

BLACKFRIARS

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EDITORIAL

EUTHANASIA, like Sterilization, Birth Prevention, Divorce, and other popular forms of immorality, is the almost inevitable result of the materialistic age in which we live. Like those other diabolical inventions, it pretends to solve the problem of suffering by eliminating suffering, cuts the knot which it cannot or will not untie. Its appeal is entirely to the emotions, and it appeals successfully to those whom materialism has robbed of reason as well as of religion, for where reason is atrophied emotions assume control. Not that the emotional element is despicable or useless, still less evil; but it is essentially blind, and if it is not led and controlled by reason and, indeed, by grace, it will drag a man blunderingly towards such devil's pitfalls as those of which we have made mention. Human suffering is a hard fact; but the problem of suffering cannot be solved by a sentimental parade of hard cases. Not only do hard cases make bad laws, but they must not be used as levers to overthrow good laws nor can they carry any weight at all in the face of natural and divine law. Euthanasia is an attempt to make a law for hard cases; in that attempt it disregards the inalienable rights of God and the unescapable duties of man, and by a show of tender pity it blankets reason which would

expose relentlessly the tragic fallacy of its specious arguments. It is not that the hard cases do not call for consideration; but perhaps reason alone cannot minister to them; at any rate it is certain that reason must first of all safeguard the law even though it may seem to be at their expense.

In this context we record a debate on Euthanasia recently held in London, within the precincts of the Temple and in the presence of more than one well-known lawyer. It took the form of a mediæval Scholastic Disputation, and was in fact intended to be an exhibition of this form of argument rather than an attack on Euthanasia. But it covered the question in a remarkably satisfactory manner. Fr. V. White, O.P., defended the thesis: *Euthanasia is immoral*. After a careful definition of the terms and scope of the thesis, he expounded the proof of his position along the lines of strict syllogistical reasoning, showing clearly that Euthanasia in the sense intended is an injury against the rights of God and of the community. Fr. C. H. McKenna, O.P., playing the part of *advocatus diaboli*, brought forward, with the same syllogistically reasoned restraint, a series of forceful arguments against the thesis, all of which were effectively overthrown by the Defender. After the reasoned attack had failed, the Objector returned to the assault with a number of more or less emotional arguments, which might have been culled from the popular press; in one of these, in particular, he described with vivid eloquence a typical "hard case" which Euthanasia would alleviate. But the Defender deftly extracted the fallacy in reason that had been covered by eloquence and emotion. He would allow neither the alleged authority of a Saint nor the undoubted appeal of suffering to shake his defence of natural and divine law. The Disputation offered a striking example of the triumph of reason over mere sentiment in the defence of truth.

If the mass of people could be persuaded to put aside prejudice and sentiment, so that they might view this and kindred questions dispassionately, the pious piper of Hell would not achieve such a following as he can now command. The obvious difficulty is that reason itself has an admittedly limited appeal, and in any case cannot effectively solve the problem of suffering. There is but one solution to that, namely Calvary. With the Passion and Death of God made

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Man, suffering has assumed a sacramental quality. The anguish and pain of suffering humanity take on the character and significance of the Agony and Death of the God-man, for they represent the sacrifice of the Mystical Body of Christ. Only those can understand the meaning and the value of suffering who can understand the meaning and value of the Crucifixion; and few, perhaps, would have the courage to accept the mystical implication of the Crucifixion were it not for the close contrast of the Resurrection. Euthanasia is an outrage against reason; but, what is infinitely more important, it is an outrage against Christianity, it is a cowardly disavowal of the Cross of Christ. Let us sympathize with the afflicted of God, let us try to heal or ease them; but let us not tempt them to this treachery against Christ the King.

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We have received notice of THE PEOPLE'S MASS for PEACE which will be offered in Westminster Cathedral on Easter Monday, April 13th, at 10-30 a.m. His Grace the Archbishop wishes the Ordinary of this Mass, i.e. Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and Responses, to be sung by the whole congregation. The Plainsong Mass No. 1 "Lux et Origo" will be sung. Copies may be obtained, at 1½d. post free, from the C.T.S., 28a Ashley Place, Westminster. The Catholic Public is urged to join in singing this Mass for the blessing of Peace.

EDITOR.