

European countries with considerable success in all social classes. This experience appears to differ from that of Dr Rock, who alleges that periodic continence can be used with success only in a highly selected and intelligent population.

*The Time has Come* is a book which should be read by all who are concerned with marriage counselling and family planning. Its very existence demands an examination by competent doctors of the ways and means of making the licit method of the infertile period more secure, as was urged by Pope Pius XII in 1951. The book is an honest attempt to solve the impasse between Catholics and other Christians over birth control methods. The existence of this impasse is a great hindrance to the formulation of a positive and acceptable policy on population control. Catholics cannot ignore this problem as the welfare of our fellow men in the under-privileged and over-populated countries is not merely a charity but our moral duty as Christians. In addition, the stalemate over family limitation has a disastrous effect on progress towards Christian unity, and is one of the major stumbling-blocks in the realm of morals. Much space in the Appendix is devoted to a horrifying account of political and sectarian strife over the issue of birth control. This serves to emphasize the need for a re-examination and re-statement of doctrine. It is necessary to question whether one can bind all mankind, irrespective of creed or belief, to the prohibition of contraception and to ask whether this only applies to Christians who have an essentially sacramental view of marriage. If the former conclusion is reached again, we still cannot impose this view of life on our fellow man by force, be it political or economic; conscience is still the final arbiter of action of the individual in good faith.

TOM BROGAN

THE INFERTILE PERIOD by John Marshall; Darton, Longman and Todd; 16s 6d.

The success of periodic continence as a means of family limitation depends on exact knowledge of the principles of the safe period. In this book Dr Marshall has provided the means to achieve the dissemination of this exact knowledge. The book is primarily intended for doctors, priests and others who may have to give instruction on family limitation by the safe period. The physiological principles underlying this method are explained in a lucid manner. The detection of ovulation, by using the rise in basal body temperature, is described with full attention to all the variations which are likely to be encountered, and numerous examples are given, both in the text and in the appendix, of illustrations of actual temperature charts selected from the author's vast accumulation of clinical data on this phenomenon.

Much space is devoted to the practical application of the calendar method of calculating the infertile period and to the use of the temperature chart as a means of detecting ovulation. Advising couples on the use of the infertile period requires a technique which is quite strange to the majority of doctors. The

adviser has to be sure that his clients *understand* a physiological process exactly, in complete contrast to the normal practice of the consulting room, where one is not expected to ensure that a patient understands exactly all the clinical and pathological details of his or her disease. In an attempt to simplify the problem, Dr Marshall has subdivided couples seeking advice into a number of groups and suggested a form of approach suitable to clients in each of these categories. The suggested approach is in no way stylized but is given on broad principles and in the best traditions of clinical medicine.

In general, the book fills a very serious need and should be read and kept as a reference by all those who advise on periodic continence. It is the answer to those who claim either that the safe period does not exist or who allege that it is completely unreliable and unworkable. By close attention to all the details of this book, there is no reason why a medical adviser should not achieve much the same results as those of the average family planning clinic which gives instruction in contraception but does not dispense the 'pill'. A separate chapter is devoted to the psychological aspects of advising on the safe period. This is important reading as it deals with many of the common problems which are encountered in this work. Of note is the management of possible difficulties and objections concerning the observance of continence. The old fallacy that sexual desire in women is greatest at the time of ovulation is exploded by quoting statistics from a paper published in a well-known medical journal.

The Introductory chapter poses the problem of fertility control and the population explosion in sober terms. Most of the points on this problem, which are made in Dr Rock's book, *The Time has Come*, are covered here with considerable economy of words but with telling force. In contrast, the final chapter on 'Theological Aspects' is rather dreary reading. The time-worn 'Natural Law' arguments are invoked to condemn mechanical and chemical contraception and to justify periodic continence. This presumably means something to some Catholics and is taken on trust by others, but it is completely unintelligible to our separated brethren. It is a good example of 'instant morality', about which various writers in the national press have complained. This is in no way a reflection on the author of the book but is an indictment of this most inadequate method of expressing our doctrinal position as Catholics. A process of enquiry into the sacramental nature of marriage is much needed in order to illuminate the doctrine of the sanctity of the sexual act, and all that it implies, and to diminish reliance on merely legalistic arguments.

TOM BROGAN

THE POPULATION EXPLOSION AND WORLD HUNGER., by Arthur McCormack; Burns and Oates (Faith and Fact); 9s 6d.

The complexities of the debate on the effects of the astronomical increase in world population are such that the layman is likely to abandon the attempt to assess their merits. On one hand he is frightened out of his wits by prophecies