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THE EXPANDING POPULATION

The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility

By Dr. Richard M. Fagley. Pp. xii+260. (London: Oxford University Press; New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1960.) 28s. net.

DR. FAGLEY has written a useful and timely book which, it must be hoped, will be read by many thoughtful citizens. As the title indicates, it is directed to Christians, in the first place, with the purpose of arousing them to think seriously on the dangers inherent in the "Population Explosion", a picturesque name for the rapid expansion of the population of the world. In this it should be successful, for the writing is lively and clear, while the Christian background of the author is evident throughout. No one should dismiss it, however, as one more appeal to uninformed sentiment or theological dogma. The demographic facts are clearly set out with references to sources, and the probable consequences for the future of mankind are stated calmly and objectively. So far as I can judge, the author has put the case with due regard to scientific accuracy, and, when more than one estimate of the future development of populations is available, has chosen the least alarming among those offered by competent authorities. The Christian bias in this section of the book makes a welcome appearance at the conclusion of the factual and impersonal exposition, when the author reminds us of the human values which are in danger. "The main issue is the family caught in the ferment and upheaval of social change, bewildered, frightened, subject to disruptive forces, tending to lose its spiritual and social moorings. Here is found the most fundamental cost of the new pressures of population."

The book surveys various possibilities of mitigating the situation. A short discussion of the potentialities of improved methods of food production tends to the conclusion that they are unlikely to be adequate to do more than defer the catastrophe. The most controversial section of the book deals with birth control, its methods, its sociological bearings and its ethical problems. In this, of course, we come squarely up against religion, and, to many readers, the author's summary of the different attitudes and teachings of the chief religions of the world will be most informative. Naturally by far the greatest space is devoted to Christianity, and, in spite of a few unimportant historical slips, the account of the chief traditions in the Church on the subject of birth-control is clear and fair. The chapter on the Roman Catholic doctrine is pre-eminently objective and sympathetic, which is no small achievement by a writer who cordially disagrees with it. His opinion, supported by documents, is that the rest of Christendom and its groups, with various velocities and degrees of clarity of thought, are moving towards an agreement on the subject of

birth-control and the formulation of a moral theology for the guidance of their members. The present writer cannot forbear to point out that the Anglican Church, according to Dr. Fagley, has advanced further than any other in its thinking on this matter. But this is of small importance. The really important message of the book is that the time is short. We cannot wait for a century of discussion. The time to think and act is now, and Christians have a responsibility to reach an informed judgment and to persuade the politicians to lift their eyes to the future and consider the prospects of the human race.

W. R. MATTHEWS

A. V. HILL

The Ethical Dilemma of Science and Other Writings
By Prof. A. V. Hill. Pp. xiii+395. (New York: Rockefeller Institute Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1960.) 7-50 dollars; 52s. net.

THERE may be some, perhaps, who will expect the short title of Prof. Hill's book, as it appears on the cover, to indicate the general tone and purpose of its contents as a whole. They should be neither disappointed nor relieved to find that it provides, in fact, a meal of many different courses. "The ethical dilemma of science" must, indeed, for the author, as for any man of science concerned for the future of civilization, be a subject seldom absent from his thoughts. In this widely ranging collection of his writings, however, it figures primarily as the title of the noble presidential address which he gave to the British Association at its Belfast meeting in 1952; and it is then applied, more inclusively, only to the first chapter, consisting of various addresses dealing with the aims and prospects of science.

The internal title-page of the book adds "and other writings"; and such an extension is certainly required to give any inkling of the rich variety characterizing the products of his wide interests and agile brain which Prof. Hill has here collected. They range, indeed, from deeply considered and eloquently presented addresses, lectures and speeches, some of them in Parliament during his war-time membership, to typically generous and affectionate memorials and tributes, to men who have been his heroes, comrades and friends. They include full-blooded denunciations of social and political tyranny, and championship of its victims; claims for what science could do, criticism of its neglect and misuse, from first-hand experience in two world wars; and advocacy of what it could yet do for the Commonwealth, and especially for India's problems, based in the latter case on knowledge gained directly on a special mission.

Prof. Hill's personal researches in science have, of course, been centred on fundamental physiology, largely in terms of thermodynamics. These have no specific mention in this collection; but the