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## Along Highway and Byway

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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# THE LINACRE QUARTERLY

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NO. 1

## ALONG HIGHWAY AND BYWAY AN APPRECIATION

In the first number of the fifth volume of LINACRE it may be well to note that this small journal has retained its status when not a few older, well-established journals have regressed or sunk in the currents of the depression. Its survival reflects much credit on its former editor, Dr. Anthony Bassler, now retiring from its editorship, and his staff, and on Reverend W. Cox, S.J., for their untiring labor and selfless zeal in promoting the interest of the LINACRE and the cause which it represents—the medico-ethical phase of Catholic Action. The ideals supporting that zeal mirror the considered attitude of the officers, moderators and members of the Guilds of the Federation, as well as of all faithful Catholics everywhere. In the broadest sense the logical objectives which flow from these ideals represent the aims of all good citizens.

Intelligent Catholics realize how much the principles embodied in Catholic Action are needed in a turbulent world that is groping for the means of security and stability. They realize well that Catholic Action can and should be used as the way not only to personal and familial sanctification, but also should inform dynamically all the various activities of Catholics—civic, social, political, economic, national and, indeed, international. The work being carried out by the various Catholic groups, lay and professional, as a part of Catholic Action, is widespread, manifold and of great moment. Catholic physicians and all other groups professionally qualified to cooperate in the practice of the healing arts are in a position to perform part of this

great work since their religious and professional training and their close and deeply respected relations with their clientele give them especial opportunities for broad service in this field. They are thus able to exhibit constantly through their professional and social activities the high level of sane and just principles which in every sense are inherent components of Catholic teaching and ideals. The retiring editor and his staff, the Reverend Moderator and the officers and active members of all the Guilds deserve credit for their organized labors in this cause. In taking up the duties of editorship of the LINACRE the writer sincerely hopes to be able to succeed in following the fine example set by those whose labors have given us the Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds and the LINACRE, which is the servant of them all.

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#### NOTICE OF CHANGE OF DATE OF ISSUE OF THE "LINACRE"

It has been thought wise to shift the date of issue of the first number of every volume of the LINACRE from December to January, so that the four numbers of the volume shall appear in January, April, July and October of each year. Hereafter all the numbers of a single volume will appear in the same year, and not partly in one year and partly in another as formerly.

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#### A WORD TO THE SECRETARIES OF THE GUILDS

It is respectfully requested of the secretaries of the different Guilds that each of them send reports upon all of the meetings of his own Guild to the editor of the LINACRE, Dr. James F. McDonald, 121 East 60th Street, New York City, well in advance of the date of issue of the journal (i.e., January, April, July and October, as above noted). Failure to publish in the LINACRE the doings of the separate Guilds subtracts from its interest and quality, since the reports of the group activities of its membership, religious, social, scientific and professional, are the main purpose of existence for the LINACRE as a matter of information and stimulus to every member of the Federation and all others who may happen to read this journal. The editor will appreciate fully such cooperation in the larger interest which the LINACRE is intended to serve.

### A WORD TO THE READERS OF THE "LINACRE"

Those who read the LINACRE and find it of interest are kindly requested to take a moment of their time to write to the editor, stating what they like and enjoy in this journal; also and especially, what they do not like or do not enjoy, and give reasons. Such constructive contacts with our readers will be gratefully appreciated as a means of helping to keep this journal to a level of interest and worth commensurate with the importance of the function it represents. Please do not hesitate to offer constructive suggestions.

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### DR. ANTHONY BASSLER, FORMER EDITOR OF "LINACRE," TO BE GUEST SPEAKER AT NEW ORLEANS

Dr. Anthony Bassler, our former editor, will be guest speaker at the New Orleans Graduate Medical Assembly in March, during which time he will also address the New Orleans Catholic Physicians' Guild. He has just been elected President of the Center Club.

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### THE SOVIET UNION REVERSES ITS STAND ON LEGALIZED ABORTION

[The Reverend Moderator has called our attention to the following editorial which appeared in the *J. A. M. A.* on Oct. 24, 1936, Vol. 107, Number 17, and suggested that it be passed on to the readers of the LINACRE for the information of any of them who may have failed to notice it in the larger journal.]

"On May 26 the Central Executive Committee and the Central Peoples' Health Committee of the Soviet Union published the draft of a new law prohibiting abortion except in the presence of stringent indications; thus it completely reversed its stand of 1920, when it legalized artificial abortion. With the interdiction of artificial abortion, except when the life or health of the woman is threatened, a number of measures calculated to lighten the burden of child bearing and of the rearing of large families were proposed. The number of available obstetric hospitals, beds, consultation stations and crèches were to be increased so as to make this service universally available. The new law likewise proposed to raise alimony fees, to make divorce more difficult and to encourage the rearing of large families. The legislative bodies responsible for the bill asked the people for a free and fearless discussion of the proposed legislation. Opponents of the bill, chiefly women, advanced a number of social reasons, such as the still existing lack of housing facilities, the difficulty in prosecuting study or work and rearing many children at the same time, the ill effect of oft repeated pregnancies on one's health and, last but not least, the encroachment on the woman's right to determine whether she chooses at a given moment to become a mother or not.

