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## **The Crucial Issue: Medical Ethics**

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existed in an age so saturated with theology? M. Gilson narrates the stages of his research. In passing he gives informal glimpses into some philosophical personalities of the early part of our century. There is, for instance, an unforgettable cameo of Bergson: he only looked at the world and reported what he saw, but in the process he left a new image of the inwardness of being; and all was done so simply that anyone might think he could do it himself.

Though M. Gilson admits in principle the possibility of other approaches to Christian philosophy, it seems that in practice he treats his own interpretation of St. Thomas' approach as the only feasible one. One would think a more flexible position is called for in view of all the human insights into the real during the seven centuries since St. Thomas.

But no criticism can dent the the monumental life work of M. Gilson. To read the present book is to chat pleasantly with a great scholar, a dedicated historian with a relentless fidelity to data.

ROQUE FERRIOLS

## THE CRUCIAL ISSUE

MEDICAL ETHICS. By Charles J. McFadden, O.S.A. Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, Co. 1961, Edition 5, 432 pp.

The rapid advances in medicine have necessitated this new edition to help the conscientious physician and nurse to apply traditional moral principles to changing scientific data. The discovery of new drugs such as anovulants, the working out of new techniques such as the tape-testing method to determine ovulation—all find a place in this new edition. Yet the number of pages is less since some sections have been shortened or even eliminated as no longer being of grave concern. Ectopic pregnancy, for example, is treated summarily but adequately in this new edition, and the presentation of the RH factor and associated moral problems are notably condensed as well as the section dealing with eugenic sterilization.

Emphasizing the approach to the whole man, a new chapter has been added on The Rights of the Patient in the Spiritual Order, wherein the author deals with what he justly describes as the most crucial issue of our age—the problem of safeguarding the inviolability of basic human rights as they find expression in the world of medicine. Included in this chapter are the need of obtaining the consent of the patient before he may be licitly subjected to

medical treatment or surgery, the right of the patient to know the nature of his illness and the risks involved in the treatment, the obligation to inform the patient who has an incurable disease or whose death is imminent. He also treats of the moral obligation to summon a non-Catholic minister for members of other religious beliefs, and, finally, the ethical problems connected with the ever-increasing practice of hypnosis.

The author still defends the position that corneal transplantation is immoral since the donor would be deliberately incurring a severe handicap—the constant lack of depth perception in his daily activities. Since there is no such severe handicap in renal transplantation he admits it as probably permissible and explains how he can hold such apparently contradictory doctrines in this disputed matter of transplantation.

The problem of the uterus damaged by multiple cesarean section is treated in such a general way that we might almost say that the author did not want to go into it. Yet it is a problem that recurs often enough to merit fuller treatment.

This new edition has all the fine qualities of the previous ones while adding many virtues of its own. The attractive cover and fine printing make it as pleasing to the eye as it will be satisfying to the mind. It is another proof that the Catholic theologian has done exceptionally well by the medical profession in offering them highly competent guidance in a field that is as difficult at times as it is noble and rewarding. Every priest and physician and nurse is indebted to the author; every professor of medical ethics will feel a special debt of gratitude.

G. W. HEALY

## MEDIEVAL THEOCRACY

LA THÉOCRATIE: L'ÉGLISE ET LE POUVOIR AU MOYEN AGE.

By Marcel Pacaut Paris: Aubier, 1957. 302 pp.

M. Pacaut begins by defining theocracy as the doctrine that sovereignty in temporal affairs belongs to the Church. The nuances he immediately adds make it clear that he is not interested in defining the abstract essence of a theory but in investigating the actual interactions between Church and State in the Europe of the ninth to the fourteenth centuries.