THE FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL THROUGH MEDICINE

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Human survival through the ages has been limited by famine, disease and violence. There was a time, not too long ago, when the average survival time at birth was only 25 to 30 years, compared with the 70 or more years for that small portion of the world population living in the economically highly advanced countries. For the hundreds of millions of people now living in India, Pakistan and Burma the average life expectancy at birth is still only 32 to 35 years, and in many other parts of the world it is still in the range of 50 years or less. The medical discoveries, which provided the tools for controlling the mass-killing bacterial, viral and parasitic diseases are being increasingly applied in the economically underdeveloped countries and death rates have fallen and are continuing to fall to an extraordinary degree. However, this very success in death control has created one of the greatest threats to future human survival, because the continuing high birth rates are resulting in the most phenomenal increase in population in human history. In the last 40 years the world population has increased by 1 billion people to a total of 3 billion. If the present rate will continue - and it is actually increasing enormously in many parts of the world - there will be 6 to
7 billion in the next 40 years, and 23 billion in the next 100 years.

This extraordinary population increase is greatest in the economically most depressed areas and it threatens to nullify all efforts at improving the living standards of those people whose growing misery and despair, constitutes the greatest threat to world stability and peace. Next to nuclear warfare, which may itself be precipitated, where the misery of hunger and despair leads to desperate acts, death control without fertility control represents the greatest threat to future human survival in all parts of the world. Current methods of fertility control can achieve much when energetically applied by an aroused population, as has been shown in Japan in the past 15 years, but they are impractical for the hundreds of millions of uneducated and poverty-stricken people who need it the most. There is an urgent need for expanding research on all aspects of the population problem, and medical science can help by discovering the new knowledge that will make fertility control at least as practical and successful as death control. The U. S. A. is spending a relatively minute amount of effort and money for research on fertility and yet it is more important to its future well-being than the new knowledge we need about heart disease and cancer. There may be differences of opinion about acceptable methods of birth control but not about the need for the regulation of births, which in the words of the late Pope Pius is "compatible with the law of God."
