THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

New York, N.Y. 10021

April 21, 1966

Sir Francis Harry Compton Crick
Institute of Molecular Biology
Cambridge University
Cambridge, England

Dear Francis:

With some urgency I am writing you in behalf of Dr. John C. Bennett, President of Union Theological Seminary in New York, and myself. We come to you personally, a theologian and a scientist, and we seek a personal reply by collect telegram or cable.

Through private sources as well as the press, we have become keenly aware in recent months of the deep personal concern Pope Paul feels about the moral issues presented by unprecedented world population growth.

While the Ecumenical Council significantly liberalized Roman Catholic doctrine on the role of conjugal love apart from reproduction, and clearly recognized the pressures of mounting population on so many families and nations, the Pope has reserved for himself the final judgment of his Church on the morality of fertility control. His special commission on this matter will meet again soon, and His Holiness may deliver his pronouncement within the next few weeks.

At this critical moment, we have been approached in confidence by highly regarded Catholic priests and scholars in the U.S. and Rome. They are convinced that an immediate, concerted expression by non-Catholic leaders -- in theology, the sciences and government -- on the moral imperatives for conscientious limitation of family size, may exert a beneficial influence on the Pope's decision.

We believe this merits a most serious and expeditious response, in the new spirit of Ecumenism among men of all faiths, and involving a wide spectrum of scientific disciplines and particular churches. Moving through organizational channels will not suffice at the moment; we must work and act together purely as individuals.

Accordingly, we have drafted the attached statement and most urgently seek your endorsement of it. The statement seeks to express, briefly but with depth and breadth, a moral foundation for fertility control, taking into account both the universal values of parental love and the scientific facts on mounting population pressures from which no man is exempt.

This communication, with the endorsements of the small group being asked to sign it, must be delivered to His Holiness on or before May 10. We expect to arrange for a personal emissary to put it in his hands. Address your collect telegram response directly to me.

Sincerely,

Ed

Edward L. Tatum

CONFIDENTIAL

THE MORAL IMPERATIVES FOR FERTILITY CONTROL

A Statement For The Consideration Of
His Holiness, Pope Paul VI

The purpose of this statement is to express our heartfelt appreciation of the sensitive position on responsible parenthood and concern for problems of population growth reflected in The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, and to transmit our conviction that future generations will hold today's leaders morally responsible if we fail to recognize and deal with the world population crisis while it is still manageable on the basis of free conscience and free choice.

We know you are keenly aware of the many millions of your fellow men who are woefully malnourished or actually starving, and we feel sure you recognize also, that despite man's ingenuity, the mounting pressures of population on world resources may subject future generations to hardships and miseries on a scale hitherto unknown. With full respect for the moral heritage of the traditional Catholic ethic on fertility control, we are profoundly convinced that a new moral consensus must be achieved among leaders of all major faiths, and that man's responsibility to the next generation includes a primary duty to limit that generation's size. It is the mark of great religions and the obligation of great leaders to recognize that changing conditions demand changing applications of unchanging moral values.

4/66
D-439

There are two moral elements of the matter, as we assess it, which must be joined and balanced in the conscience of modern man: First is the parental obligation of every couple to decide, with reverence for life, the number and spacing of its children, so that each family member may have the best prospect for health, vocation and fulfillment. Second is the emerging social responsibility of each couple to reasonably limit family size as an essential step toward assuring that no man has too little of life's requirements and blessings because an excess of people requires too much.

It is paradoxical that so many problems confronting mankind today are the result of scientific progress in curbing one of our most ancient and formidable enemies -- disease. For most of human history, survival against such enemies required man to exercise his fertility most abundantly, so that total births exceeded -- or at least equalled -- total deaths. It was therefore morally imperative to encourage fertility and discourage the avoidance of pregnancy. But in our time many causes of early death have been finally overcome. For more than two centuries, human numbers have been growing with unprecedented, accelerating swiftness -- the rate of growth has doubled in the past two decades alone. Today man's future is threatened less by rampant disease than by unbridled reproduction. Therefore, if future generations are to enjoy the quality of life made possible through the advances of science, our new moral imperative must call for the conscientious regulation of fertility.

The population dilemma, from which no individual is exempt, is equalled in magnitude only by the opportunity today's leaders share

to influence its outcome for good or ill. If we achieve an affirmative moral consensus on this issue, those who follow will surely give thanks. If we fail, our conscience must bear the burden of their mounting hardships, and the tragic loss of freedom and opportunity which we could have spared them. Our moral outlook must creatively confront these prospects of the future, while remaining firmly rooted in the tested ethics of the past. Today your participation in the forging of a new consensus on this vital matter is essential for all mankind.