

POST-HIPPOCRATIC MEDICINE:
THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

How the Christian Ethic has Influenced Health Care

POST-HIPPOCRATIC MEDICINE:
THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

How the Christian Ethic has Influenced Health Care

by

HUGH FLEMMING

KUYPER FOUNDATION
TAUNTON • ENGLAND
2010

Published in Great Britain by
THE KUYPER FOUNDATION
P. O. BOX 2, TAUNTON, SOMERSET,
TAI 4ZD, ENGLAND

Copyright © Hugh Flemming 2010
All rights reserved
ISBN 978-0-9522058-9-0

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

*Printed and bound in Great Britain
by Cpod, Trowbridge, Wiltshire*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
1. THE BIBLICAL PERIOD	
(1) <i>The Old Testament</i>	9
(2) <i>The New Testament</i>	16
2. THE EARLY CHURCH PERIOD: FROM THE FIRST CENTURY TO SAINT AUGUSTINE (A.D. 100-430)	23
3. THE MIDDLE AGES (A.D. 500-1500).....	31
4. THE MODERN AGE (A.D. 1500 TO THE PRESENT).....	39

INTRODUCTION

WHEN first asked to present a paper to a Society that had anything to do with medicine, I thought I was having a bad dream.¹ However, after having been told that the subject was to be *How the Christian Ethic has Influenced Health Care*, I agreed to accept the task and do my best at it for three main reasons. First, I could deal with the subject mainly from the historical perspective in keeping with my formal training in biblical theology and classics. Secondly, I might help to set the record straight by correcting some errors and myths disseminated by several secular anti-Christian historians. Thirdly, the high regard and utmost respect I have for the two close friends who asked me to tackle this subject; their confidence in me is very humbling, but at the same time a great source of encouragement in researching this subject.

After having agreed to speak on this subject, I began to read and note every article and book I could find which dealt with the subject of health care, particularly those that had some relevance to Christian ethics. Much of the material I could not understand due to my ignorance of things medical. However, like Mark Twain and his Bible, it was not so much the things that I did not understand that bothered me as those things I did understand. Let me explain what I mean by briefly mentioning a few examples. This information could lead one to believe that what has been called “The Golden Age of Medicine”² may be coming to an end. I also believe that these examples show how the medical profession is gradually abandoning its Hippocratic tradition and its Judeo-Christian ethical foundation. The following examples were randomly discovered as I researched the subject. The source of each

¹ This essay is the text of a paper given originally to the Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada, May 23–24th, 1997.

² Michael Woods, *The World and I*, September, 1987 (The National Institutes for Health).

article is referenced in the footnotes of this paper so, if you wish, you can study them individually.

You can read all about babies being treated like a crop of potatoes in the new science of fetal harvesting³; you can read all about women serving as breeders in surrogate motherhood programmes⁴; you can read all about the “new growth industry,” as it is called, of genetic manipulation in test tube baby experiments⁵; you can read all about how the poor serve as guinea pigs in bizarre particle bombardments⁶; or read about handicapped patients facing compulsory sterilisation⁷; or the latest in genetic engineering⁸; or—probably the most frightening of all—the revival of the racially motivated eugenic programmes⁹; and finally, how two *Wall Street Journal* reporters revealed a tale of deceit and manipulation by the government, the media, and the Centre for Disease Control in order to gain political support for the billions being spent on AIDS research and prevention.¹⁰

Dr. Leo Alexander, instructor in psychiatry, Tufts University Medical School, on duty with the office of the Chief of Counsel for War Crimes at Nuremberg during the trials, made some very insightful observations as far back as 1949. In the *New England Journal of Medicine*, he wrote as follows:

Whatever proportions these crimes finally assumed, it became evident to all who investigated them that they had started from small beginnings. The beginnings at first were merely a subtle shift in emphasis in the basic

³ Joe Levine, “Help from the unborn,” *Time*, January 12, 1987.

⁴ Elizabeth Meheren, “Surrogate mothers: let’s stop this,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1987.

⁵ William Winslade and Judith Wilson Ross, “High-teck babies; a growth industry,” *Galveston Gazette*, June 17, 1983.

⁶ Lucas Berry and Davis Lowery, “Human experimentation in Berkeley draws fire,” *Local Times*, February 8, 1978.

⁷ Daniel J. Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

⁸ Ted Howard and Jeremy Rifkin, *Who Should Play God* (New York: Dell Publications, 1977).

⁹ Stephen J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton and Co., 1981).

¹⁰ Amanda Bennett and Anita Sharpe, “AIDS fight is skewed by federal campaign exaggerating risks,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 1, 1996.

attitude of the physicians. It started with the acceptance of the attitude, basic in the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as life not worthy to be lived . . . the question that this fact prompts is whether there are any danger signs that American physicians have also been infected with Hegelian, cold-blooded, utilitarian philosophy and whether early traces of it can be detected in their medical thinking that may make them vulnerable to departures of the type that occurred in Germany.¹¹

The “Golden Age of Medicine” was built upon the foundation of the Judeo-Christian ethic and the Hippocratic tradition. It flourished because of this foundation. Whenever and wherever this foundation has been abandoned, medicine has given way to barbarism and superstition. Let us now re-examine our foundation.

§I

THE BIBLICAL PERIOD

(1) *The Old Testament*

Christian ethics has its genesis in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Bible. It is this book that contains the record of God’s revelation to man and of man’s experience of that revelation. Christian ethics, therefore, begins with God, continues with God and ends with God. Dr. John Wilkinson brings us right to the heart of the matter when he points out that, “Ethics in the Old Testament cannot be separated from religion for both are intertwined and both depend on the character and the will of God.”¹² Inasmuch as everyone is religious, it will be that particular religion, or world-view, or metaphysical system, which will determine ethical standards.

Basic to Christian ethics in the Old Testament are two foundational revealed truths. One is that God is Holy and its following corollary as stated in Lev. 19:2, “You shall be Holy because I the

¹¹ Leo. Alexander, “Medical science under dictatorship,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, 241(2), 39–47.

¹² John Wilkinson, *Christian Ethics in Health Care*, p. 20.

LORD your God am Holy.” Old Testament ethics cannot be grasped apart from some understanding of the holiness of God and man as a fallen sinful creature. The other truth is that man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).¹³ It is these foundations that have shaped Christian ethics in general and governed the Christian concern for the care of the sick. This doctrine of the *imago Dei* was central to the strong Christian belief in the sanctity of life.

During the past few decades, the doctrine of the *imago Dei* has been vehemently attacked. Peter Singer (1993) had an article published in *Pediatrics*, the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The title of the article was “Sanctity of life or quality of life.” In this article, Singer stated: “We can no longer base our ethics on the idea that human beings are a special form of creation, made in the image of God, singled out from all other animals, and alone possessing an immortal Soul.”¹⁴

He referred to the concept of the *imago Dei* as nothing more than “religious mumbo-jumbo”¹⁵ that must be stripped away. All life for Singer is a continuum, and your place in the scale of things is determined by the quality of your life or its utilitarian value. Let us hear his own words and, at the same time, remember he is representing the Centre for Human Bioethics at a large influential American university. He writes as follows:

Only the fact that the defective infant is a member of the species *Homo sapiens* leads it to be treated differently from a dog or pig. Species membership alone, however, is not morally relevant. Humans who bestow superior value on the lives of all human beings, solely because they are members of our own species, are judging along lines strikingly similar to those used by white racists who bestow superior value on the lives of other whites, merely because they are members of their own race . . . If we put aside the obsolete and erroneous notion of the sanctity of all human life, we may start to look at human life as it really is: at the quality of life that each human being has or can achieve.¹⁶

¹³ For a definitive account of the history of the doctrine of the image of God in man see David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London: SMC Press, 1953).

¹⁴ Peter Singer, “Sanctity of life or quality of life,” *Pediatrics*, 72 (1), July, 1993, p. 129.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

To understand the origin of Singer's system of ethics we have to go back about thirty-five hundred years to ancient Egypt. There they also believed that every living thing had a common being and nature. John Wilson, in the symposium *Before Philosophy*, explains this as follows:

... it is not a matter of a single god but of a single nature of observed phenomenon in the universe, with clear possibilities of exchange and substitution. With relation to gods and men the Egyptians were monophysites; many men and many gods, but all ultimately of one nature.¹⁷

The difference in things was one of degree, not of kind; this even included the gods. Juvenal, the Roman satirist (fl. A.D. 110), ridiculed the continuing aspect of this old naturalistic synergistic faith when he facetiously observed that for the Egyptians, "it is an impious outrage to crunch leeks and onions with the teeth. What a holy race to have such divinities springing up in their gardens!"¹⁸

In spite of her many achievements, Egypt was known as the "mother of diseases."¹⁹ Every part of the body had its own god.²⁰ Magical methods were based on the principle of transfer; to cure a migraine rub the head with a fried fish!²¹ Other remedies include, "lizards blood, swines' teeth, putrid meat, stinking fat, moisture from pig's ears, excreta from humans, animals and even flies."²² Behind all these remedies stood the healing deities who were called upon to heal the suppliants. Amun is praised as "he who frees from evil and drives away suffering, a physician who makes the eye healthy without medicine, who opens and cures squinting."²³ Eusebius of Caesarea (fl. A.D. 300) refers to Apis as

¹⁷ Quoted by R. J. Rushdoony in his personally typed *World History Notes*, p. 11. Dr. Rushdoony very kindly sent these unpublished, typed notes to the writer after the latter expressed an interest in them several years ago.