"The attitude of the medical profession and in particular of the obstetricians and gynecologists is in sharp contrast to these views. The medical profession in the Soviet Union had an unusual opportunity to observe the harmful effects, both early and late, of artificial abortion. Prof. G. A. Baksht, the head of the First Gynecologic-Obstetric Clinic of the Leningrad Medical Institute, states: 'The accumulated experience since 1920 furnishes abundant proof that artificial abortion is a serious evil and that the operation, even when performed *lege artis*, leads to a number of injurious effects.' Trauma, and infection have always constituted a real danger in operative interference with the normal process of labor. The same holds true with even greater force in the case of artificial abortion. The organism of the woman in the first months of pregnancy has not acquired those protective properties which guarantee it a physiologic puerperium. In discussing the operative trauma, Baksht states that the incidence of perforation of the uterus amounted to from 0.01 to 0.11 per cent. This accident not infrequently calls for an immediate laparotomy in order to ascertain probable injury to the intestine, the urinary bladder or the mesentery. Occasionally the uterus has to be sacrificed in a young woman. According to Ulyanovsky (quoted by Baksht), tears of the internal os occurred in 10.5 per cent and led to cicatricial contractures and even to a complete atresia, or serves as a portal of infection of the parametrium. Too energetic curettage of the uterine mucosa traumatizes the basal membrane, with the consequent atrophy and depression of the menstrual function.

"While micro-organisms enter the uterine cavity after the fourth day in the normal puerperium, about the time of the formation of the protective granulation zone, bacteria were found to be present in the uterine cavity after an artificial abortion on the second day after the operation and their number rapidly increased on the third and fourth days. This is manifested clinically by the frequency of 'mild' fever. The high incidence of postabortive fever (40 and 50 per cent according to Rusin) depends on the considerable number of repeated abortions with the attendant subinvolution and latent infection. Chronic pelvic infection was present in 12.8 per cent in a follow-up study of 1,500 cases of artificial abortion.

"The extent of biologic trauma is rather difficult to estimate. The introduction of two new glands of internal secretion, the corpus luteum and the placenta, undoubtedly call for especial adaptation on the part of the rest of the endocrine-vegetative system. The effect of the sudden interruption of pregnancy must be to upset the new equilibrium and to lead to endocrine-vegetative upsets and to disturbance of the menstrual function and libido. This is of particular significance when interrupting the first pregnancy in women with an asthenic-hypoplastic

constitution. It tends to stabilize infantilism and result in sterility even in the absence of a pelvic infection. Artificial abortion is an important etiologic factor in extra-uterine pregnancy.

"The advocates of the bill likewise stress the salutary effect they believe the new law will have on the relations of the sexes, on the irresponsible and frivolous attitude toward the sex problem and on the building of character in the growing generation."

The bill was passed, June 27.

## HOW OLD THE NEW

By JAMES J. WALSH, M.D., PH.D.

**J**OHNS FISKE, who was very well known in this country for his books on history and on certain phases of popular science, once disturbed the minds of his many special adherents by suggesting that the so-called "dark ages" were really the bright ages. He added: "It is hard to find words fit to express the debt of gratitude which modern civilization owes to the Roman Catholic Church." He even went so far as to say that: "When we consider how the seeds of what is noblest in modern life were then painfully sown upon the soil which imperial Rome had prepared . . . there is a sense in which the most brilliant achievements of pagan antiquity are dwarfed in comparison with these."

During the better part of the twentieth century, a change has been coming over appreciation of what was accomplished during the Middle Ages until now there are a great many people—I mean of course scholarly, educated people—who are very ready to acknowledge our debt to this period which was supposed to be almost nil and has now come to be appreciated as representing the beginnings of those influences which have meant most for the development of our time.

Now the surprising thing is that this is true for medical science as it is for other phases of knowledge, though in the minds of a great many people, even educated folk, there remains the deepest prejudice against it. It needs only a little consultation of original and not secondary authorities to bring this out. Of course these original authorities have only been available, as a rule, during comparatively recent years. It is a disgrace now for anyone not to know them. Let me illustrate.

I suppose that the things we consider to be triumphs of modern medicine and proofs of the advancement of medical science are, (1) the use of anesthetics to relieve pain during surgical operations; (2) the use of what may be called aseptics to prevent the spread of infection and save life after surgical operations; (3) the proper understanding of insanity and the taking of such care of the insane as provides opportunity for them to get better and, above all, not to be abused in their unfortunate condition; and last, but not least, (4) the erection