

jects he says: 'It is evident that the unborn child is not a formal aggressor on its mother's life, for it is incapable of deliberation or malice. Neither is it a material, unjust aggressor, for it has done nothing to cause danger to the mother's life. But *action* is necessary for *aggression*. The child's position is determined not by any act of its own, but by the operation of nature, and the danger which arises from that position usually comes not from the child, but from some defect in the mother herself. Of the two the mother is much more responsible for the danger to the child's life than the child is for the danger to the mother's life. Yet no physician would hold that it would be lawful to sacrifice the mother for the safety of the child.' Therefore the operation of craniotomy cannot be justified on the plea of self-defence, that the child is an unjust aggressor on the life of the mother. Again, it is said, the mother's life is more valuable than the child's, and therefore should be saved even by the death of the child. This is the doctrine of expediency which teaches that a Christian mother should preserve her life by slaying the child of her womb. It is strongly argued that the child shall die in any case, and therefore the operation of craniotomy only anticipates natural death by an hour or less. Even so; that is God's province, not man's. Who gave the doctor power over life and death—a Divine power? Who told him that he could lawfully shorten life by even one hour? And if he could lawfully shorten life in the case of an unborn child, why not have the power to do so in the case of adults suffering from incurable and painful diseases? God is the Author of life; He has given it; He and He alone can take it away when and how He pleases; and no human being, be he doctor or father or mother, can lawfully anticipate the work of God nor assume to himself Divine authority over life and death. A doctor would be branded as a murderer were he for any cause wilfully to take away the life of a child after birth. Yet he may take away the life of a human being before or during birth, and still be a welcome visitor in Christian homes. Let us repeat it again: the child before as after birth is a true human being enjoying all the rights and privileges of a human being, first amongst which is the right to live, a right which is inalienable, and which no man can lawfully take from it. 'Whosoever shall shed a man's blood, his blood shall be shed; for man is made to the image of God.' 'At the hand of man I will require the life of man.' 'Thou shalt not kill.'

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Father COPPENS, S.J., lecturer on medical jurisprudence at the Medical College, Omaha, had occasion to treat of this subject in the course of his lectures to the medical students attending that institution. He asks the question: 'Is a physician ever justified in destroying the life of a child before or during birth by craniotomy or by any other means in order to save the life of the mother?' He takes the case of a mother about to give birth to a child. All the medical skill possible has been given, consulting physicians have been called in, many operations approved of by science may be performed, but in this case, either from want of skill or from some other cause, they cannot be performed. 'Can the doctor,' he asks, 'in such a case break the cranium or in any other way destroy the life of the child to save the life of the mother?' 'If three consulting physicians agree that this is the only way to save the life of the mother, the operation may be performed according to the American civil law.' But he asks the further question: 'Will the law of nature or nature's God approve of such an act?' And remember, it is with the natural and divine law we have to do, not with the civil law. He answers his question: 'All men are equal and have an equal right to life; God is the supreme and only Master of life and death, and He has laid down the strict prohibition, "Thou shalt not kill." Catholics are not left to the erring guidance of fallible reason in this matter. The Catholic Church has added her voice to the voice of nature. In a decision given by the Holy Office in 1884 she says, 'In Catholic schools it cannot be safely taught that the surgical operation known as craniotomy, or any surgical operation which is directly destructive of the life of the foetus or of the mother, is lawful.' In 1895, in answer to the question whether, when the mother is in immediate danger of death and there is no means of saving her life, a physician can in these circumstances cause abortion, the Sacred Congregation answered in the negative. The meaning of which answer is, That a physician could

not in such a case lawfully cause by any means the death of an infant not even to save the life of the mother. Therefore, let us say with all due deliberation and with the full sense of our responsibility, that it is never morally lawful for a doctor to perform, nor for a Catholic father or mother to counsel or permit the operation of craniotomy, or any other form of operation which directly intends and causes the death of a child either before or during birth, not even to save the life of the mother. 'It is never lawful to do an evil act that good may come.' In other words, 'the end does not justify the means.' This is a moral principle which all physicians believe in theory but which many violate in practice.

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But is it so necessary in difficult cases of childbirth that the life of the innocent child should be sacrificed? We hold that it is not. It is neither lawful nor is it even necessary to attain the end desired,—the life of the mother. In proof of this assertion we shall quote the opinions of two eminent medical men. One is an American, Dr. W. H. PARISH, who writes as follows in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*: 'The operation of craniotomy is to-day of relatively infrequent occurrence, and many obstetricians of large experience have never performed it.' He then mentions other operations which may be performed to meet the case and states the results. Ninety-five per cent. of mothers recover when craniotomy is performed and no child. In other operations performed with due skill ninety-five per cent. of the mothers recover and about the same number of children. He continues, 'which shall we choose, the Cæsarean Section, with one hundred and ninety living beings as the result, or craniotomy, with about ninety-five living beings.' As late as 1893 Dr. JAMES MURPHY, of the University of Durham, delivered the presidential address before a section of the British Medical Association. In the course of his address which was precisely on this subject he enumerated several forms of operation to meet the case of difficult birth, and concluded with these very weighty words: 'I say it deliberately, and with whatever authority I possess, and I urge it with all the force I can master, that we are not now justified in destroying a living child, and while there may be some things I look back upon with pleasure in my professional career that which gives me the greatest satisfaction is that I have never done a craniotomy on a living child.' Even from a medical point of view according to these words the operation is not now justified. 'We are not justified in destroying a living child' are his words.

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There are other questions for Catholic parents intimately involved in this, the principal one being the Baptism of the infant. Upon which let us make this remark: The unborn child has got a soul, which soul can never see God without Baptism, hence no care is too great which will ensure the Baptism of the infant. And the parents who by any means wilfully takes from the child the possibility of receiving the Sacrament of Baptism shall have to answer to God for it. We have seen that such an operation is never morally lawful and in the present advanced state of medical science is not now considered necessary. It is therefore to be looked upon as an immoral and unscientific blunder. It is an act which the Church now as always regards as nothing short of murder, and murder which not only causes the temporal death, but is the occasion of the spiritual death of a helpless infant.

Notes

The Troubles of a Marshal.

Probably the official who has the least enviable part in arranging the Coronation ceremonial is the Earl Marshal, the Duke of Norfolk. The number of seats at his disposal is limited, while the applications are unlimited in number and in the variety of claims on which they are based. Here is a specimen of the letters received by the noble earl almost daily:—'Dear sir,—I am sending you ten shillings for two seats in the Abbey on Coronation Day. Me and my wife can both sing, and as I am a parish clerk I could help you to see the people in their seats all right. I would not mind standing myself, so long as the wife could be made comfortable. Yours, etc., J—' Such trustful simplicity deserves a better reward than