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Catholic Physicians' Guild

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ALONG HIGHWAY AND BYWAY

At a recent meeting in New York, Dr. Abraham J. Rongy, a prominent advocate of euthanasia, stated that a Board of Physicians should decide legally if a patient's life should be ended, and then withdraw; after which the sentence should be carried out by a public executioner or, perhaps, by the patient's spiritual adviser. To the latter plan, Rev. Dr. Charles Francis Potter, the clerical advocate of euthanasia, readily assented because the spiritual adviser would have the confidence of the family. The sick man will have to learn in advance the viewpoint of his physician, and even that of his clergyman.

Repeated efforts are being made to obtain legal authorization to kill, with their consent, the hopelessly afflicted in body and to do away with the mentally afflicted. It seems strange for a clergyman to advocate that the same kind of "mercy" should be shown to children of God as to animals.

Let euthanasia be made legal and there will be any number of self-appointed executioners. How simplified would be the poliomyelitis campaign—just kill off the badly crippled—no need of prolonged hospital care or "iron lungs." In former days, we were

accustomed to the fear of the poor towards hospitals, especially as a legendary "black bottle" was supposed to be administered to hopeless patients. The poor have learned to know better, and now it is proposed to give them a real reason for dread.

Encouraging words will conquer despair. There is a joy in living, even amongst the hopelessly sick. The advocates of euthanasia present no real reasons—saying that there is "no logical argument against it," "all thoughtful people" favor it, likewise all "modern men and women" and "all intelligent persons." It is stated that doctors can be trusted not to abuse such a privilege. In this connection, it is well to recall the recent case of a young woman who was unsexed under pretense of another operation.

Are we so sure of our prognoses? Are there not unexpected recoveries? Shall the sick look upon physicians as judges who may pass a death sentence? Is "suicide by proxy" to be the answer to the despairing patient who asks for death? Should he not rather be reminded of the goal of all—the life beyond the grave?