¹⁸ Juvenal, *Satires*, XV.10 (*Loeb Classical Library*). Hereafter we shall abbreviate the *Loeb Classical Library* to (*LCL*). ¹⁹ Lois Magner, *A History of Medicine*, p. 26.

²⁰ Herodotus (*LCL*), II.84.

²¹ Magner, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²² S. I. McMillen, *None of These Diseases*, p. 9.

²³ Michael Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer*, p. 54. In a footnote on page 282, Brown refers to J. C. deMoor's *Rise of Yahwism*, pp. 42-57: "Of course it is Amun-Re who blesses parents with children because he is the life-giving god, the breath of

the “son” or “living replica” of Ptah and credited him with the origin of medicine.²⁴ Imhotep, the deified physician, became the god of all physicians.²⁵ Isis, “great of magic,” was the god who healed children.²⁶ Khonshu, the personification of “soul-energy,” had power to cast out demons and heal diseases.²⁷ And Serapis, the iatromantic deity, healed through dreams, oracles, magic and other mystical means.²⁸ It was from this synergistic paganism that Jehovah, the covenant God of the Bible, or Yahweh, to use the Hebrew designation, supernaturally delivered his people Israel. This Exodus from Egypt is the focal point of the Old Testament revelation. It was through these mighty acts of revelation that Yahweh revealed himself to Israel as their divine healer, a surgeon and physician (Hebrew: *rpʿ*).²⁹ The *locus classicus* of this revelation is Exodus 15:22–27, with particular reference to v. 26:

If you are careful to obey the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, paying attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not inflict on you any of the diseases I inflicted on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord your Healer (*rôpê*).

This has to be seen against the background of the highly developed magical-medical polytheistic milieu of Israel’s past in Egypt with

life in the nose of ever creature . . . [He is] the Shepherd . . . If one of his herd is afflicted by disease he manifests himself as the great Healer.” Amun-Re is also hailed as “lord of life and health.”

²⁴ Eusebius, *Preparation for the gospel*, 10:6. ²⁵ W. A. Jayne, *Healing Gods*, p. 62f.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64f. Michael Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 283, adds that: “Jayne’s citation there of the prayer to Isis found in the Ebers Papyrus is instructive in that Isis, the ‘great enchantress,’ was asked to heal the suppliant and save him from ‘all evil things of darkness,’ while at the same time Re and Osiris were called on to promote the healing manifestations in the sick man’s body. Thus, we have here religion, magic, and medicine (the quote, being taken as it were, from the Ebers Papyrus) in one short and representative prayer. Among other prominent magician-healers, Thoth is worthy of special mention.”

²⁷ W. A. Jayne, *op. cit.*, p. 68f.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77f.

²⁹ For a word study of the three Hebrew letters, *Resh*, *Pe*, and *Aleph* (*rpʿ*), that form the root of the Hebrew verb “to heal” and the noun “healer,” “surgeon” and “physician,” and with particular emphasis where and how this word is used in various passages throughout the Old Testament, see *Lexicon in Testamenti Libros* (Eds. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner), p. 903.

all its healing deities; it also looks ahead to the coming conflict with the Syrian-Canaanite healing deities.³⁰

The conflict here, it should be noted, is not between God, or Yahweh to use the Hebrew name, and human physicians, but rather between Yahweh and all other healing deities. To have any other Healer than Yahweh would be in religious conflict with strict monotheism. This principle applies to that controversial passage in 2 Chronicles 16:12, where King Asa of Judah did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians (made [oracular] inquiry of the pagan physicians).³¹ It is difficult to understand why some medical historians use this passage as evidence to prove that the Bible denigrates the use of medicine and physicians.³² C. F. Keil correctly notes, "It is not the mere inquiring of the physicians which is here censured, but only the godless manner in which Asa trusted in the physicians."³³ It has nothing to do with the use of means or those we would classify as physicians today.³⁴ Furthermore, one recent commentator on 1 and 2 Chronicles has stated:

The view that God is the supreme physician . . . is prevalent throughout the Scriptures, as well as the conviction that illness is divinely inflicted. The turning to God for cure is attested abundantly throughout the Bible, *nowhere, however, do we find a negative attitude towards human medicine or human attempts to heal.*³⁵

³⁰ Michael Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³¹ This phrase, "made oracular inquiry of the pagan physicians," is our own literal translation based on both the meaning of the Hebrew *DARAS Be*, the context of the passage and a comparison with other passages in the Old Testament that use the same phrase. Cf. 1 Chron. 10:13b–14 regarding King Saul: "He even consulted and inquired of a medium, but he did not inquire of the LORD so he put him to death."

³² For a moderate example of this negative view, see Klaus Seybold and Ulrich Mueller in *Sickness and Healing*, p. 23.

³³ Keil, C. F. *The Second Book of Chronicles* in the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary Series, p. 370. Keil rightly stresses the fact that the Hebrew *DARAS Be* for "inquiry" is always oracular or religious in nature. Many commentators miss this point altogether, thereby concluding that the physicians spoken of here were of a non-religious nature.

³⁴ Samuel Kottek, *Medicine and Hygiene in the Works of Flavius Josephus*, pp. 25f.

³⁵ Michael Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 277–8, where he quotes from S. Japhet's commentary on 1 and 2 Chronicles, p. 738. Emphasis added.

In the light of dozens of such passages in the Old Testament, it becomes apparent that obedience to Yahweh's laws was understood to be the sure path to a healthy, abundant life. Moses underscored this when he wrote: "they are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land . . ." (Dt. 32:47). Gordon Wenham, in his commentary on Leviticus, adds: "What is envisaged is a happy life in which man enjoys God's bounty of health, children, friends and prosperity. Keeping the law is the path to divine blessing, to a happy and fulfilled life in the present."³⁶

The Old Testament teaching is that, in general, one cannot enjoy a happy life without a healthy life. Indeed, as Fred Rosner points out, "Of the 613 biblical commandments and prohibitions, no less than 213 are health rules imposed in the form of rigorously observed ceremonial rites."³⁷

Even though many scholars, in that genre of biblical studies known as higher criticism, make much out of comparing Yahweh with the other healing gods of the nations around Israel the comparison soon breaks down. The deities of all the other nations of the ancient world, whether Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Syrian, Hittite, Greek or Roman were capricious, moody, lustful, engaging in obscene sexual orgies and themselves subject to sickness. H. W. Haggard, in his interesting study entitled *The Doctor in History*, notes: "The gods of Egypt, like men, might suffer from disease . . . When a god was stricken with disease he turned for aid to his friends among the gods."³⁸ There is never the slightest hint that Yahweh suffered, or was the subject to, such weaknesses. He promised to accompany his people, remain with them, and manifest himself to them as their divine Healer. The later prophets and poets testified, "He will not grow tired nor weary, and his understanding no one can fathom" (Is. 40:28b); "He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4).

When Israel broke covenant with Yahweh and was sent into exile, one of the reasons given was that, "You have not strengthened

³⁶ Gordon Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 253.

³⁷ Fred Rosner, *Medicine in the Bible and the Talmud*, p. 9.

³⁸ Fred Haggard, *The Doctor in History*, pp. 44–45.

the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured” (Ezek. 34:4). The heart of Old Testament ethics is not just a written code, but a personal relationship between man and God and man and man expressed in a covenant.

Shortly after some of the deported Jews returned to their homeland after their captivity in Babylon, towards the close of the sixth century B.C., the oral interpretations of the Torah began to take shape and give rise to Judaism.³⁹ This oral interpretation of the Torah was later codified in written form and became the library, known as the Talmud, of legal and extralegal commentary to and application of biblical law and narrative. During this period the Rabbis concluded that the Torah gave permission, even making it obligatory, for the physician to heal based upon the phrase “and see that he is completely healed” (Ex. 21:19). Although healing lies only with God, he does give physicians the wherewithal to heal by earthly or natural means.⁴⁰

The Jewish attitude towards physicians and the responsibilities for patients to seek medical aid is beautifully described in the Apocrypha by Ben-Sira. We shall quote just a few verses:

Honor a physician before need of him
 Him also hath God appointed.
 From God a physician getteth wisdom . . .
 God bringeth out medicines from the earth
 And let a prudent man not refuse them . . .
 My son, in sickness be not negligent
 Pray unto God, for he will heal . . .
 He that sinneth against his maker
 Will behave himself proudly against a physician.
 (Ecclesiasticus 38)

To be sure, a few of the minor sects like the Karaites totally rejected the permissibility of human healing because (so they concluded) it interfered with the divine will. Most Jews, however, had a very practical way to get around these tensions. Rabbi Feldman

³⁹ *The New Bible Dictionary*, p. 670.

