

unreal picture of a tiny baby claiming protection – which the pre-embryo is not; and the only authoritative support for such a view comes from the Church (he means the Roman Catholic Church), in which the position is demonstrably a novelty. At this point St Thomas Aquinas and the animation tradition is properly invoked. Unfortunately on p30 Austin appears to have followed Glanville Williams in his interpretation of St Thomas's language, to assert that he took quickening as the first indication of life. *Animatus* in Aquinas, as in the writing of philosophers, moralists and canonists for centuries, refers specifically to 'animation' in the Aristotelian sense – the point when the morphology of the organism revealed or displayed that its animating or organising principle was a 'rational soul', that of a man and not of an animal. Inevitably *animatus* came in time to be identified with the subjective experience of quickening (*vivificatus*) and as such the concept passed into the English common law. This minor blemish detracts little from a very good and useful book.

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## Christian Ethics in Health Care

John Wilkinson, 510 pages, Edinburgh, £27.50, The Handsel Press, 1988.

This is a very ambitious book intended to guide Christian health workers in the ethical problems they face. By articulating ethical principles for thought and action, Wilkinson hopes to have produced a book of more lasting value than one which proceeded from problems or issues.

The book is in three parts: Christian ethics in outline, Health care ethics in history, and Christian ethics in health care. Given the strong emphasis on a principled approach it is not clear why so many issues get discussed in part three, yet it is just as well because this is the best part of the book. There are chapters on the beginning of life, the close of life, human experimentation and consent, resource allocation, health care relationships, and AIDS. It is not always clear that the Christian contribution to these discussions is as singular or normative as the author might have liked.

Wilkinson stands in a tradition in

which theology and ethics cannot be separated. He writes of there being a Christian world view and a Christian ethical system 'based on the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ his Son and on his creation of the world and of man' (p x). However, the discussion of particular issues frequently admits a degree of pluralism in Christianity. Whilst a helpful and clear methodology is given in the first section of the book too much of the discussion is frustrating. No one could deal justly with natural morality in six pages or biblical ethics in twelve pages. It would have been useful to have indicated more clearly the authority of the Bible. Its absolute authority seems to become relative as the particular is discussed and the various sources of Christian ethics come into conflict.

A more positive appreciation of the descriptive and analytical strands of ethics might have helped the third section of the book. In one part of the discussion of the beginning of life the phrase 'the termination of pregnancy' is abandoned in favour of 'abortion' and 'the unborn contents of the mother's uterus' in favour of 'child'. The justification is brevity, with no recognition of the value-loaded nature of the descriptions.

Despite these major reservations this book is a fine example of someone wrestling faithfully with ethical dilemmas. There is much to be gained here by Christians involved in health care, though the approach is more limited than the author himself is prepared to admit.

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## Ethics in Nursing Practice: Basic Principles and Their Application

F J Fitzpatrick, 290 pages, London, £9.95, The Linacre Centre, 1988.

This book should carry a more obvious 'government health warning' than it does. That is to say its title does not reveal the fact that it is a book which has more to do with Catholic moral principles and standpoints than with a more general notion of nursing ethics. The fact that the book comes out of the Linacre Centre gives a clue to its purpose and the foreword makes it very clear what this book is about. It states: 'The Governors and staff of the centre

were made aware at an early stage in our existence of the need for a comprehensive account of nursing ethics which would be both faithful to Catholic moral tradition and accessible to a wider audience'.

The book stands on its own terms, that is as a guide to Catholic nurses in clinical practice. I am not so sure of its appeal to a 'wider audience'. The chapter dealing with Issues in sexual ethics is perhaps the most obvious example of the book's specific outlook. There are four practices which Fitzpatrick points out are 'objectionable' from the Catholic viewpoint. These are contraception, sterilisation, artificial insemination and *in vitro* fertilisation. In this chapter the Catholic beliefs are well articulated but little time is given to the idea that those who do not hold these views might have their rights compromised if they are nursed by someone who is primarily concerned with keeping faith and conscience intact.

The position taken leads to some rather bizarre lines of argument. For instance, in an attempt to maintain the inseparable link between the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexual activity Fitzpatrick argues thus: 'If ... sexual intercourse is intrinsically bound up with procreation, and if, also, the begetting and raising of children is appropriate only in the context of a single man-woman couple who undertake an unshakable commitment to care for their children, we can see why extra-marital affairs, homosexual practices and pederasty are to be condemned'.

