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## The Time has Come ....

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# The Time Has Come . . . .

The N.C.W.C. News Service has released the following text of an article written by Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, on a book entitled, *The Time Has Come*, by Dr. John Rock. The article appeared in the April 20 issue of the *Boston Pilot*. Readers of *THE LINACRE QUARTERLY* will recognize the subject from material published in previous issues of our own journal.

Dr. John Rock of Brookline has published a new book entitled *The Time Has Come* with a subtitle suggesting that this work is intended to present "a Catholic doctor's proposals to end the battle over birth control." Since Dr. Rock writes explicitly as a Catholic, and since I am his Bishop, I have been asked from several sources to make some observations on his latest publication.

The law of the Church requires that every Catholic who writes on a subject pertaining to faith or morality submit his manuscript to Church authority for a so-called "imprimatur." This is an official statement by the local bishop that the contents are free from doctrinal and/or moral error. Such a law should not be interpreted in any sense as an unjust infringement upon the rights of the Catholic in question, but rather a means which the Church is entitled to employ in order to keep an accurate image of her official teaching before the eyes of the non-Catholic world.

I regret to observe that Dr. Rock has published his book without such an "imprimatur." Therefore, the opinions on the morality of artificial birth control as presented in the text lack any official approval as authentic Catholic teaching.

In this book there is much that is good. The author has presented a

detailed and graphic account of the history of the birth control controversy in the United States, and many times he rightly criticizes the excesses to which some Catholics have gone in this matter.

He has quoted accurately and unequivocally from officially approved Catholic authors in an attempt to present a correct picture of the much misunderstood Catholic position on birth control, and has clearly demonstrated that the Church is not opposed to birth control as such, but to the use of artificial means to control births.

He presents many cogent arguments for the formation of a public policy on birth control, and some of his suggestions could contribute to the establishment of domestic peace in our pluralistic society. With reason, he calls to task those who are unwilling to face the implications of the much publicized population explosion.

He makes an eloquent, and much needed, plea for Federal grants to perfect the so-called Rhythm System so that it might become a means of controlling births which is not only morally acceptable but also scientifically accurate.

Not everything in the book, however, can pass without criticism. It also contains several statements

which are theologically incorrect and certainly misleading.

When he speaks on the formation of the Catholic conscience he fails to take into consideration the true complexity of this problem and so commits in the field of theology the same mistake he urges against the theologians in the field of reproductive physiology. The entire chapter on the teaching of the Natural Law in matters which pertain to the morality of artificial contraception is oversimplified.

In his defense of the "natural" and, to his mind, "lawful," use of the progestational steroids as contraceptive devices, Dr. Rock does not meet the incisive arguments against his position which have been continually voiced by Catholic moral theologians.

In the pages of this book Dr. Rock is emphatic in his claim to be a good and devoted Catholic. It must be

said, however, that some of the positions which he defends therein are not in agreement with Catholic teaching.

Surely Doctor Rock, and other physicians, have much to offer the Church and her teaching authority if medical men and theologians study together the complex problems of human reproduction. Theologians must recognize the competence of Dr. Rock in the field of reproductive physiology but he must recognize their competence in the field of Catholic moral teaching.

Fair minded people will appreciate that such cooperation in no way curtails the doctor's scientific freedom. It would rather aid him in his dedicated pursuit of the ultimate truth in this matter, the defense and formulation of which in theological terms is not the task of an individual but that of the whole teaching Church.