⁴⁰ Julius Preuss, *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine*, p. 25.

tells a story of the Rabbi who, on seeing a man deathly sick and in need of help, decided to fulfil his obligation and give the man a few coins. Before doing so, however, he confessed to his fellow Rabbi that he might be interfering with the eternal pain of God if he did so. Caught in this dilemma, he asked his fellow Rabbi if he could help him. His friend agreed that he could. He just advised him to be an atheist for a few seconds and give him the coins!⁴¹

(2) *The New Testament*

The fact that our civilisation is known as Judeo-Christian is indicative of the close connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Most of our institutions and professions which make up our society have functioned within this common Judeo-Christian heritage. The reason for this, of course, is that Christianity, growing out of its Jewish roots, encompasses every department of life. The Holy Scriptures make it very clear to us that any area of life that does not come under the dominion, authority and Lordship of the God who revealed himself in these Scriptures is idolatrous. John Hutchison is perfectly correct when he explains that, for the Christian: “. . . religion is not one aspect or department of life besides the others, as modern secular thought likes to believe; it consists rather in the orientation of all human life absolute.”⁴²

Many today want to abolish any religion based on absolutes without giving any definition to the religion that will replace it. The fact that religion is a universal phenomenon seems to escape them; no people anywhere in the world at any time have been found without religion.⁴³ Culture is nothing more than religion externalised. Even the 1980 preface to the *Humanist Manifestoes* says, “Humanism is a philosophical, religious, and moral point of view.”⁴⁴ Paul Tillich brings the whole thing together for us in

⁴¹ David Feldman, *Health and Medicine in the Jewish Tradition*, p. 18.

⁴² John Hutchison, *Faith, Reason and Existence*, p. 211.

⁴³ William Howells, *The Heathens—Primitive Man and His Religion*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Humanist Manifestoes* I and II, Ed., Paul Kurtz, p. 3.

one succinct sentence: "Religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion."⁴⁵

It was the basic doctrines of the Old Testament that were presupposed by Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and the early Church. Its strict monotheism, its divine infallibility, its record of Yahweh's universal, absolute and eternal law as summarised in the Ten Commandments and the theology of the covenant, were all foundational to the New Testament and the early Church. Here, already contained for them, were the eternal foundations of the moral order of a Christian society.

When Jesus did assert his own ethical authority, it was to condemn legalism and to insist that the real meaning of the law was not simply to curb and control external actions, but to radically alter inward attitudes and motives.

The *locus classicus* for this is found in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil (Greek: *plerosai*) them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished" (Mt. 5:17-18).⁴⁶

The exact meaning of the word "fulfil" has been discussed by scholars for centuries. No matter how precisely it is defined, however, it must always include: "to obey," "to establish," and "to give full meaning"; it also conveys the meaning to make something operative and to give the power to do so. Thayer, in his Greek Lexicon, adds this note of explanation: ". . . universally and absolutely, to fulfil, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfilment."⁴⁷

Here we have the two words that define the unity of the two testaments: promise and fulfilment. Here we also have the reason

⁴⁵ Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, p. 57.

⁴⁶ All New Testament quotations will be taken from the *New International Version* unless otherwise indicated.

⁴⁷ J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament*, p. 519.

for St. Augustine's famous dictum that the New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is revealed in the New.

For the first Jewish followers of Jesus, or Messianic Jews—to describe them more accurately in their historical context—their coming did not mark the beginning of a new religion called Christianity. On the contrary, they saw his coming as the fulfilment of all the promises and expectations of their sacred Scriptures.⁴⁸ When they saw the crippled cured, the dumb speaking, the lame walking and the blind seeing, they “praised the God of Israel” (Mt. 15:31). After Jesus raised the widow's son, St. Luke records that the crowd was “filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. God has come to help his people.” (Lk. 7:11–15). The kingdom of God, with all its healing and transforming power, had suddenly broken into human history.⁴⁹ The proof of Jesus' power and glory as the one and only son of God, or the Old Testament-promised Messiah, was recognised more than anything else through his healing ministry.⁵⁰

When the Apostles were sent out on their first preaching mission, they were given “authority to drive out evil spirits and to *heal* every disease and sickness” (Mt. 10:1, cf. 10:7–8; Mk. 6:7, 12–13; Lk. 9:1–2; 10:8–9). St Luke describes this mission as follows: “they set out and went from village to village, *preaching* the gospel and *healing* people everywhere” (9:16). We could give numerous examples to show that this was the pattern for the whole apostolic period (e.g. Acts 8:5–8). Among the most distinguishing marks of the new Messianic age, so the Hebrew prophets foretold (cf. Is. 30:26), would be the restoration of the maimed and the healing of the sick.⁵¹

⁴⁸ R. G. Witty, *Divine Healing*, p. 53f.

⁴⁹ For an excellent short exposition of the meaning of “The Kingdom of God,” see G. Ladd, “The kingdom of God,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3:23–29; for a more definitive study, see Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*.

⁵⁰ C. L. Blomberg, “Healing,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, pp. 298–307.

⁵¹ Central to this concept of restoration and healing is the Hebrew root *rpʿ* (“to heal/to restore”) along with its cognate Hebrew root *chbs* (“to bind up”). It is informative to note that “this represents the largest concentration of occurrence of this root in any one literary genre in the Hebrew Bible.” See Michael Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

When John the Baptist had doubts about the authenticity of Jesus and the Messiah foretold by the prophets, he sent two of his disciples to inquire of Jesus directly. The answer of Jesus, recorded identically by both St. Matthew and St. Luke, was: “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor” (Lk. 7:22–23).

Here Jesus associates his healing ministry with signs confirming his Messiahship. For him, sickness and disease was something that had no place in the kingdom of God he was to inaugurate. He believed that, like sin, sickness and disease had moral and spiritual roots in the kingdom of Satan, which he was sent into the world to destroy. Adolf Harnack explains it as follows: “To him all evil, all misery, is something terrible; it is part of the great realm of Satan . . . He knows that progress is possible only by overcoming weakness and healing diseases.”⁵²

It is very emphatic in the New Testament that when Jesus came in contact with sickness he had to do something about it. The “good news” he came to proclaim was to rid man of sin and its effects in every area of man’s life, including sickness. With him human need and suffering took precedence over everything; in spite of his many clashes with the religious and political authorities, the common people “listened to him with delight” (Mk. 12:37). J. D. Crossan explains why they were so delighted with his teaching:

He speaks about the rule of God, and they listen as much from curiosity as anything else. They know all about rule and power, about kingdom and empire, but they know it in terms of tax and debt, malnutrition and sickness, agrarian oppression and demonic possession. What, they really want to know, can this kingdom of God do for a lame child, a blind parent, a demented soul screaming its tortured isolation among the graves that mark the edges of the village?⁵³

⁵² Adolf Harnack, *What is Christianity?*, p. 60.

⁵³ J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, p. xi.

The rest of the New Testament and the success of the early Church provides the answer to these oppressive forces that are as real today as they ever were.

Basically, Jesus taught that it was man's alienation from God that was the root cause of human suffering, even though there may be mitigating circumstances over which he may or may not have some control. When Jesus of Nazareth entered this world, the visible evidence of sin, sickness and suffering was universal. It has been rightly said that, "suffering is the great common denominator among human beings. Everyone has an experience of profound hurt and loneliness and suffering."⁵⁴

From the New Testament perspective there is a close correlation between sin and sickness. For some, their sickness was specifically related to their sin (cf. Jn. 5:14); for others it was clearly unrelated to any transgression on their part (e.g. Jn. 9:1-3). All deserved judgment and death (cf. Lk. 13:1-6); all, therefore, need the Great Physician's touch (cf. Mt. 9:9-13). "But when the time had fully come, God sent his son," as St Paul puts it, to freely offer to all who would repent and believe liberty from both sin and sickness. When Jesus first announced his mission in his home synagogue at Nazareth, he read a portion of Isaiah's prophecy of the coming messianic age (61:1-2):

The spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to release the oppressed
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour . . .
Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. (Lk. 4:18-20)

One commentator expresses the power and beauty of Jesus' jubilee proclamation as follows: "Jubilee release is not spiritualized into forgiveness of sins, but neither can it be resolved into a program of social reform. It encompasses spiritual restoration, moral trans-

⁵⁴ Daniel J. Simundson, *Faith Under Fire*, p. 9.

formation, rescue from demonic oppression, and release from illness and disability.”⁵⁵

Jesus’ healing ministry was predicated upon the conviction that his heavenly Father had empowered him to heal both soul and body. The Gospel records portray him as the omnipotent physician with power to heal all of man’s spiritual, physical and even mental infirmities.⁵⁶ His healing power and saving power was one and the same. Jesus the Saviour cannot be divorced from Jesus the Healer. Harnack refers to the indivisibility of this unity when he reminds us that “he did his work as Saviour or Healer . . . The first three gospels depict him as physician of souls and body, and the Saviour and Healer of men.”⁵⁷ It is absolutely essential to keep this in mind because it is his activity as both Saviour and Healer that clearly sets him apart from all other healers in the ancient world when comparisons are made.⁵⁸

The one Greek word⁵⁹ in the New Testament that helps us,

⁵⁵ Michael Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 403, quoting from Nolland’s commentary on St. Luke’s gospel.

⁵⁶ Daniel J. Simundson, “Mental health and the Bible,” *Word and World*, 9, 1989, pp. 140–146. Although mental healing is a very important part of biblical healing it is beyond the scope of our study to deal with it as a separate category. For the importance of God in healing most of the mental ills of mankind see Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 273; Karl Menninger, *Man Against Himself*, p. 81 talks about the “life instinct” and the “death instinct” common to us all, one cannot but help see the similarity between these modern psychiatrists and St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, particularly chapter 7.

