wholesome literature must all have their share in rousing chivalry and in fostering the great ideal.

There is next the wedded life to consider. The couple must live one for the other, giving honour one to the other, and they must view the office of Parenthood as awful in its majesty and perfect in its beauty. Not merely to bring children into the world, but to have fit children

whom they can rightly train must be their determination. This may entail self-denial, but nothing is perfect without sacrifice. A wise doctor is an almost necessary friend and counsellor for any married couple. The teaching of the chapters of this book will surely be of great use to wedded lives, as well as to those contemplating matrimony.

There is again the duty of the State to be remembered. We must ensure that every mother shall have during and after child-bearing the necessary physical and moral help ; that every child shall be cared for so that inefficients shall be almost unknown, and true citizens shall be the rule ; that undue temptation shall not assail the young, and that sin shall not prevail ; that the diseases incidental to impurity shall not be allowed to rage unchecked ; that men and women shall know the dangers which belong to lust ; that we shall all understand how we depend one upon the other ; that whether by emigration or other means care may be had for those to whom here at home the joys of marriage are denied ; and, above all, that the State shall bear in mind that upon the recognition of God in

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all that concerns marriage and parenthood depends the future well-being of the land we love, and of the people upon whom it would seem that at the present time rests the greatest responsibility for setting a world-wide example of the highest and best in life.

H. R. Birmingham