An Editorial

Catholic Physicians' Guilds
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IN RECENT YEARS we have been encouraged by the emphasis on the general practice of medicine. In this development we saw the healthy reaction to overemphasis on specialization and the preservation of the family physician. We thought also that it indicated a renascence of medicine's concern for man as a total being—for man in his full personality.

A book review in the September issue of GP reveals that even the general practitioner may have a very limited understanding of man as man. In reviewing "The Ethical Basis of Medical Practice" by Willard L. Sperry, the editor of GP expresses some opinions which are shocking and alarming. These opinions indicate that in his evaluation of a patient only the physical aspects of man and his illnesses are worthy of consideration. Any consideration of man with a vital principle transcending the material is omitted. Any thought of man with a destiny beyond the span of human life is ignored. Any thought of man's essential relation to a supreme creator is implicitly denied.

In discussing euthanasia the sufferings of man are considered the same as the sufferings of a dog or a horse, and man should be put away with the same indifference as we despatch dumb animals.

For the editor of GP, human life consists merely of physical elements and the beauty of life depends upon these elements remaining at least non-repulsive. He tells us "when the brain is largely destroyed and gone there is not much left of man." Manifestly Dr. Alvarez has never thought of the existence of a human soul after the physical elements of the body and the brain have completely decomposed.

It is regrettable that the editor of an important medical journal would take such a materialistic view of man. It is tragic that he cannot understand the spiritual side of man. Suffering and
pain are not to be wished upon anyone, and we must do everything possible to alleviate it. On the other hand, God our Creator has given us an eternal destiny beyond any human or material measure, and we cannot interfere with the particular pattern by which each one must achieve that inestimable goal of eternal happiness. Hard as suffering is to bear and difficult as it is to witness, its tolerance may be the means of eternal salvation and greater happiness. To believe this and to be convinced of it one must believe in God and the existence of a soul and be able to place spiritual values above material comfort and well-being.

Medico-Moral Notes

Gerold Kelly, S.J.

These notes will mainly consist of a survey of some rather recent medico-moral articles that should be of interest to physicians. To facilitate reading I shall divide them into three sections: I. Survey on Euthanasia; II. Survey of Other Topics; and III. Some Problems for Discussion.

I. Survey on Euthanasia

During the past year many excellent articles and statements on the morality of euthanasia have been published. The main reason for this, no doubt, was the publicity that necessarily attended the Sander case.

Medical Societies

The most wholesome aspect of the literature condemning euthanasia is the fact that much of it emanated from physicians themselves and from the secular press; the defense of good morals was not left entirely to priests. During the year I noted many statements made by various medical groups, though I did not preserve a record of these. However, I do have in my notes a reference to a resolution adopted by the Medical Society of the State of New York to the effect that the society "go on record as being unalterably opposed to euthanasia and to any legislation that will legalize euthanasia." This society is composed of 23,000 doctors. The resolution was adopted unanimously by the 149 members of the house of delegates. Also, I have an Associated Press clipping saying that the World Medical Association, representing 41 national associations, voted to condemn euthanasia under any circumstances. Physicians themselves could no doubt multiply such statements, for there have been many during the past year.

Individual Physicians

Individual physicians have also spoken strongly against mercy killing. At Montreal, in an address before the Kiwanis Club, Dr. I. M. Rabinowitch, an internationally known Jewish medical