⁵⁷ Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, p. 101. It is interesting to note that the chapter where this is found is entitled “The Gospel of the Saviour and of Salvation”; the German title is “Das Evangelium vom Heiland und von der Heilung,” which could be translated “The Gospel of the Healer and Healing.”

⁵⁸ William Manson, *Jesus the Messiah*, p. 35. Manson points out that the two words commonly used in the New Testament to describe Jesus’ power are *dunamis* and *exousia*, both used interchangeably. Both refer to the power and authority of God at work in the world as perfectly revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:27; 2:10; 12:24; Mt. 28:18; Lk. 5:17; Acts 2:22; 10:38; and Rom. 1:4). It was this power that Jesus passed on to his disciples, enabling them to heal (Mk 3:15; Acts 1:8; 3:12; and 1 Cor 2:4). Manson further points out that in the contemporary Hellenistic world someone with *exousia* possessed both superhuman wisdom and supernatural power.

⁵⁹ For a fuller, non-technical exposition of the various Greek words used in

probably more than any other word, in our understanding of its teaching on the subject of healing is *sozein*. Let us look at this word, which means “to save,” “to rescue,” “to deliver,” and “to preserve from danger.”⁶⁰ This was cognate with *soter* (saviour), one of the most common epithets of Jesus in keeping with his saving and healing mission (Mt 1:21) and *soteria* (salvation). It should be kept in mind that in the ancient world when devotees viewed their deity as saviour, healer and deliverer, it was all part of one inclusive concept. Likewise, in the New Testament, it was a word that was all inclusive. In the Gospels, therefore, Jesus was regarded as Saviour from sin, sickness, death, eternal destruction and demons.⁶¹ One exegetical dictionary describes this as follows: “That from which one is saved . . . include mortal dangers, death, disease, possession, sin and alienation from God, and eternal ruin.”⁶²

Another feature the Gospel records as integral to the healing miracles of Jesus was his compassion. It is specifically recorded that, “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick” (Mt. 14:14).⁶³ This, of course, reflects his Father’s acts of mercy and grace in the healing of the sick as expressed in Psalms 6 and 103, which have as their background the healing of serious illness. When the word “compassion” (*splanchnon*) is used with the many acts of healing in the Gospels, it is used in two distinct ways. On the one hand “the term reflects the totality

conjunction with the subject of healing see C. J. Hemer, “Medicine in the New Testament World,” *Medicine and the Bible*, pp. 43–83.

⁶⁰ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, pp. 1132–1140.

⁶¹ For the classical study of the phenomenon of demonology in the New Testament, see William M. Alexander (M.D.), *Demonic Possession in the New Testament: Its Historical, Medical, and Theological Aspects*. For a detailed historical picture, see T. K. Oesterreich, *Possession, Demonic and Other*. For actual case studies on demonic possession from non-Christian cultures, see John L. Nevius, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*. For a more contemporary treatment in light of modern views on mental illness, see S. Vernon McCasland, *By the Finger of God*.

⁶² Michael Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 405, where he quotes from W. Radl in *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:319–321.

⁶³ Morton Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, pp. 52–103; Kelsey is especially strong in expounding the relevance of the compassionate element in Jesus’ healing ministry.

of divine mercy to which human compassion is a proper response"; and on the other hand the word has messianic overtones which reflect the very heart of God towards sick and suffering humanity.⁶⁴ Michael Brown is correct when he points out that:

This insight would suggest strongly that, just as it is right and fitting for the church to lead the way in performing acts of mercy for the hungry, impoverished, and socially and politically oppressed, so also it is right and fitting for the church to lead the way in the ministry of healing for the sick—both by natural and supernatural means.⁶⁵

For both the Old Testament and the New Testament everything must be put in the context of faith in Jesus as Messiah and belief in the truthfulness of his word. This faith, however, is more than just mental assent or a profession. Faith in the biblical sense implies a costly demand resulting from a spiritual transformation involving personal commitment and a personal relationship with Jesus as the anointed of God.⁶⁶

§2

THE EARLY CHURCH PERIOD:
FROM THE FIRST CENTURY TO SAINT AUGUSTINE
(A.D. 100–430)

When Christianity, as a healing religion, began to spread throughout the Greco-Roman world it came into conflict with a pagan healing tradition that had been firmly established for centuries. Its chief rival was Asklepios—Aesculapius to the Romans—the most prominent healing deity in the ancient Greco-Roman pantheon.

Like most religious figures his origin is obscure, but by the fifth century B.C. his cult had been firmly established throughout the Mediterranean world as inscriptional evidence indicates.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, pp. 1067–1069.

⁶⁵ Michael Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

⁶⁶ R.T. France, "Faith," *Dictionary of Jesus and Gospels*, pp. 223–226.

⁶⁷ H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*, pp. 78–104.

Asklepios was originally a human physician,⁶⁸ made the son of Apollo by both Hesiod and Pindar.⁶⁹ He became the chief healing deity of the famous shrine at Epidauros and recognised as demi-god at Athens. He was finally venerated as the great healing god Aesculapius at Rome.⁷⁰

His reputation did not stop with healing, but broadened and increased until he was recognised as both deliverer and saviour (*soter*) as well as healer.⁷¹ His cult was so widespread, his fame so universal, and his healing power so famous that Asklepios “was regarded by the early Christians as the chief competitor of Christ because of his remarkable similarity in role and teaching to the Great Physician.”⁷² It is important to keep in mind that in the world of the New Testament any deity venerated as healer was also venerated as saviour. For the Christians, therefore, Jesus was both Saviour (*soter*) and Physician (*iatros*).

Many famous names in the ancient world—the stoic Epictetus (fl. A.D. 120), the emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180), and the physician Galen (fl. A.D. 175)—spoke in glowing terms of the healing and benevolent power of Asklepios, while denigrating Christianity. He was referred to as the “most philanthropic of the gods.”⁷³ Galen confessed that he was a servant of Aesculapius “since he saved me when I had the deadly condition of an abscess.”⁷⁴

The early Christian apologists answered by charging that the cures made by the pagan gods that corresponded to the cures of Christ were instigated by demons. Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100–165) wrote that when the demons “learned that it had been foretold that He (Christ) should heal every sickness and raise the dead they produced Aesculapius.”⁷⁵ Tertullian (c. A.D. 160–220) called Askle-

⁶⁸ Homer, *The Iliad*, 2:731.

⁶⁹ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 106.

⁷⁰ Walter A. Jayne, *op. cit.*, p. 240f.

⁷¹ H. C. Kee, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–94.

⁷² Darrel Amundsen, and Gary Ferngren, “Medicine and religion: pre-Christian antiquity,” *Health/Medicine and the Faith Traditions*, p. 80.

⁷³ For a quick reference these relevant passages may be found in one source: E. and L. Edelstein, *Asclepios*. For Epictetus’ *Dissertationes* IV.8, 28 and 29, see *Asclepios*, Vol. 1, p. 205; for the Marcus Aurelius quotation, see p. 113.

⁷⁴ E. and L. Edelstein, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

⁷⁵ Justin Martyr, *I Apology*, 54, Vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. From this point on, all references to *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* will be abbreviated *ANF*.

pious a “dangerous beast.”⁷⁶ Lactantius (c. A.D. 240 to c. 320) said that his birth was a disgrace to Apollo⁷⁷ and Eusebius of Caesarea (c. A.D. 265–c. 339) looked upon him as a “destroyer of souls.”⁷⁸

Due to the complexity of the subject we shall, for the most part, leave aside the matter of supernatural healing claimed by both pagan and Christian writers during this period.⁷⁹ The question that remains may be stated as follows: What were the ordinary means of caring and curing that won the day for Christianity? We can partially answer this by comparing the Christian world-view with the pagan world-view as each related to the care of the sick.

The one word that largely governed the care of the sick in the pagan world was *philanthropia* (philanthropy). Ludwig Edelstein, at least to some extent, defines this word for us in his lecture in honour of Sir William Osler, presented to the Faculty of Medicine, McGill University, on December 5, 1955.⁸⁰ In this lecture, Edelstein quotes the well-known line from the pseudo-Hippocratic treatise *Precepts*: “For where there is love of man (*philanthropia*) there is also love of the art (*philotechnia*) (ch. 6).”⁸¹ He does so in order to show that Osler himself had read too much into this maxim. Osler had said that he saw evidence of the Greek physician’s “love of humanity associated with the love of his craft—*philanthropia* and *philotechnia*—the joy of working joined in each one to a true love of his brother.”⁸²

⁷⁶ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, II.14, Vol. 4, ANF.

⁷⁷ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, I.10, Vol. 7, ANF.

⁷⁸ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini*, III, 56.

⁷⁹ The subject of miracles is so complex it would need special attention to do it justice. The question revolves around one basic problem: did the miraculous powers of healing Christ gave to his followers that knew him in the flesh cease when they died, or have they always been present, or at least available, throughout the history of the Church? For the classic exposition for the cessationist position see B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*; for an insightful short article, See Gary B. Ferngren, “Early Christianity as a Religion of Healing,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Spring (1992), Vol. 66, No. 1. For a challenge to the cessationist view, see G. S. Grieg and K. N. Springer, eds., *The Kingdom and The Power*, and J. Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*.

⁸⁰ The full lecture is included in Edelstein’s *Ancient Medicine*, under the title “The Professional Ethics of the Greek Physician,” p. 319f.

⁸¹ Ludwig Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine*, p. 320.

