

IV.

MEDICINE PLUS RELIGION

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INTRODUCTION

As century upon century great glaciers have edged their way southward inch by inch, tiny streams have cut courses through mountainous regions growing into mighty rivers as they approached the sea, thoughts and ideas have slowly evolved from the soul and mind of man. Each civilization has made its contribution, until Today, building on the accomplishments of the past, we stand at the highest peak of attainment thus far reached, although ahead we can still see Mt. Everests yet unconquered. In his search for truth and happiness, man has necessarily passed through periods of darkness and misunderstanding. From the earliest beginnings medicine and religion have been more or less closely associated, although not always happily so. In the centuries just passed, broadly speaking, the clergy has often looked with askance on many of the practices and adaptations of new methods by the medical world, never for a moment thinking that medicine might have something

of value to contribute to religion. In just the same way, the medical profession has been very slow to accept the fact that the Church might be of any assistance. There is, however, a growing realization that the physical, mental, spiritual and social sides of the individual are not separate entities, but are very closely related, and a growing consciousness that medicine and religion, can, by working together, improve the total result.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Primitive man was not the carefree creature, living the free, idealistic life which he has often been pictured as being. His was the life of a terror driven, ignorant savage, facing a hostile world. By day he slunk through rough woods in search of food, constantly fearing death by stronger men and beasts. Because he did not understand Nature and her phenomena, he often trembled before lightning and fell prostrate before thunder. When convulsed in the agony of disease he hid away like a dumb animal.

Though he was ignorant, he possessed intelligence. In his heart and mind he had a desire for companionship with and protection by some higher power. Because he could not understand nor explain the world about him, he peopled it with creatures of his own imagination. These intangible reflections of his mind he called spirits and ghosts. He gave personification to objects about him such as the sun, moon, stars, the wind, trees, water and even animals and birds.

He was confronted with many mysteries, but the greatest of these were the mysteries of birth, life, disease and death.

Soon his imagined spirits took on the aspect of supernatural forces, bringing on misfortune, disease and finally death. To prevent or cure disease, the spirit must be controlled, forced or bribed away. This gave rise to a variety of superstitions regarding sickness. It is interesting to note how some of these have persisted to the present day in the form of very valuable treatments. It was thought that by loud noises, beating, pummelling and pounding the patient, the evil spirits would be driven away. Thus the practice of massage arose. Trephining came from the thought that the malign spirit would escape through a hole in the skull. Hydrotherapy might easily have originated from plunging patients into hot or cold water, or sweating him to drive out the demon of sickness. Counter-irritants came from an effort to burn out the spirit by fire, with hot instruments or blistering appliances. Purgatives and emetics were used to expel the demon through the orifices of the body. Deodorants were brought into use to drive the evil spirit away by a strong odor, while horrible, bitter tasting medicines were thought to nauseate or kill the spirit. This superstition dominated

the materia medica of the Middle Ages and lingers today in the popular fancy, for to many to be efficacious, a medicine must be strong and bad tasting. Other practices which were followed, might be added. Because the fox was a long winded animal, the lungs were thought to be good for tuberculosis; fat of bears (a hairy animal) were supposedly efficacious in treatment of baldness; eating a lion's heart, or the heart of a brave human enemy gave courage and stout-heartedness; toads boiled in a witches' caldron were used in the treatment of cardiacs (medical science has found that the skin of toads contains a substance which resembles digitalis in action and is beneficial in heart diseases); the Chinese gave "dragon's" bones (dinosaur's) to children with convulsions (now known that bones contain calcium which is beneficial in certain types of convulsions); trees and plants were the abode of spirits, hence eating a plant or drinking its juice brought virtue to the spirit of human flesh. Remedies by plants and animals was followed by the development of astrology which attached much significance and importance to the influence of the moon, sun, and stars to the individual. Practically every

substance in the world was used for medical treatment with the hope of overcoming misfortune and warding off disease.

The development of these practices brought about the rise of the medicine man with his white and black magic and the growth of rites and rituals. As the medicine man advanced in prestige, the psychic functions became clearly divided from the practical procedures and the physician became the priest while his assistants became the practical doctors. Witches, with their black magic, were the first rivals of the medicine man.

A form of psychotherapy was used by these early medicine men who frightened away the spirits by various means, often bringing about temporary improvement due to the influence of the patient's mental processes upon his bodily functions. At times, when the ailment was mental in the beginning, patients were entirely cured. Some cures were effected due to the enormous recuperative powers of the human body--the patient would have recovered eventually anyway. Faith was thereby built up in the magical powers of the medicine man.

