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Letters to the Editor

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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Letters to the Editor

Professional Inaction

To the Editor:

Jack Kevorkian used to call what he does "medicide" until it was pointed out that the term literally means "the killing of medicine." Many feared that killing the medical profession was exactly what he would accomplish if he succeeded in turning physicians into agents of death who were authorized to put the sick out of our emotional and financial misery. But it appears to already be too late.

Although partial-birth abortion has been condemned by the medical profession as never justified, the profession has taken no action against its practitioners. Why not? What kind of mind does it take to hold a perfectly formed human child squirming in one's hands and then puncture its skull and suck its brains out? Do such as these really qualify to be called medical doctors? Then why are they still members of the profession in good standing and allowed to continue this horrific practice?

The byword of the medical profession used to be "above all do no harm," and the Hippocratic Oath used to say "I will give no deadly medicine." It also included an explicit prohibition against committing abortion. (Perhaps this has something to do with why it has quietly disappeared from many medical schools.) What has become of the medical profession when it welcomes into its ranks those

unethical practitioners who have prostituted their skills to destroy human life, accepts abortion when there is no medical indication, and intrudes itself into families by condoning surgery on minors without parental permission or knowledge? Yet many, duped by the wedge issues of pain and personal autonomy, want to trust this thoroughly corrupted brotherhood with end of life decisions for the weakest and most vulnerable among us.

We are not far from the experience of the Netherlands where euthanasia is legal. The Dutch now fear entering their own hospitals where many lives are involuntarily ended in spite of so-called safeguards.

- Alfred Lemmo
Dearborn, Michigan

Ensoulement of the Fetus

To the Editor:

I would like to corroborate the letter of C. Ward Kischer in the November, 1998 *Linacre Quarterly*.

I am not a scientist so I will let a world famous doctor refute German's claim about the *first contact* of fertilization. Sir Arthur William Liley, M.D., the "father of modern fetology," who perfected the technique for amniocentesis and who discovered how to perform intra-uterine transfusions taught as follows: "As any high school biology textbook will tell us, life begins at

conception and ends at death. In between, life does not develop; it is simply there.”¹

And regarding the “future possible individual human life” he wrote: “The definition of the embryo or fetus as a potential human, or human being, or human life, is interesting if only because of the frequency with which it is used by doctors and biologists who probably would consider that they are speaking as scientists. In the first place it is, of course, a non-definition. It does not tell us what an embryo or fetus is, but only what it will become. But secondly, the word ‘potential’ is not a medical or scientific term at all, but a metaphysical term. The corresponding terms in biology and medicine are ‘growth’ and ‘development’; and if we speak of a growing or developing human, or human being, or human life, we have quite a different sense and we are back with reality.

“However, it is not name-calling that will harm the embryo or fetus. Rather, the necessity to deny medical and scientific knowledge of the fetus, derives from the fact that the fate proposed for him has little or nothing to do with medicine or therapy.”²

We must remember that the difference between our Blessed Mother and ourselves is not one of nature but of grace: “For the honor of the holy and undivided Trinity, for the honor and renown of the Virgin Mother of God, for the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the increase of the Christian religion, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own authority, We declare, pronounce

and define: the doctrine that the most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, by a unique grace and privilege of the omnipotent God and in consideration of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore must be firmly and constantly held by all the faithful.” (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, Dec. 8, 1854)

and

“10. If these praises of the Blessed Virgin Mary be given the careful consideration they deserve, who will dare to doubt that she, who was purer than the angels and at all times pure, was at any moment even for the briefest instant, not free from every stain of sin?...13. And again, if we consider the matter with attention, and especially if we consider the burning and sweet love which Almighty God without doubt had, and has, for the mother of His only begotten Son, for what reason can we even think that she was, even for the briefest moment of time, subject to sin and destitute of divine Grace.” (Pius XII, *Fulgens Corona*, On the Centennial of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception, Sept. 8, 1953)

The Catholic Church, *Mater et Maestra*, is the legitimate interpreter of doctrine, the custodian of the keys of the kingdom. She does not contradict what is scientifically certain, but neither does she shirk her duty to teach, in the words of Professor LeJeune, that man does not live by science alone.

Finally:

“The present Declaration deliberately leaves untouched the question of the moment when the spiritual soul is infused. The tradition is not unanimous in its answer and authors hold different views: some think animation occurs in the first moment of life, others that it occurs only after implantation. But science really cannot decide the question, since the very existence of an immortal soul is not a subject for scientific inquiry; the question is a philosophical one. For two reasons the moral position taken here on abortion does not depend on the answer to that question: 1) even if it is assumed that animation comes at a later point, the life of the fetus is nonetheless incipiently *human* (as the biological sciences make clear); it prepares the way for and requires the infusion of the soul, which will complete the nature received from the parents; 2) if the infusion of the soul at the very first moment is at least *probable* (and the contrary will in fact never be established with certainty), then to take the life of the fetus is at least to run the *risk* of killing a human being who is not merely awaiting but is already in possession of a human soul.”³

- Fr. Denis O'Brien, M.M.
Dallas, TX

References

1. *The Tiniest Humans*, American Life League, P.O. Box 1350, Stafford, VA 22555, p. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, P. 34

3. *Declaration on Abortion*, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Nov. 18, 1974; footnote 19.

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