⁸² In *The Old Humanities and the New Science*, and quoted by Edelstein in *Ancient Medicine*, pp. 319–320.

Edelstein reminded his audience that Osler had read back into the word *philanthropia* a meaning that it did not originally have; and if scrutinised in its wider context, Edelstein concludes that “it means no more than a certain friendliness of disposition, a kindness, as opposed to any misanthropic attitude.”⁸³ In the Hippocratic Corpus, therefore, *philanthropia* indicates no more than politeness, kindness and a decent feeling toward others; in reality, not a very powerful concept as a moral imperative.

Our term “philanthropy” is derived from the Greek word *philanthropia*, which literally means a general “love of mankind.”⁸⁴ The word originally meant a generosity of rulers towards subjects; a friendly relationship between States. The world always carried with it an element of condescension that brought praise to the giver on behalf of the recipients.⁸⁵ This has little to do with the biblical ethic as Jesus points out when he said of such benefactors, “they have received their reward in full” (Mt. 6:2). From the pagan perspective, the same holds true, as Cicero (106–43 B.C.) observes, when he wrote: “It is quite clear that most people are generous in their gifts not so much by natural inclination as by reason of the lure of honor—they simply want to be seen as beneficent.”⁸⁶

It is quite evident that philanthropy in the Greco-Roman world did not include private charity, nor did it include any personal concern for the sick orphans or widows.⁸⁷ The Greco-Roman deities showed little concern for those in need, only for the rich and powerful who could offer them sacrifices. As Amundsen and Ferngren point out: “It was on a *quid-pro-quo* basis that pity might serve as a motive for giving; the giver hoped that, should he ever

⁸³ L. Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine*, p. 320.

⁸⁴ For a full exposition of the word, see J. Ferguson, *Moral Values of the Ancient World*, pp. 102–117.

⁸⁵ Darrel Amundsen, and Gary Ferngren, “Philanthropy in medicine: some historical perspectives,” *Beneficence and Health Care*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.14.44; Aulus Gellius (fl. A.D. 150) tells us that the same holds true for Rome inasmuch as the Latin word *humanitas* is commonly taken to have the same meaning as the Greek *philanthropia* which, according to him, signifies “a kind of friendly spirit and good feeling towards all men without distinction.” See his *Noctes Atticae*, (LCL), 13.17.1.

⁸⁷ A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome*, pp. 77–88.

be in need, he might expect pity and aid because he had earned it by displaying pity himself.”⁸⁸

The idea is succinctly summed up in the one line attributed to Aristotle by his biographer, Diogenes Laertius: “I give not to the man, but to mankind.”⁸⁹ This was characteristic of society at large as W. W. Tearn points out: “Broadly speaking, pity for the poor had little place in the normal Greek character, and consequently for the poor as such, no provision usually existed . . . there was nothing corresponding to our mass or privately organised charities and hospitals.”⁹⁰

Philanthropy being communal and based upon a *quid-pro-quo* principle, no distinction was made between those in need and others. Furthermore, since the poor and the sick could not return favours given them, they were considered unworthy of receiving them. Greco-Roman philanthropy was statist, impersonal and utilitarian. Peter Singer’s society would be something like this.

It is because of such connotations that the writers of the New Testament and the early Church Fathers seldom used the word *philanthropia*⁹¹ to describe love in the Christian sense. They chose the seldom-used word *agape* and gave it a new and distinctive Christian meaning.⁹² It was rooted in the very nature of God’s love towards mankind as shown in the Incarnation: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (Jn 3:16). Moreover, since God was the active agent in sending his son, *agape* is an active principle in that the love of God requires a response in man’s love toward his brothers and sisters (Mt. 22:36–40): “All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments,” said Jesus. When asked specifically how Christian love is to be shown and to whom, his answer is contained in the parable of the good Samaritan along with the admonition, “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:25–37). William

⁸⁸ Darrel Amundsen, and Gary Ferngren, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 5.21.

⁹⁰ William W. Tearn, and G. T. Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilization*, p. 110.

⁹¹ The word was used later by Christians, particularly in the east, but only after it had taken on the meaning contained in the word *agape*. For an excellent short account of this process, see *Encyclopaedia of Bioethics*, Vol. 3, pp. 1519–1520.

⁹² *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, pp. 5–10.

Barclay describes it as follows: “*agape* is the spirit which says: ‘No matter what any man does to me, I will never seek to do harm to him; I will never set out for revenge; I will always seek nothing but his highest good’.”⁹³

This *agape* was absolutely essential in carrying out the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18–20). One of the commands Christians were to obey was to “heal (*therapeuo*) the sick” (Lk 10:9). Often we let the miraculous in the New Testament overshadow the ordinary meaning of this word which is “to restore the sick to health by serving, caring and treating.”⁹⁴ The emphasis can be on giving treatment, with or without any reference to healing.⁹⁵

As Christians spread this revolutionary concept of *agape* throughout the Greco-Roman world they found a medical ethical tradition in harmony with their own, namely that of Hippocrates. This Hippocratic tradition, however, represented only a small segment of medical opinion. Edelstein points out that:

Medical writings, from the time of Hippocrates down to that of Galen, give evidence of the violation of almost every one of its injunctions . . . At the end of antiquity a decided change took place. Medical practice began to conform to that state of affairs which the Oath had envisaged . . . Small wonder! A new religion arose that changed the very foundation of ancient civilization . . . Christianity found itself in agreement with its principles . . . as early as in the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” the command was given: “Thou shalt not procure abortion; nor commit infanticide.”⁹⁶

Very early in her life the Church set up agencies to deal with every sphere of life. They had their own courts, schools, exchequers and hospitals. It was their faith that dominated every area of life; to have any area of life outside the Lordship of Christ was considered idolatry. The reason behind the violent Roman persecutions of

⁹³ William Barclay, *More New Testament Words*, p. 16.

⁹⁴ J. H. Thayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 288–9.

⁹⁵ William M. Ramsay, *Luke the Physician*, p. 16.

⁹⁶ Ludwig Edelstein, *Hippocratic Oath: Text Translation and Interpretation*, pp. 63–64; for the quotation Edelstein takes from the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” see *The Apostolic Fathers, LCL*, Vol. 1, pp. 310–312.

the third century was not religious, but rather that, as the charge read, the Christian Church was—*imperium in imperio*—a sovereignty within a sovereignty; an absolute authority within the jurisdiction of another. It was because they were regarded as politically subversive they had to be destroyed. Steward Perowne describes the cause of the violent persecution under the Emperor Valerian (A.D. 257) as follows: “Once again, it was the Christian *society*, not the Christian *faith*, which was proscribed as illicit; the persecution was, as usual, based on political and economic, not on religious or theological grounds.”⁹⁷

Both Justin Martyr⁹⁸ (c. 100–165) and Tertullian⁹⁹ (c. 165–220) taught that all believers should visit the sick; this was an imperative, as Christ himself had pointed out: “I was sick and you looked after me . . . whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me” (Mt. 25:36, 40). The verb “to look after” (*episkeptomai*), in its context here, means “to care for in order to help or benefit.”¹⁰⁰ In late antiquity this was the word used to describe a physician’s visit to a patient.¹⁰¹ The Church’s exchequer had funds designated especially for the sick who were too poor to pay for treatment.¹⁰² The deacons and deaconesses of the Church, who were largely responsible for administering this aid, were also responsible for the staffing of the orphanages, hospitals, leprosariae and other charitable institutions established by the Church.¹⁰³ Henry Sigerist describes it as follows:

It remained for Christianity to introduce the most revolutionary and decisive change in the attitude of society towards the sick. Christianity came into the world as a religion of healing, as the joyful Gospel of the Redeemer and of Redemption. It addressed itself to the disinherited, to the sick and afflicted and promised them healing, a restoration both spiritual and physical . . . It became the duty of the Christian to attend to the sick and poor of the community . . . The social position of the sick

⁹⁷ Stewart Perowne, *Caesars and Saints: The Evolution of the Christian State*, p. 145.

⁹⁸ Justin Martyr, *Epist. Ad Zen. Et Seren.*, 17. (ANF Vol. 1).

⁹⁹ Tertullian, *Ad Uxor.*, 2.4. (ANF Vol. 4). ¹⁰⁰ J. H. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

¹⁰¹ Darrel Amundsen, and Gary Ferngren, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁰² Justin Martyr, *Apologia*, 1.67.

¹⁰³ Demetrios Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, p. 68.

man became fundamentally different from what it had been before. He assumed a preferential position which has been his ever since.¹⁰⁴

About half way through the third century a devastating plague ravaged the empire, and the Christians responded with a heroism previously unknown in the ancient world. This was particularly noticeable in that the Christians had just passed through a period of intense, cruel and vicious persecution. A letter, written by Dionysius bishop of Alexandria, describing the Christian response to this plague, has been preserved for us. Dionysius observed the following:

The most, at all events, of our brethren in their exceeding love and affection for the brotherhood were unsparing of themselves and cleave to one another, visiting the sick without a thought as to the danger, assiduously ministering to them, tending them in Christ, and so most gladly departed this life along with them: being infected with the disease from others, drawing upon themselves the sickness from their neighbours, and willingly taking over their pains.¹⁰⁵

The pagans, on the other hand, were terrified by the plague; they even abandoned their own relatives by dragging them out into the streets before they were dead, hoping they would be picked up and cared for by the Christians.¹⁰⁶

Due to the devastating effects of the plague, there appeared an unofficial body of Christians known as the *Parabolani* ("the reckless ones") who, in spite of the risk involved, devoted themselves especially to the care of all plague victims.¹⁰⁷

During the great plague of the next century their care, not only for their own, but for their pagan persecutors as well, was noticed even by the Emperor Julian (361–363) who remarked that "the impious Galilaeans support not only their own poor but ours as well."¹⁰⁸ This was quite remarkable in that there was, in general,

¹⁰⁴ Henry Sigerist, *Civilization and Disease*, pp. 69–70.

