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The New Scope of Medicine and The Christian Faith

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It is clear to all persons that a basic difference now exists in the relationship of the profession of medicine to the Christian Church from what it was a decade and more ago. As President of the National Guild of Catholic Psychiatrists, it is indeed an opportunity to express through the pages of the *Linacre Quarterly* how we have observed these developments in cultural patterns and have updated our purposes and goals not only to meet them but to effect them dynamically.

In days past, the position was firmly established and promulgated that as Catholic Physicians it was incumbent upon us to act as a link between the two great areas of science and religion. We were to attempt to mesh the discoveries of science with the stated beliefs and practices of religion. This was to be done in all areas of science and in our case the area of medicine and its sub-specialties, particularly psychiatry and its understanding of human behavior. It was to be linked harmoniously with the beliefs and dogma of all religion, but particularly the Christian religion, and finally the Roman Catholic Church. The two were to work together without conflict and it was even our stated purpose as Catholic Doctors to

support the hierarchy in their actions and pronouncements.

A new obligation, a new type of duty, a new role has been asked of us as Catholic Physicians from every area, especially from the hierarchy itself. No longer do we only defend the Faith so exactly and cause this meshing of the two. This would fall short of what we are able to do.

The two great areas, science and religion, have passed through evolutionary change and have widened their scope.

In the field of science and medicine, the break-through of discovery and knowledgeable action has caused a true influence on man's behavior. Sound psychological insights have demonstrated the why of man's actions. A clear concept has been gained of the reactions of guilt, the operations of the function of judgement in an individual and his responsibility for his actions, and how behavior may be altered by pathological processes and abnormal compulsions. What is more important, techniques of therapy have been developed to alter man's behavioral patterns, to free him and make him more complete. These developments have had a deep penetrating effect on the thinking of all theologians, and have caused so many religious and ministers to turn to developing these techniques in their

own work — to be depth counselors and not only the dispensers of the Sacraments and the leaders of worship. They are no longer satisfied to warn men of sin and stop there; they wish to help man be free and a more full Christian — indeed, a healthier man.

In the field of religion and the Church, its leaders have opened in breadth and see its people in totality with all their turmoil and search for God. It has recognized as a result of what it has learned from science and psychology and in its own renewal that the judgement of the individual and his free giving of service to God as he comprehends it is so paramount and central. The Church has a new relationship to its people. No longer is it adult to child — follow as we lead. Now it is adult to adult — you are responsible for your actions, are free, you are the Church. Hence as its members we are all moving through an era of growth, of emerging from adolescence to becoming mature in our own eyes and in relating to God. As physicians we continue to aid and guide this growth with our knowledge and techniques. As leading adults and professional people, we share in the formulation of new thinking. Especially we are called to aid those in trouble and turmoil as we proceed through the evolutionary change, including the ordained and religious as they find themselves in new ways of life. Else, we do not fulfill our own calling.