

## 2. Plea for Responsible Parenthood

By WARREN S. THOMPSON,  
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tion for Research in Population  
Problems at Miami University.*

THE FIRST part of "The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility" (Oxford, \$4.25) is devoted to the explosion itself and its consequences. The second consists of an argument, based chiefly on the historical development of church doctrines, aimed at justifying the spread of the use of contraception throughout the world. This the author, Richard Fagley, deems necessary to insure the development of responsible parenthood among all peoples; hence it is a Christian responsibility. Much the larger portion of the book is devoted to this argument.

In the beginning chapters the author depends chiefly on the writings of the students of population and on official publications. His presentation here differs little from that of lay writers addressed to the general reader. It is concise and clear and as accurate as one can be when trying to describe a complex social and economic situation very briefly. From the author's point of view this factual presentation of materials that are essentially demographic, social, and economic is necessary to convince the readers in whom he is chiefly interested that the population explosion demands a reorientation of Christian thought.

In his own words, "Although the concerns of the general reader have been kept in mind, in purpose this book is a call to Christian action, addressed in the first place to churchmen who share the Evangelical heritage. It is a call to the parson and the interested parishioner to take an active part in the task of building a more worthy and dynamic Protestant position on the complex problems represented by the terms population and parenthood."

Only a few specific points in this factual description can be noted here. The data showing the sudden and extremely rapid rate of growth among the underdeveloped peoples are clearly and adequately presented. The chief cause—the scientific control of disease—is also adequately treated.

On the other hand, the burden on

the economies of the underdeveloped countries arising from this rapid population growth, although noted, particularly in the chapter on food, needs fuller treatment. It would also help the reader to appreciate how great this burden is if the contrast of the economic situation of the Western world in 1750, let us say, with that in the underdeveloped countries today were noted more fully.

This survey of the population explosion leads the author to conclude that the widespread use of contraception must be added to the economic remedies if an unbearable population pressure is to be avoided in the underdeveloped countries.

In the portion of the book treating of Christian responsibility in this situation the author presents materials showing that concepts of the obligations of parenthood have varied greatly in different religions and even within the same religious group at different times. He holds that these changes represent efforts to adjust religious doctrines and practices to changing social and economic conditions. In the present situation he believes that Protestant Christianity must modify its doctrines and practices to bring them into conformity with the needs for responsible parenthood. "Be fruitful and multiply" no longer adequately defines the pur-

pose of the family. Other ideas essential to the Christian concept of responsible parenthood are greater devotion of the parents to the education and training of their children for more complete living in the world of today and closer cooperation of the parents themselves in all aspects of family life. In order to fulfill these responsibilities it will be necessary for many couples to limit the size of their families.

It probably is not possible for the layman to appreciate the value of the finer doctrinal points in the author's historical discussion of religious attitudes as determinants of parental responsibility. Indeed it does not seem that these points are relevant, to say nothing of being essential, in arriving at a decision that the voluntary control of the size of the family is a *sine qua non* for the widespread development of responsible parenthood. Furthermore, while encouraging a broader and deeper feeling of responsibility among the peoples in the more economically developed countries to assist those less fortunate to an all-around better life is no doubt Christian in spirit and in intent, this attitude and the behavior arising from it certainly are not dependent exclusively on the acceptance of Christian doctrines. Thus while any person who considers himself a man of good will will probably agree that the concept of Christian responsibility as developed here would, if widely practised, lead to a better world he may not feel the need of the adjective Christian if, at the same time, this commits him to the approval of the doctrinal beliefs that seem so essential to the author in arriving at this concept.



## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

### MYTHOLOGICAL THREESOMES

Fannie Gross, of Asheville, N.C., presents on the left ten trios who appear in mythology, and asks you to match them with their designations scrambled on the right. The ones whose nationalities are not specified are Greek or Roman. Answers on page 42.

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Agathyrus, Colonus, Scythes   | ( ) Agamemnon's Children         |
| 2. Alecto, Tisiphone, Megaera    | ( ) The Trimurti (Hindu)         |
| 3. Althea, Toxeus, Phlexippus    | ( ) Diana's Nymphs               |
| 4. Amphitrite, Thetis, Galatea   | ( ) The Fates                    |
| 5. Antigone, Eteocles, Polynices | ( ) The Furies                   |
| 6. Brahma, Vishnu, Siva          | ( ) The Graces                   |
| 7. Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos     | ( ) Most important Nereids       |
| 8. Crocale, Nephele, Hyale       | ( ) Children of Oedipus          |
| 9. Electra, Iphigenia, Orestes   | ( ) Sons of Hercules and Echidna |
| 10. Euphrosyne, Aglaia, Thalia   | ( ) Children of Thestius         |

# In an Age of Science, a New Accent on Religion

*SR Devotes the Following Pages of This Year's Religious Book Issue to a Wide Selection of Reading Dealing with the Contemplative and the Contemporary.*

By JOHN C. BENNETT, *dean of the faculty, Union Theological Seminary in New York.*

**W**ILL HERBERG has recently called attention to the fact that in addition to the popular revival of religious interest which expresses itself in conventional ways, there is also a religious questioning among intellectuals which arouses interest in Existentialism, which leads them to read such writers as Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, or Paul Tillich. On many a campus there has been for some time this facing of ultimate religious issues, and a solid academic study of religion in our colleges and universities preceded the current popular religious revival. The tendency is for religion on this level to be highly personal and subjective. It often has more depth than form. It may lead to a private rejection of many cultural values but it has not led to much public prophetic criticism.