¹⁰⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, (LCL), Vol. 2, 7.22, p. 185.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.22, pp. 187–188.

¹⁰⁷ *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 747.

¹⁰⁸ Julian, *Letters*, Vol. 3, (LCL), p. 71.

no ethical motivation for this kind of charity in the ancient world up until this time.¹⁰⁹

It was the Christian concern for those who bore God's image (*imago Dei*), even though defaced by sin,¹¹⁰ and motivated by love (*agape*) as displayed in Christ that gave rise to the establishment of the first hospitals (*xenodochia*) in the fourth century.¹¹¹

Probably the best known of these was the Basileias, founded about 372 by Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Gregory of Nazianzus (330–389) has left us a first-hand account of a personal visit. He says:

Go forth a little from the city, and behold the city, the treasure-house of godliness . . . in which disease is investigated and sympathy proved . . . We have no longer to look on the fearful and pitiable sight of men like corpses before death, with the greater part of their limbs dead (from leprosy), driven from cities, from dwellings, from public places, from water-courses . . . Basil it was more than anyone who persuaded those who are men not to scorn men, nor to dishonour Christ the head of all by their inhumanity towards human beings.¹¹²

§3

THE MIDDLE AGES

(A.D. 500–1500)

The Middle Ages are normally divided into two distinct periods. First, the early period (500–1050) and second, the high or late period (1050–1500). The perjorative term “dark” is often used to refer to the early period. The reason for this is more religious or philosophical than historical. Many non-Christian historians found these ages “dark” because Hellenism was absent and Christianity

¹⁰⁹ Darrel Amundsen, and Gary Ferngren, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–12.

¹¹⁰ For a most excellent and scholarly discussion of the influence of this doctrine, see Gary B. Ferngren, “The Imago Dei and the Sanctity of Life: The Origin of an Idea,” *Euthanasia and the Newborn*, pp. 23–42.

¹¹¹ Timothy S. Miller, *Birth of Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*, p. 73.

¹¹² Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 20*, as quoted by Darrel Amundsen and Gary Ferngren in “The Early Christian Tradition,” *Caring and Curing*, p. 49.

became more dominant. The “darkness,” then, is the “Christian” interlude between the collapse of the old Greco-Roman culture and its revival at about the time Peter Abelard (1079–1142) reintroduced Aristotle into non-Byzantine Europe.¹¹³

This term “dark ages” is a loose concept which any man may define according to his own prejudice. Some retreat from the term “Dark Ages” began when the term “Mediaeval Period” was used to indicate that at least some culture was in existence before the Renaissance. William Carroll Bark reminds us that it was the frontier spirit that dominated this early period. He pointed out that it was

. . . a working, striving society, impelled to pioneer, forced to experiment, often making mistakes but also drawing upon the energies of its people much more fully than its predecessors, and eventually allowing them much fuller and freer scope for development. That conditions, events, and peoples came together as they did in the early Middle Ages was extremely fortunate for the present heirs of the Western tradition.¹¹⁴

This idea of “darkness” has also been postulated by several medical historians, as though there were a clear break between Greco-Roman medicine and that practised during the early mediaeval period. For example, Charles Singer wrote that, during this early period, “men lacked a motive for living . . . Monkish medicine had no thought save for the immediate relief of the patient. All theoretical knowledge was permitted to lapse.”¹¹⁵ Lately, however, this view has been seriously challenged. For example, George Sarton has rightly pointed out that those “dark ages” were “never so dark as our ignorance of them.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey*, p. 261.

¹¹⁴ William C. Bark, *Origins of Medieval World*, as quoted by R. J. Rushdoony, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

¹¹⁵ Charles Singer, *A Short Story of Medicine*, pp. 61–62. Other scholars who accept the idea of the “dark ages” in medicine are Erwin H. Ackernecht, *A Short History of Medicine*, and Arturo Castiglioni, *A History of Medicine*.

¹¹⁶ George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, Vol. 1, p. 17. Other scholars who have challenged this view are Loren C. MacKinney, “A Half Century of Medieval Medical Historiography in America,” *Medievalia et humanistica*, 7, (1952),

The reason for this tension was due, in large measure, to Aristotle, who compartmentalised medicine into two distinct categories; namely, the practice of medicine: the art, and the theory of medicine: the science.¹¹⁷ In his study entitled *Ancient Medicine*, Ludwig Edelstein rightly defines the result of this when he tells us that, “Greek science advocated at all times assumptions about an invisible world of law and order; it was theoretical rather than practical.”¹¹⁸

The Romans, being more practical than the Greeks, did not take to the Greek tomes on theoretical medicine. Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23/24 to 79) laments the fact that many Roman medical practitioners in his day could not even read the Greek medical works; he railed against Roman physicians, saying that they “acquired their knowledge from our dangers, making experiments at the cost of our lives. Only a physician can commit homicide with complete impunity.”¹¹⁹ It was probably this dichotomy which gave rise to that humorous distinction often made between Greece and Rome; namely, that the Greeks were famous for their brains and the Romans for their drains.

The failure of the humanistic pagan world-view was in its inability to bring the practical and the theoretical together. Indeed, given its presuppositions, it could never have done so. It was largely due to this failure that Edelstein concluded that ancient science was in a state of serious decay by A.D. 200.¹²⁰

The important point to be made here is that as Christianity divided into its eastern and western halves, the western (or Latin) half stressed the practical, while the eastern (or Greek) half stressed the theoretical.¹²¹ This division, however, was only partially true, due to a common faith, particularly in the biblical doctrines of the *imago Dei* and *agape*. Compassion for the sick was that common

18–42; and John M. Riddle, “Theory and Practice in Medieval Medicine,” *Viator*, Vol. 5, No. 51 (1974), 157–184.

¹¹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, (LCL), 1282a3.

¹¹⁸ Ludwig Edelstein, “Recent Trends in the Interpretation of Greek Science,” *Ancient Medicine*, p. 421.

¹¹⁹ Pliny, *Natural History*, (LCL), 29.8.17–18.

¹²⁰ Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine*, p. 416.

¹²¹ John M. Riddle, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

feature of both eastern and western Christianity that manifested itself in a manner previously unknown in Greco-Roman medical ethics.

We have already seen that in the east the Church established the first hospitals and charitable institutions. These gave asylum even to lepers, who were hopeless and helpless outcasts of society.¹²² These institutions continue to grow and flourish throughout the middle ages, even under Turkish rule (1453–1850). The Turks, unlike their Christian subjects, disliked activities such as the caring for the sick and the practice of medicine.¹²³ It is evident, therefore, that the eastern Greek Christians were not completely given to the theory of medicine, giving more attention to the practice of medicine as an art.

One cannot consider the early Middle Ages without giving some attention to Augustine of Hippo (354–430). Adolph Harnack does not overstate the case when he points out that Augustine's importance in the history of the Church and dogma lies in his giving to the West a system of ethics that was specifically Christian.¹²⁴

The Greco-Roman view was that history was an endless cycle. To the Greeks, the origin of everything that existed was constant strife resulting in chaos which brought about a new beginning. The soul of man was caught up in a ceaseless transmigration. "War is the father and king of all . . . Strife is justice," said Heraclitus.¹²⁵ This pagan belief had left man facing the world without God, with only his free will. Even this eventually disappeared, and man's hope came to rest in "luck" (*fortuna*). It was Augustine's teaching on the

¹²² Richard Palmer, "The Church, Leprosy and Plague in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *The Church and Healing*, p. 81.

¹²³ Stanley S. Harakas, "The Eastern Orthodox Tradition," *Caring and Curing*, p. 162. For a detailed study of Byzantine medicine see John Scarborough, ed., *Symposium on Byzantine Medicine*. For some excellent shorter articles, see Mary E. Keenan, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Early Byzantine Medicine," pp. 8–30 and "Gregory of Nyssa and the Medical Profession," pp. 150–161. See also Demetrios Constantelos, "Medicine, Byzantine," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 8, p. 244.

¹²⁴ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, pp. 317–318; where the quotation from Harnack may be found.