I have focussed on what I see to be the less useful, in a general sense, aspects of this work and it would be unfair to leave the review at that. The work opens with a few general remarks about caring, the role of the nurse in terms of dependence and independence *vis a viz* medicine, the primacy of caring in nursing and the importance of health. There is a discussion of codes of ethics and discipline in nursing.

There is a useful introductory account of 'morality and objective truth'. After an enlightening discussion of emotivism and subjective-report theory, Fitzpatrick rather undercuts his, up until then even-handed approach, by asserting that 'although the idea that moral beliefs are not objectively true or false is clearly fashionable at present, nobody who ever makes moral claims – and surely that means all of us – can take it seriously. Clearly there is such a thing as moral truth...'

The remainder of the book has this rather mixed approach of discussion and dogma. The discussion of natural law and utilitarianism is on the whole helpful, the conclusion that 'utilitarianism turns out to be untenable' is a bit bald. The chapters on integrity, respect and confidentiality follow a similar pattern and the three chapters dealing with 'problems of life and death' consider euthanasia, abortion, genetic counselling and care of the handicapped newborn.

The book works to the extent that it tells Catholic nurses how to keep faith. More problematic is the question: 'How do Catholic nurses act towards those who do not share their beliefs?' This latter issue is, to my mind, of concern in nursing ethics if we are to confront the problem of the potential for the imposition of value systems on our patients. If the work were entitled *Ethics in Catholic Nursing Practice*, this reviewer would be a good deal happier with this addition to the ever-increasing literature on nursing ethics.

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## Confronting AIDS – Update 1988

Institute of Medicine and National  
 Academy of Sciences, 239 pages,  
 Washington DC, USA, £13.75, 1988.

This is an update on the 1986 report into the public health issues around HIV and AIDS. It is written by a joint committee of the American Institute of Medicine and National Academy of

Sciences. It focusses on the conclusions of the earlier report, the need for a national strategy and a national commission on AIDS and HIV, supported at presidential level with a budget to do a federal job. It is significant that none of the recommendations have seen any political acknowledgement.

It is an important reference book for this reason, and for others. There is a concise summary of the committee's deliberations at the beginning, a user-friendly contents and index and all the references, some obsolete, at the end of each chapter. It is a time-saving reference for anyone wishing to learn about AIDS.

There is a short commentary on important public health issues around HIV. The editors almost ignore the conflicting attitudes but make the right suggestions. There are recommendations to target health education through television, to use wide-scale advertising to take the message to the young, and to evaluate the educational impact on heterosexual women and men. The government is urged to get the message across – with 'properly funded educational programmes', effectively and explicitly. Another reminder of what has not been done, both in Britain and the United States.

Between the necessarily repetitive, emerge original points and encouraging suggestions. The committee is strongly in favour of voluntary testing, as against mandatory, or anonymous programmes of testing which are expensive. Above all else, they emphasise individual counselling to reduce risk whenever the risk is greatest. The gross inadequacy of federal efforts to reduce HIV transmission amongst drug users they say, 'is now the most serious deficiency

in controlling HIV infection'. They want an end to the climate of discrimination which clouds public health policy and support a federal statute to outlaw AIDS-related discrimination.

*Update 1988* argues for increased standards of privacy, informed consent and confidentiality of antibody test results. The laws on informed consent, confidentiality and disclosure vary in different states of America. The committee believes that there should be legal sanctions for negligent disclosure and exceptions to confidentiality must have a solid basis in public health policy. Secure hospital medical-record keeping is an achievable aim and would make it possible to trace unauthorised disclosures. As the committee is strongly in favour of voluntary testing because it may affect behavioural change, there is over-reliance on the 'need to know who is infected' policy. It is not surprising to find argument on the duty to warn others when an individual is infected, and a belief that contact tracing can be useful. However, it is disturbing to see half-baked comments on ethical dilemmas. The authors postulate: 'Directly warning ... may not be required ... Informing the police or public authorities might ... be reasonable alternatives'.

*Update 1988* does not profess to be any more original than the original authorities. Nevertheless this is a very important report. It boldly says where government needs to go and boldly has not been.

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