The prophetic religious challenge to the complacencies of a culture has never been emphasized by the majority at any time. The Biblical prophets themselves always moved against the religious stream of their own day. But we can hope that the churches may raise up within themselves more individuals and groups which keep asking the hard questions about their culture and which point to new possibilities of honesty and justice in the community. Also, it is not too much to hope that far beyond these minorities there will be a disturbed public conscience.

With respect to racial justice in the country the churches have greater clarity of mind when they face the issue than on almost any other social problem. But while race is the easiest subject on which to say the right things in principle, on a national scale it is one of the hardest subjects on which to come to terms locally. In recent years there has been much courage and there have been many sacrifices, including lost jobs, because of this difficulty.

In the 1930s there was much prophetic speaking and acting in

the churches about economic justice, and this had some effect in preparing the American people to accept the changes that events forced upon them. Today the economic issues are much less clear. Churchmen could readily be champions of labor in the steel strike of 1919 when the twelve-hour day was involved, but it has been difficult for them to know what to say about the steel strike of 1959. However, there are many emerging issues in the economic sphere to which churches will be called to address themselves. Some issues are less obviously points of justice; they are, rather, issues that affect the quality of life of the more privileged, their feeling for honesty and truth, their freedom from domination by economic organizations of their own making.

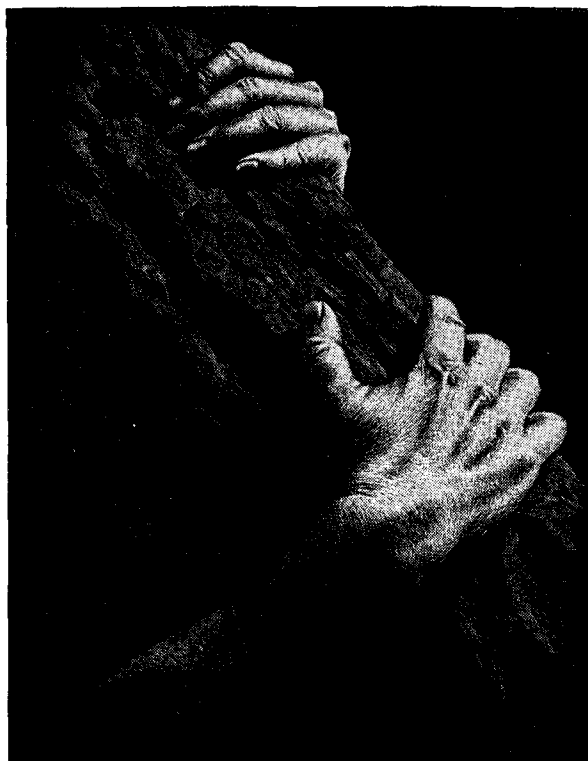
**T**HE issues of global economic justice will be more demanding than ever. The churches should be influenced by the fact that they are part of a worldwide Judeo-Christian community which includes people in nations which in their poverty and hunger remind us of the moral precariousness of our own pros-

perity. There are various motives that should lead our country to be concerned about the nations which must have revolutionary change and a rising standard of living, but within the houses of worship the emphasis should be on our solidarity with their people.

Within the churches there has been little emphasis so far on the moral issues involved in the nuclear arms race and in the problems of possible nuclear war. There are terrifying risks in any decisions in this area but we seem unable to concentrate for long on any risks except those that might involve the exposure of some part of the world to Communist blackmail or Soviet aggression.

The leaders of the churches for the most part have shared with the leaders of our nation concern for those risks, but in the next period the churches must surely be disturbed into asking quite different questions about quite different risks.

The churches need to emphasize the risks of an uncontrolled arms race quite as much as the risks that may come from allowing a relative increase of Russian power. They need to do far more than they have done to challenge the tendency of government and of opinion-forming agencies to play down the consequences of nuclear tests and even of nuclear war. The churches should be impelled to remind the nation of the rights of the unborn when it is tempted to risk genetic poisoning of future generations for the sake of its present security. If the churches are to be true to themselves and to be more than national temples or the temples of Western culture they must press the question, which is so far almost ignored, about the moral limits to be observed as we prepare for possible nuclear war. Churches cannot be expected to have policies in these matters; but they are bound to keep raising the neglected questions; they are bound to remind citizens who are willing to hear that no strategist's view of military necessity can ever be the final norm; they are bound to champion the victims of our policies.



—From "A New Way of the Cross" (Bruce Publishing Co.).  
"... quite different questions about quite different risks."