¹²⁵ W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy: The Classical Mind*, p. 16.

sovereignty of God that gave man a new birth of freedom. C. N. Cochrane explains Augustine's contribution as follows:

... with the disappearance from Christian thought of the classical antithesis between "man" and the "environment," there disappears also the possibility of such a conflict. The destiny of man is, indeed, determined, but neither by a soulless mechanism nor by the *fiat* of an arbitrary or capricious power external to himself. For the laws which govern physical (nature), like those which govern human nature, are equally the laws of God.¹²⁶

Augustine's sermons abound with illustrations portraying Christ as the Divine Physician—*Christus medicus*—and the Healer of all mankind's spiritual diseases.¹²⁷ The human physician, then, manifests the spirit of *agape*, of Christ-like compassion, in his care of the sick, especially the poor and destitute, without any thought of reward or fear of contagion.¹²⁸

Many of Augustine's letters are written to physicians who happen to be close personal friends. In one letter he mentions his friend, Gennadius, a physician, as a man "of devout mind, kind and generous heart, and untiring compassion, as shown by his care of the poor."¹²⁹ Mary Keenan tells us that, "The brief glimpses which Augustine affords us of his friends and acquaintances among the physicians of his day reveals them as men of noble character and of high professional ideals."¹³⁰ Augustine, in one of his sermons, actually encouraged the theoretical study of medicine. He even went so far as to categorically state that it would be cruelty indeed if the physician wished only to practice his art apart from a theoretical knowledge of the subject.¹³¹ His one and only criticism was of the anatomists who, in their cruel zeal for science, practiced dissection, not only on the bodies of the dead by robbing graves, but sometimes on the living as well.¹³²

¹²⁶ Charles N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, p. 368.

¹²⁷ Rudolph Arbesmann, "The Concept of 'Christus medicus' in St Augustine," *Traditio*, 10 (1954), p. 28.

¹²⁸ Augustine, *Sermones*, 175-8f.

¹²⁹ Augustine, *Epistles*, 159.

¹³⁰ Mary Keenan, "Augustine and the Medical Profession," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 67 (1936), p. 169.

¹³¹ Augustine, *Sermon*, 156.2.

¹³² Augustine, *City of God*, 22.24.

One of Augustine's great legacies is the special care he gave to handicapped children. According to him, God created each child in his own image; it was God who gave the miracle of life at conception, formed each body in the womb and providentially brought it into this world. All newborn children, therefore, were to be preserved, irrespective of the circumstances of their conception, physical condition or mental ability. Even the child born of a prostitute, he contended, is sometimes adopted by God as his own son or daughter;¹³³ a child born of adultery is no less a creature of God than any other.¹³⁴

Almost from the beginning the early Christians, and later in the early Middle Ages the Church, made it known there was an alternative to infanticide and the aborting of the unborn. The alternative was that Christians would take the unwanted children into their own homes. Monastic records indicate that defective and unwanted children were often left to the care of the Church.¹³⁵

It has often been charged by many modern medical historians that the Church of the Middle Ages was opposed to the practice of medicine. This is an error that is found in many modern histories of medicine which otherwise appear to be quite scholarly. After listing the various Church councils and the edicts that followed, one scholar concluded that: "The general effect was, unfortunately, not only to stop the monks from practicing, but to extend the special odium of these decrees to the whole medical profession."¹³⁶ This is only a half truth. Many modern texts on medical history contradict each other when naming the councils in which this prohibition was supposedly decreed; the same contradiction also applies to the types of clergy.

An excellent example of these errors is found in Andrew Dick-

¹³³ Augustine, *Contra Iulianum*, 6.43.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.16.

¹³⁵ J. E. Boswell, *Expositio and oblatio: The Abandonment of Children and the Ancient and Medieval Family*, pp. 17–33.

¹³⁶ Fielding H. Garrison, *An Introduction to the History of Medicine*, p. 168. See also Robert S. Lopez, *The Birth of Europe*, p. 373; Robert Margotta, *The Story of Medicine*, p. 146; Max Neuberger, *History of Medicine*, p. 40; J. H. Bass, *Outlines of the History of Medicine and the Medical Profession*, p. 253; and Theodor Puschmann, *A History of Medical Education*, p. 280.

son White's book, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*:

. . . one of the main objections developed in the Modern Ages against anatomical studies was the maxim that "the Church abhors the shedding of blood." On this ground, in 1248, the Council of Le Mans forbade surgery to monks. Many other councils did the same . . . So deeply was this idea rooted in the mind of the universal Church that for over a thousand years surgery was considered dishonourable.¹³⁷

T. C. Albutt in his book contradicts White when he states that it was at the Council of Tours that this "sinister and perfidious"—*ecclesia abhorret a sanguine*—was decreed.¹³⁸

It soon became apparent that in the midst of this scholarly quagmire of confusion and inaccuracy, one would be forced to leave these secondary sources altogether and turn to the primary sources for help. This would be next to impossible for most of us to attempt. Fortunately, Professor Darrel Amundsen has done this for us in an excellent and scholarly study he has entitled, "Medieval Canon Law on Medical and Surgical Practice by the Clergy."¹³⁹

During the twelfth century there was a "shift in values within the traditional scheme of the cardinal vices."¹⁴⁰ The sin of pride as the foremost of vices was gradually giving way to the sin of avarice. The various Church councils attempted to curb this vice of avarice. It was never aimed directly at the medical profession, even though it did affect it to some extent. One scholar summed it

¹³⁷ Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, Vol. II, pp. 31–32.

¹³⁸ T. C. Albutt, *The Historical Relations of Medicine and Surgery to the End of Sixteenth Century*, p. 21.

¹³⁹ This is chapter 8 in Professor Amundsen's book entitled *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*. This article can also be found in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 52, (Spring 1978) No. 1. The writer is indebted to Professor Amundsen for almost all of the material dealing with this subject at this point. We would conclude that this article, indeed his entire book mentioned above, is indispensable for a proper understanding of medical history during the mediaeval period.

¹⁴⁰ L. K. Little, "Pride Goes Before Avarice: Social Change and the Vices in Latin Christendom," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 1, p. 16.

up as follows: “In practice, clerics had engaged in secular pursuits from the time of the early Church onwards, and gradually, in theory, the canonists came to apply one criterion, i.e., of motive, whether such work was undertaken from a genuine need (*necessitas*) or selfish gain (*turpe lucrum*).”¹⁴¹

The prohibitions contained in the various councils during the late Middle Ages applied only to the regular clergy, i.e. those who had taken a vow to withdraw from secular affairs. Amundsen concludes: “The specific prohibition against the study and practice of medicine did not apply to a sizable segment of the clergy and it is hardly a wholesale condemnation of the practice of medicine by clerics.”¹⁴²

What shall we say about the “sinister and perfidious” *ecclesia abhorret a sanguine*, which is sometimes attributed to the Council of Tours and sometimes to canon 18 of Lateran IV? According to C. H. Talbot, it is no more than a literary ghost. He explains as follows:

The famous phrase *Ecclesia abhorret a sanguine*, which has been quoted by every writer on medicine for the past two hundred years as the reason for the separation of surgery from medicine, is not to be found either in the text of the Council of Tours, 1163 A.D. (to which they all attribute it) or in any other Church Council. It cannot be found in the Decretals of the Popes nor in any of the medieval commentaries on canon law. It is a literary ghost.

Talbot goes on to explain that it owes its existence to Quesnay, the uncritical historian of the Faculty of Surgeons at Paris who, in 1774, translated the French into Latin and inserted it into the text. No earlier source for this sentence can be found.¹⁴³ We trust this fallacy will, from now on, be laid to rest permanently.

¹⁴¹ J. Gilchrist, *The Church and Economic Activity in the Middle Ages*, p. 25.

¹⁴² Darrel Amundsen, *op. cit.*, p. 20 in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*.

¹⁴³ C. H. Talbot, *Medicine in Medieval England*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Dickson White, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 50.

§4
THE MODERN AGE
(A.D. 1500 TO THE PRESENT)

Andrew Dickson White persevered in his allegation that “theological dogmas” continued to be among the greatest stumbling blocks to the growth of modern medical science even into the modern age. He cites the case of Andreas Vesalius, whose work in the sixteenth century set a new standard for human anatomy. According to White, Vesalius incurred “ecclesiastical censure,” and “in the search for real knowledge he risked the most terrible dangers, and especially the charge of sacrilege, founded upon the teaching of the church for ages.”¹⁴⁴ The fact is that during the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, dissections met with little interference from the Church; in some cases, religious authorities even permitted Vesalius the use of Church buildings as anatomical theatres.¹⁴⁵

The religious response to inoculation and vaccination against smallpox presents a similar pattern. A curious twist developed in New England in 1721, when the brilliant Puritan theologian Cotton Mather initiated the first American trials of inoculation. He was opposed by a leading Boston physician who argued that the procedure was not only unsafe, but irreligious because it interfered with God’s will.¹⁴⁶

When the use of chloroform during childbirth was first introduced in Edinburgh in the 1840s by James Young Simpson, there was some mild opposition on theological grounds. In this case, even White admits, it was the powerful preaching of that notable Scottish Presbyterian theologian Thomas Chalmers that turned the tide of public opinion in Simpson’s favour.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Mary N. Alston, “The Attitude of the Church Towards Dissection Before 1500,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 16 (1944): 221–238.

¹⁴⁶ Otho T. Beall, Jr. and Richard H. Shryock, *Cotton Mather: First Significant Figure in American Medicine*, p. 104f; John Duffy, *Epidemics in Colonial America*, p. 30f. See also Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, pp. 345–366.

¹⁴⁷ Andrew Dickson White, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 62–63.

