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[Book Reviews of] Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teaching, 3rd.ed. by Kevin O'Rourke and Philip Boyle / A Catholic Guide to Medical Ethics, by Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.

Eric Kilbreath

Patrick Guinan

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Book Reviews

Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teaching, 3rd.ed. by Kevin O'Rourke and Philip Boyle, Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999, 464 pp., \$37.50.

O'Rourke and Boyle have updated this reference book to incorporate recent encyclicals and magisterial statements such as *The Splendor of Truth*, *The Gospel of Life*, and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. They write that the "Book seeks to help Catholic health care professionals understand, internalize, and apply the principles of Catholic teaching to the many ethical issues they encounter in their research and practice." (p. xiii) Rather than understanding Church doctrine on medical ethical questions as a set of rules, they hope to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of why the Church teaches what it does. One of the aims of the book is to present Church statements regarding medical ethics in a manner that allows the reader to come to an understanding of the Christian vision of the human person.

To achieve this, the authors provide two introductory chapters that give the foundations for understanding Catholic medical ethics. The first chapter considers anthropology and how this influences medical ethical decision making. The second chapter concerns the formation of conscience and attempts to correct the erroneous presuppositions people have relating to forming one's conscience. These chapters are followed by specific teachings of the Church on 61 topics, ranging from *abortion* to *withholding life support*. Included are topics that at first may surprise the reader by their inclusion, such as *capital punishment* and *labor relations*. However, after reading the first chapter with its description of anthropology, one realizes that such topics are included because they deal with how humans are to treat each other. It is this proper ordering of human needs and actions which is addressed by most of the documents in the book. Humans, being created in the image of God, will be fulfilled by certain treatment and damaged by other treatment.

The two introductory chapters are clear and concise, giving a good summary of what the Church believes about human nature and the key factors in forming one's conscience. A thorough reading of these chapters should give one enough knowledge of Catholic doctrine to make an educated guess at the Church's position on a specific topic before reading the actual Church documents on it. O'Rourke and Boyle write that the

Christian view of the person is informed by the scriptural view that people were created by God in God's image and likeness. Hence, humans possess spiritual intelligence and free will making them different than animals. Free choice allows the person to shape his or her destiny and character. Morality comes from this human freedom. Moral norms help express actions that help or hinder the person and direct him or her to human fulfillment. The needs of the person can be expressed in four categories: physiological, psychological, social, and spiritual. The authors make the good analogy of saying these four needs are not related as stories of a building but as dimensions of a cube.(p. 5) Each human act is to utilize all four dimensions.

O'Rourke and Boyle note that there exists a hierarchy among these needs. The person's spiritual needs are deepest and most central and integrating. One's biological needs are the least unified and the psychological and social needs occupy the intermediate positions. Human health occurs when all four needs are nourished. Many health care professionals limit themselves to the physiological and psychological. While being good clinicians demands such knowledge, there are times when they need to realize that the patient's good demands that these two needs be subordinated to social and spiritual needs. The doctrine of extraordinary/ordinary means recognizes this fact when it states that the person need not pursue treatment to prolong life at all costs if it interferes with the person's pursuit of spiritual and social needs. The individual has responsibilities toward his or her relationship with God and family that take priority.

The documents are taken principally from Papal statements and Vatican congregations. However, there are a large number of statements from various American Catholic bodies. The book is written primarily for an American audience. Topics such as national health insurance and health care reform are taken from documents directed explicitly at the American bioethics scene. The large number of documents emanating from American Catholic bodies suggests that this book would more properly be titled *Medical Ethics: Sources of American Catholic Teachings*.

However, this does not hinder the authors' aim of giving a coherent overview to the Church's positions on many of the medical ethical questions of our day. The topics are organized alphabetically, but can be placed under several main themes. There are topics that deal with principles concerning medical ethics, such as autonomy, confidentiality, informed consent, proxy consent, cooperation, double effect, totality, and truth telling. There are the traditional topics concerning the beginning of life: abortion, artificial insemination, artificial reproduction, embryo research, genetics, in vitro fertilization, and sexuality. The topics

surrounding the end of life include aging, assisted suicide, anencephaly, brain death, capital punishment, euthanasia, hydration and nutrition, living will, murder, ordinary and extraordinary means to prolong life, organ donation and transplantation, pain relief, suicide and withholding life support. Many of the topics are concerned with formulating the Church's view of the human person: children and the family, family and marriage, human life, human rights, labor relations, national health insurance, population, right to health care, sacredness of human life, and suffering.

