October 22, 1951.

President Harry S. Truman,
Blair House,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

With profound regret millions of your fellow-citizens have heard of your appointment of the first American ambassador to the Vatican. That this is a tragic blunder, abandoning the American principle of separation between church and state and singling out for preferential honor and influence a particular church, seems to us obvious. No pretense that the Vatican state and the Church of Rome are distinct, and that an ambassador to one is not an ambassador to the other, can successfully be maintained; and no plea that, because other nations have ambassadors at the Vatican, the United States should have one also can blind us to your violation of our basic American principle of the equality of all religious faiths in the eyes of our government.

Many of us have worked long and hard to achieve more fraternal relationships between Protestants and Roman Catholics. We do not oppose your appointment of an American ambassador to the Vatican from intolerant and bigoted motives. We would equally oppose any similar preferential treatment of any other church. Only because your action involves the negation of fundamental American principles we oppose it, with great regret and deep indignation.

At a time when this nation's unity is of utmost importance, you have needlessly started a controversy, which will bitterly divide our people and do immeasurable harm. You have forced millions of our citizens into a position where, for conscience' sake, we cannot rest until this outrage is undone.

Like many others, I personally regret your action the more because until this time I have supported your administration against the attack of adversaries. Now, however, you have made such defense impossible for hosts of your friends. This deplorable appointment will, I am sure, prove to be as imprudent and ill-advised as it certainly is false to the traditional principles of our Republic.

Respectfully yours,

Harry Emerson Fosdick.