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Book Reviews

Abortion: The Development of the Roman Catholic Perspective

John Connery, S.J.

Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1977. 336 pp., \$7.95.

As the abortion debate matures and involves more segments of the society, a growing library of sophisticated and in-depth studies is being published for special purposes. This book will be of invaluable use to those in the Pro-Life Movement who have made clerical motivation their special cause. Father Connery, with admirable scholarship, has traced the continuous thread of opposition to abortion back through centuries of Christian tradition. Those churchmen who have opted out of the anti-abortion battle because of a conviction that there was scant scriptural comment on abortion will find no comfort in Father Connery's formidable recruitment of evidence to show that Christian concern for the sanctity of life has always embraced unborn life. The reaction of the early Church to the practice of abortion, is shown to have been unequivocal. In one of the earliest of Christian documents, the "Didache," which dates from apostolic times, is found the categorical statement, "You shall not kill the fetus by abortion nor the child after birth by infanticide." This statement is found in that part of the "Didache" which was also used by the Jews in proselytizing the pagans. The condemnation, therefore, is derived from a truly Judeo-Christian perspective of great antiquity.

Much is made in the current abortion debate about the uncertain status of the unborn child. It is certainly the keystone of the strategy of the pro-abortion lobby to deny humanhood to the fetus. The alleged uncertainty of the point when life begins, however, is entirely contrived for political purposes. The biological evidence for the beginning of human life at fertilization is as well established as any scientific evidence can be and enjoys almost universal acceptance in the genetic and obstetrical literature. It is incumbent on science to decide when life begins so that the theologians may then proceed to tell us how to value and protect life at the various stages of its continuum. The author points out how the Church has been influenced down through the centuries by the limitations of an uncertain biology. It was Aristotelian biology which led to the preoccupation with the physical formation of the fetus as a criterion for the infusion of the soul. The invention of the microscope obviously had a sweeping effect on cellular biology as have numerous other scientific advancements up to and including the discovery of the molecular structure of DNA. Surprisingly, as this book elucidates, the Church has never attempted to define the specific time of animation in light of new scientific breakthroughs. What is conspicuous in the historical insights developed by Father Connery, is an uncompromising Catholic defense of unborn life however it was perceived by the science of ancient, medieval and modern times.

Those who have chided the Church for its "disproportionate emphasis on the abortion issue" must concede after reading this book, that Vatican II, when it spoke of abortion as "an unspeakable crime" was only echoing a constant and consistent Roman Catholic position. Those pastors and curates who lead their congregations in the implementation of the bishops' pastoral plan for pro-life activities will be following in a pathway prepared for them by the earliest Fathers of the Church.

The detailed historical development of the theological debate will be of particular value to teachers at various levels. The notes are arranged by chapter and constitute a detailed bibliography for further study.

— Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.
Professor of Pediatrics, Stritch School of Medicine

Ethics of Newborn Intensive Care

Albert R. Jonsen and Michael J. Garland, Editors

University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif., 1976. xv + 193 pp., \$4.00 (paper).

The publication is a joint effort of the Health Policy Program of the School of Medicine of the University of California (San Francisco) and the Institute of Governmental Studies of the University of California (Berkeley) based on materials presented at the Sonoma Conference on Ethical Issues in Neonatal Intensive Care in May, 1974, organized to explore the ethical issues and some of the policy implications of neonatal intensive care. Supported by funds from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the conference was jointly sponsored by the Health Policy Program and the Department of Pediatrics of the University of California at San Francisco. The conference was directed by William H. Tooley, M.D. and Roderic H. Phibbs, M.D., neonatologists working in the intensive care nursery, Moffitt Hospital, University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Albert R. Jonsen, Ph.D., associate professor of bioethics, School of Medicine (UCSF) with Michael J. Garland, Ph.D., lecturer in bioethics, School of Medicine (UCSF) serving as conference coordinator.

The published report of the conference contains material presented initially at the conference which was reviewed, revised and supplemented after the conference. Conference participants included: Eileen Brewer, M.D., pediatrician (UCSF); John Clausen, Ph.D., sociologist, University of California, Berkeley (UCB); Danner Clouser, Ph.D., philosopher, Hershey Medical Center (HMC), Pennsylvania State University; Marianna Cohen, M.S.W., social worker (UCSF); Robert K. Creasy, M.D.; obstetrician (UCSF); Morris Davis, J.D., M.P.H., editor, *Masks, Journal of Black Health Perspectives*; Jane Hunt, Ph.D., research psychologist (UCB); Robert Jaffe, M.D., obstetrician (UCSF); Marcia Kramer, Ph.D., economist, State University of New York, Stony Brook; Alan Margolis, M.D., obstetrician (UCSF); F. Raymond Marks, J.D., attorney, Childhood and Government Project (UCB); Laura Nader, Ph.D., anthropologist (UCB); Nicholas Nelson, M.D., pediatrician (HMC); David Perlman, science editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*; Teresa Poirier, R.N. (UCSF); Gloria Powell, M.D., psychiatrist, (UCLA) and Clement A. Smith, M.D., pediatrician, Harvard Medical School. Additional material was contributed after the symposium by Philip R. Lee, M.D., internist, professor of community medicine and director, health policy program, School of Medicine (UCSF); Diane Dooley, pre-doctoral fellow, health policy program, School of Medicine (UCSF); and Alex Stalcup, M.D.; then chief resident, pediatrics service, Moffitt Hospital (UCSF).

A disturbing foreword by Stanley Scott, assistant director of the Institute of Governmental Studies (UCB) attempts to set the limits of the discussion. The disturbing note comes in the very first paragraph when after evoking interest in how, when and for what purposes we should employ the science and technology of our times, he moves to wondering . . . "when does the baby's probable future hold such grim prospects that it becomes more ethical and humane to withhold