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The Explosion: Overpopulation: A Catholic View

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Christian must draw courage and enthusiasm for the arduous and dangerous tasks which this generation must face. "For all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

The compiler of these addresses is a chemical engineer who, before studying for the priesthood, worked on the Army's atomic projects at Columbia University and Oak Ridge; currently he is Catholic Chaplain at Purdue University. The addresses, and the Foreword by the Rev. Walter J. Ong, S.J., will provide thought-provoking reading not only for engineers but for all who are concerned about the situation of the human person in the face of the vast forces which his talents have unleashed.

JOHN J. CARROLL

THE EXPLOSION

OVERPOPULATION: A CATHOLIC VIEW. By Monsignor Gerald A. Kelly. New York: Paulist Press, 1960. 96 pp.

Following World War II, the short and long-term consequences of accelerated rates of natural increase in population have been widely explored. The United Nations have conducted numerous investigations into the causes and extent of the increase and even convened a World Population Conference in Rome in September 1954 to exchange information. Although population growth is a world-wide phenomenon, it is taking place at a much faster rate in the less-developed countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. While falling death rates in Western nations were accompanied by improvements in agriculture and the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the economically underdeveloped areas whose populations are undernourished can scarcely maintain existing levels of living.

This growing awareness of the population-resource relationship and the problems associated with it have prompted a new and significant trend of thinking on the part of Church authorities and theologians. The Church has on various occasions publicly recognized that problems of human fertility and of population can and do exist in our day, and that morally acceptable answers are definitely in order. The late Pope Pius XII commended students of society who, in studying these problems objectively, have sought moral solutions.

Monsignor Gerald Kelly has attempted in his latest work to "examine the problem of the world's increased numbers calmly with-

in the framework of sociology and religion." Readers may be disappointed if they expect a novel and searching discussion of the population problem supported by comprehensive documentation.

The 96-page booklet is arranged in two major parts consisting of five chapters. The first part of the book, entitled, "What is the population problem?" focuses attention on the rapid growth of the world's population resulting from a combination of declining mortality and constant high fertility in many regions of the globe. The question at issue is neither the world's increasing numbers nor increasing growth rates but whether the earth's resources are adequate to provide for all.

Msgr. Kelly considers two crucial questions: Can rapid growth continue for a long time? Should we be concerned about it? His reply is "no" to the first question, and "yes" to the second. It is unlikely that the decline in mortality can be reversed, since "medical and scientific knowledge, which makes low death rates possible, is here to stay." On the other hand, "we cannot but recognize the reality of the problem as it is will affect coming generations, and the fact that it will become increasingly intense if acceptable solutions are not found."

The "solutions" are discussed in the second part of the book. These include the sharing of resources, increase of food supplies, more emigration, industrialization, delayed marriage, and education. However, such remedies cannot singly provide complete solutions to the world's ills. Any economic, social, demographic and religious action must be considered in their mutual relations.

What is then a Christian program to follow? First, a serious and concerted attempt must be made to balance the scales by increasing resources to provide the necessities for human life. Though difficult to attain, it is not impossible. Second, eliminate illiteracy since it is only through widespread education that many habits and customs throughout the world may be changed.

The gravity of the present resources problem and the difficulties to be encountered in trying to solve it in keeping with the natural law and the dignity of man must not be underestimated. In his concluding chapter, Msgr. Kelly stresses once more the urgency of the situation and the necessity for employing all economic and demographic remedies. He is convinced that a moral and dignified solution can be achieved "if we work as though everything depended upon us, and pray as though everything depended upon God."