The whole area of medical ethics is thoroughly canvassed in this book. It will act as an indispensable reference for looking up Church documents related to specific questions. The two introductory chapters serve as a useful overview of Catholic doctrine concerning medical ethics to those new to the area and is a good review for those more involved in the field. The topics themselves are of a narrow enough scope that one can quickly find a detailed statement on an exact question, rather than having to read through a general theme in medical ethics. The book makes a valuable contribution to the library of anyone interested in Catholic medical ethics.

— Eric Kilbreath
University of Bristol

A Catholic Guide to Medical Ethics, by Eugene F. Diamond, M.D., The Linacre Institute, 8706 W. 121st, Palos Park, IL 60464, \$20 plus \$5 handling.

Medical ethics since the time of Hippocrates have been based on the natural law, which recognizes the uniqueness of the human person and the sanctity of life. With the rise of "bioethics" in the past thirty years the natural law medical ethic has been eroded by a utilitarian ethic characterized by the demand for autonomy and personal choice. A defense of the Catholic medical ethical tradition is an urgent necessity.

Dr. Eugene Diamond's book, *A Catholic Guide to Medical Ethics*, is equal to this challenge. Its 53 chapters address the contemporary neurologic medical-moral issues, particularly at the beginning of life and the end of life. These chapters are organized under ten general headings:

I. Linacre Institute Studies include six important papers of broad topical value emanating from the Institute of which Dr. Diamond is the director;

II. Nutrition and Hydration emphasizes the moral principle that food and water are part of ordinary care and cannot be discontinued;

III. Abortion reiterates the traditional Catholic teaching that abortion is intrinsically evil;

IV. Handicapped Children consists of ten chapters in defense of children with developmental problems such as spina bifida, Down syndrome, and anencephaly;

V. Contraception reveals that many so-called contraceptives are really abortifacients;

VI. Experimentation describes how a loss of respect for the human person can lead to abuses in human experimentation and a return to Nazi eugenics;

VII. Family Issues emphasizes the Church's insistence on the importance of the family in society;

VIII. Medical Education reveals that there is a prejudice against pro-life students in US medical schools;

IX. Clinical Issues cover subjects not included elsewhere such as AIDS, sterilization, and do not resuscitate (DNR) order; Finally,

X. Abortion and Public Policy is an expansion of the subject of Section III from the legislative and political viewpoints.

The value of this remarkably informative book is its readability. Dr. Diamond is extremely lucid and his arguments are cogent. The reader does not need a medical or philosophical background to appreciate the reasoning presented in defense of the Church's stand on the medical-moral issues discussed.

This book is timely and practical and has immediate value in our modern society with the contemporary struggle between the culture of life and the culture of death. It will be particularly useful for wide distribution by diocesan pro-life officers to all parishes.

Minor criticisms must be noted. An opening chapter on general ethical principles, or at least a bibliography, would have been beneficial to readers who wished to pursue these important topics. An index of authors and subjects would have also been helpful.

Dr. Diamond's 45 years as a prominent pediatrician have given him insight into moral issues as varied as anencephaly, spinal bifida, and classroom sex education. His position as professor of clinical pediatrics at Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine adds to the academic credibility of his cogent arguments. For his entire life, he has been fighting the good fight in defense of Catholic and Hippocratic medical-moral principles. *A Catholic Guide to Medical Ethics* is a fitting tribute to his life's work.

In summary, this book is intended for a broad audience of individuals engaged in the defense of the culture of life in an increasingly hostile society. It is a lucid and cogent review of Catholic positions on the broad spectrum medical-moral issues confronting our culture as we enter the twenty-first century.

— Patrick Guinan, M.D.