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Department of Medical Genetics

May 16, 1957

DR. C. P. Miller
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Dear Phil:

My recent election to the National Academy of Sciences was quite unexpected and probably premature, and it has left me in something of a quandary on which I would appreciate your advice.

I was nominated by the Botany Section, in which I have a great many friends, and to which many or most of the geneticists seem to have gravitated in the absence of a genetics section. At first thought, this would be the reasonable section that I should elect, and most of my friends have advised me accordingly.

However, as you know, I have a longstanding interest in scientific medicine, one which is coming to a focus now with the recent establishment here of this Medical Genetics Department. I wondered if I should not give some thought to Pathology & Bacteriology as an alternative. Now I do not personally know very many members of this section, none better than yourself, and I also recognize that my own point of view is not necessarily going to be very familiar or popular in it. These can be considered as reasons both pro and con. Much hinges on what the academy does on a sectional basis. If its functions are mostly the deliberation on new candidates, then I ought to stick with Botany, if only as a matter of personal regard. If there is more serious business, it might be just possible that another geneticist in P&B ought to come in there, precisely in order to represent a different point of view.

This is hardly a world-shaking issue, but what do you think about it?

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Medical Genetics