This type of thinking, that the spirits or gods, or

deeds done by the individual, was responsible for all disease and misfortune, was the basis of all ancient medical practice and the theory carried over into early civilization without change of principle, and even persists today in quackery, healing cults and fads.

From this it is easy to see how from the dawn of time religion and medicine have been very closely allied, one apparently the outgrowth of the other, and though both were very crude in their beginnings, showed promise of development. Through all is visible the underlying motive of fear, a factor which still exists today, though in a much modified form. Medical science is able to accomplish a great deal more when fear is removed. True religion states that "perfect love (of God) casteth out fear." Thus religion may make one contribution to the progress of medicine.

EGYPT:

Egypt was one of the earliest countries to practice medicine. The first work in this field dates back to 5000 -

4000 B.C.

In the earlier years of Egyptian civilization the priests and physicians were identical. Later the tendency was towards specialism. An impetus to medicine was the fact that the religion of Egypt inculcated kindness, justice, charity, hospitality, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked. The Egyptians advanced views of personal hygiene, regulation of diet, baths and purgatives to conform to laws of health suited for country and its climate, cleanliness, and prevention. They also grasped the significance of some of the more important phenomena of physiology, the circulation of the blood with the heart as the center, a knowledge of the distribution of arteries, and the pulse. The Egyptians were outstanding in the art of embalming, showed rare skill in bandaging, and were even skilled in dentistry. Hypnotism, also astrology and astronomy was used in treating disease.

The oldest medical records are found in Egypt, being compiled sometime in the Sixteenth Century B. C. This contains a description and classification of many diseases and surgical operations. More than seven hundred drugs of the vegetable, animal and mineral kingdoms are enumerated and classified, with

written approximately 2000 B.C., showing an organization of medical treatment and surgery, with fixed fees and also a definite penalty for failure to effect a cure.

INDIA:

Nature worship was the basic principle on which the mythologies, religions and medicine of the ancient civilizations was founded. India was not without exception in this. However, India early reached an advanced and enlightened state of civilization. Among the sacred books of India, called the Vedas, were those which treated with the cure and prevention of disease. Hygienic measures were enforced by making them a part of religious observance as were various other health procedures. This included such things as brushing the teeth, drinking water early in the morning, cleansing the tongue, daily defecation, and various other things. The records show that medicine, surgery, hygiene and sanitation were very highly developed for that particular period. These books also included a description of various types of nervous diseases and insanity, children's diseases, genito-urinary diseases, instruction regarding bandaging, poisons and antidotes and various drugs. Pre and

post natal care were well understood. Cleanliness of patients, attendants and physicians was emphasized. Hints of the germ theory of disease were found to be running through all the Hindu regulations. Certain rules of asepsis were observed. Hospitals supported at public expense had been erected. These were of the finest type and well organized. The physicians were descendants of the exorciser and magician and had arrived at a highly scientific stage. A rather unique method of treatment employed, was the use of music and the reading of pleasant verses to the patients.

The period medical science reached its high stage of development was that in which the religion of Buddha prevailed. It was a religion of mercy, compassion, and justice, and enjoined humane treatment of animals as well as humans.

With the passing of Buddhism, and the coming of the religion of Brahma, the brilliant medical work of the Hindus deteriorated. Not only did the Brahmins tend to intensify the caste system, but created a number of taboos. One of these made it unclean to touch blood or morbid matter. This made it impossible for intelligent medical and nursing care to progress. So enlightened India sank into a state of bondage and darkness

bacteriology. We find that provisions were made for the inspection of food; for the disposal of excreta; the notification of authorities in case of communicable disease; quarantine and terminal disinfection; rules for menstruation and childbirth which assured proper rest and privacy to women. Directions for these and various other provisions, are given in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy in minutest detail.

From the book of Daniel, we find that the Jews emphasized the importance of simple, wholesome diet in maintaining health and preventing disease. The value of fresh fruits and vegetables, and drinking of a sufficient quantity of water is clearly shown.

The Jewish religion placed a high value upon human brotherhood and social justice. As a result they developed a keen sense of hospitality to strangers; a form of relief to widows, the fatherless, and the oppressed; a keen sense of personal and social responsibility; visited and relieved the sick.