The nineteenth-century movement to clean up filthy and disease-ridden cities, on both sides of the Atlantic, drew much of its force from individuals motivated by Christian piety. Many saw a direct link between filth, disease and moral degeneration. It was John H. Griscom, a Quaker physician, who led the fight in New York City to improve the health of the working poor. In both Europe and North America, the Christian concern to improve health by sanitation improved the lives of millions of people.¹⁴⁸

During the sixteenth century medical science became more empirical in its observations about most of the diseases common to mankind. Even when discussing the plague, the most feared of all diseases, a theological explanation did not preclude natural causes nor the treatment and the use of natural remedies. The French surgeon Ambroise Pare confided that trying to find “the natural causes of the plague” kept him so busy that he would have to leave the ultimate causes to the theologians.¹⁴⁹ It is not surprising that most physicians did not deny a supernatural component to disease inasmuch as most physicians were also Christians.¹⁵⁰

During the eighteenth century there arose a movement known as the Enlightenment, whose aim was the ultimate destruction of Christianity. If the movement has not succeeded in this, it has been effective in greatly diminishing the influence of Christianity on science in general, and health care in particular. Karl Barth describes this movement as “a system founded upon the presupposition of faith in the omnipotence of human ability.”¹⁵¹ Like Christianity it is a religion; like Christianity it has a creed which can be written down, partly at least, as follows:

¹⁴⁸ Charles E. Rosenberg, and S. Carroll, “Pietism and the origins of the American public health movement: a note on John H. Griscom and Robert M. Hartley,” *Journal of the History of Medical and Allied Sciences*, 23 (1968): 16–35. For the continuing influence of Christianity in the twentieth century, see John Ettling, *The Germ of Laziness: Rockefeller Philanthropy and Public Health in the New South*.

¹⁴⁹ Paul H. Kocher, “The idea of God in Elizabethan medicine,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 11 (1950), p. 29.

¹⁵⁰ Ronald L. Numbers, and Ronald C. Sawyer, “Medicine and Christianity in the modern world,” *Health/Medicine and the Faith Traditions*, p. 138.

¹⁵¹ J. D. Douglas, “Enlightenment,” *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 343.

There is no God. There is, in fact, nothing besides the physical cosmos that science investigates. Human beings, since they are a part of this cosmos, are physical things and therefore do not survive death. Human beings are, in fact animals among other animals and differ from other animals only in being more complex. Like other animals, they are a product of uncaring and unconscious physical processes that did not have them, or anything else, in mind. There is, therefore, nothing external to humanity that is capable of conferring meaning or purpose on human existence. In the end, the only evil is pain and the only good is pleasure . . .¹⁵²

Like Christianity there are various enlightenment “denominations” to choose from: Socialism, Marxism, Logical Positivism, Freudianism, Behaviourism, and Existentialism just to name a few.¹⁵³

One of the more forceful critiques of the main tenets of the Enlightenment we have seen recently has come from the pen of Professor Peter van Inwagen in his essay “*Quam Dilecta*,” contained in *God and the Philosophers* edited by Thomas V. Morris. This is the narrative of his own pilgrimage from atheism to faith in Christ. Van Inwagen begins his critique with the following observation: “The Enlightenment has had its chance with me, and I have found it wanting. I once was one of its adherents, and now I am an apostate. On the level of intellectual argument and evidence, it leaves a lot to be desired. And its social consequences have been horrible.”¹⁵⁴

The first matter discussed in this critique is that of congruency. The Enlightenment view of the universe, constructed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was that the universe was infinite in space and time, and consisted entirely of matter in motion. Today this view is impossible. Van Inwagen says, “Present day science gives us a universe that began to exist a specific number of years ago and may well be spatially finite.”¹⁵⁵ The Enlightenment theory that humanity is continuous with other terrestrial animals is nothing more than “a very funny idea.”¹⁵⁶ He also takes issue

¹⁵² Thomas V. Morris, (ed.), *God and the Philosophers*, p. 49.

¹⁵³ For information on just how and on what grounds some of these “denominations” launch their attack, see Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 161f.

¹⁵⁴ Peter van Inwagen, “*Quam Dilecta*,” in *God and the Philosophers*, p. 50.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

with Andrew Dickson White's thesis that the Church has been at war with science from the beginning. Van Inwagen, on the other hand, points out that:

There has been little persecution of science by the Church. There is nothing in the history of the relations of science and Christianity that can be compared with the Lysenko era in Soviet biology or the condition of science in Germany under the Nazis . . . I would suggest that the Christian world-view of the High Middle Ages produced a mental climate that made the birth of science possible.¹⁵⁷

The single and most important congruency is that all humans are deeply, radically evil; which may, indeed, be only potential but nonetheless real. The Enlightenment, of course, does not accept this thesis and, because of this, is unable to present a realistic view of the human condition past and present. Van Inwagen observes that: "It is extremely unfortunate that some Christians have abandoned the doctrine of original sin. As someone, Chesterton perhaps, remarked, they have abandoned the only Christian dogma that can actually be empirically proved."¹⁵⁸

Another argument van Inwagen brings forward is the statement of Christ in Mt. 7:20: "by their fruits you will recognise them." To see the fruits of the Enlightenment in its purest form, one has to look at those who have consciously and deliberately separated themselves from any Christian influence, and who have held the reins of political power. The examples given are the terrors of the French Revolution, Germany and Russia under Hitler and Stalin, and Pol Pot's experiment in social engineering in the 1970s. His conclusion is that:

In the end, the Enlightenment cannot survive; even if (by the standards of the world) it should destroy the Church, what replaces the Church at the social and cultural level will destroy the enlightenment. Saturn's children will devour him. Those who doubt this should reflect on the actual fate of liberal humanism under Hitler or on the probable fate of liberal humanism under a politically established age of Aquarius or under a triumphalist reign of "theory" in the universities.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 52f.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56f.

One of the best examples of Enlightenment thinking may be found in a recent study in the field of bioethics entitled *Should the Baby Live: The Problem of Handicapped Infants*, co-authored by Helga Kushe and Peter Singer. Their position is boldly stated: “We think that some infants with severe disabilities should be killed.”¹⁶⁰ Apparently, by their own admission, it becomes evident that their term “severe” is much more severe than one might imagine when they seem obliged to add that, “this recommendation may cause particular offense to readers who were themselves born with disabilities, perhaps even the same disabilities we are discussing.”¹⁶¹

The thrust of the book is the complete repudiation of our Hippocratic/Judeo-Christian ethical tradition, coupled with an exaltation of that type of medical ethics practised in the pagan world before the rise of Christianity, which included abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. They commend cultures in which infanticide is accepted and practised within the confines of ethical morality.¹⁶² Kushe and Singer maintain that the Judeo-Christian tradition is the deviant one.¹⁶³ Then they go on to ask the question, “Why do we take a view so different from that of the majority of human societies?”¹⁶⁴ The villain, of course, is Christianity. To prove their point, they quote from W. H. E. Lecky’s *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*:

Considered as immortal beings, destined for the extremes of happiness or of misery, and united to one another by a special community of redemption, the first and most manifest duty of the Christian man was to look upon his fellow men as sacred beings, and from this notion grew up the eminently Christian idea of the sanctity of all human life . . . it was one of the most important services of Christianity that besides quickening greatly our benevolent affections it definitely and dogmatically asserted the sinfulness of all destruction of human life as a matter of amusement or of simple convenience, and thereby formed a new standard higher than any which then existed in the world . . . this minute and scrupulous care for human life and human virtue in the humblest form, in the slave,

¹⁶⁰ As quoted by Nigel Cameron in *The New Medicine: Life and Death After Hippocrates*, p. 115.

¹⁶¹ Also quoted by Nigel Cameron, *ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁶² Helga Kushe, and Peter Singer, *Should the Baby Live? The Problem of Handicapped Infants*, p. 110.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

the gladiator, the savage, or the infant was indeed wholly foreign to the genius of Paganism. It was produced by the Christian doctrine of the inestimable value of each immortal soul.¹⁶⁵

Central to a proper understanding of Christian ethics, particularly as they have a bearing on health care, is the doctrine that man was created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). John Calvin, in the sixteenth century, states that there can be no true knowledge of man except within the framework of a true knowledge of God.¹⁶⁶ He is very clear on this when he states: "It is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself."¹⁶⁷

In the twentieth century the *imago Dei* has received extensive treatment by both the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth, and the German Lutheran theologian Helmut Thielicke. Barth places high value on human life because it is a creation of God. It is on this basis that he rejects both abortion and euthanasia.¹⁶⁸

For Thielicke, however, human dignity is enhanced by the fact that man is a creation of God and the fact that Christ died for him. Man is a divine creation and, as such, stands under the protection of God and partakes of the majesty of him who bestows it.¹⁶⁹

Gary Ferngren sees the issue very clearly when he observes that: "One may doubt that the idea of the sanctity of life in its traditional form can continue to exist divorced from the theological concept of the *imago Dei*. It is likely that it will maintain its influence in a pluralistic age like our own only so long as the Judeo-Christian tradition that gave it birth continues to be a living force that is capable of relating in a meaningful way its belief

¹⁶⁵ William E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, Vol. 2, pp. 18, 20, 34.

¹⁶⁶ For an excellent short study of Calvin's understanding of the *imago Dei*, see Thomas F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*.

¹⁶⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.1.2.

¹⁶⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, pp. 324–397; of special interest concerning a number of bio-ethical issues, see "The Protection of Life," pp. 397–470.

¹⁶⁹ Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, Vol. I, p. 172.

in the transcendent value of all human life to contemporary (and increasingly difficult) issues in bio-medical ethics.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Gary Ferngren, “The *imago Dei* and the sanctity of life: the origins of an idea,” *Euthanasia and the Newborn*, p. 42.