In this nation medicine was very closely allied with religion, sanitation being the outstanding field. Here they were not so greatly hampered by superstition and fear as

was the case in so many other early nations.

GREECE:

Scientific medicine was born in Greece. Here is found the source of modern medical science, for Greece raised medicine to the dignity of a science.

During the age of myths and superstitions, Apollo, then Asklepios was deified and worshipped as the god of health and medicine. The Temple of Asklepios, first used as a place of worship and sacrifice to this god, developed into an institution closely resembling our modern sanitoriums, with large numbers of patients cared for on great porticoes. From this there developed a recognized class of physicians known as the Asklepiades. These founded centers for the teaching of medicine which were followed by the growth of important medical schools, hospitals and related institutions. These buildings were spacious, and built in a beautiful Grecian style. Not only were there hospital wards and corridors, but baths, gymnasium, libraries, rooms for visitors and attendants, houses for priests and physicians, and even a beautiful outdoor theater, all set in a location of ideal beauty among pine covered hills.

The hospital administration resembled that followed today. There was a chief administrator closely resembling the modern superintendent of the hospital, with various grades of attendants, both men and women. There were two sets of priestesses, one assisted in the "holy mysteries" while the others were entitled the "basket bearers" and no doubt carried out the more practical duties and care of patients.

With the coming of Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, came even a greater period for this science. He openly rejected all superstitions and myths and declared that disease was caused by disobedience to natural laws. He delved into every branch of medicine and his writings, which cover the entire medical field are still regarded as classics. Hippocrates emphasised the necessity of observation and experiment in the pursuit of medical knowledge. He founded a bedside manner. Prior to his time diagnoses had not been made. He recorded symptoms and classified disease. The well known Hippocratic Oath is the embodiment of his fine ethics and lofty standards of medicine.

The Greeks maintained a utilitarian rather than a humanitarian outlook, caring only for those whom they regarded

as curable. The incurables were left in the streets or out on the mountainsides to die. They worshipped beauty and physical perfection, and were not so interested in the illness or deprivations of the unfortunate. Duty and charity were not emphasized in their religion, although hospitality was considered a virtue. Some attention however, was paid to the problems of poverty. State relief was afforded orphans, the destitute, etc., public physicians attending the poor. Mutual help associations were common, while Brotherhoods of Hospitality made provisions for travelers. The Greeks were an intellectual, rational people, elevating reason, justice, temperance and civic integrity to the highest plane.

ROMANS:

Rome has more outstanding in sanitation than medicine. The Greeks, even after their capture by the Romans carried on their medical work, though often as slaves of the Romans. It is natural that the Romans would find their highest expression in sanitation on a large public scale, as their general outlook on and approach to life was somewhat different from the countries thus far mentioned. They were an aggressive, acquisitive people, never distinguished for their compassion or pity,

although a form of public health with free dispensaries existed. Their only hospitals were those for soldiers. Their engineering and sanitary works, precautions against malaria, and aqueducts are still a monument to their accomplishments in this respect.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA WITH RESULTANT RELIGIOUS ORDERS:

Although all neighborly kindness and charity did not begin with the Christian era, the coming of Christ ushered in a force so powerful that it not only permeated the then known civilized world and revolutionized its thinking, but it is still existent today.

The Roman Empire at the dawn of Christianity was free from unintelligent superstitions; was practical and business like; its political economy was based on slavery which finally undermined the empire; women were allowed freedom, which helped to make possible the later development of nursing. Into this setting came a humble teacher whose emphasis on love and brotherhood set free a boundless current of spiritual joy and hope. Chief among His teachings was that of Service--to the sick, the neglected, the out cast, the needy, and with this

spirit He imbued His followers. Women were no longer given a secondary place to men, but shared equally. Christ recognized their intellectual aspirations as He did their right to share in practical work.

From this grew the work done by the deaconesses, virgins and widows of the early church. It might be termed the very earliest Visiting Nursing, for the very earliest ministrations consisted of visiting house to house, relieving suffering and alleviating pain wherever possible. When this was found inadequate, some of the larger homes were opened to the sick--the beginnings of the Christian hospitals. This opened avenues of service to certain wealthy Roman matrons, Paula, Marcella, Fabiola and others, who because of lives changed by Christianity, opened their palatial homes to the sick and needy, and gave all their time and material wealth to further this cause. Many fairly well organized hospitals flourished in various parts of the country following this period.

Although medicine as a science saw little development at this time, two names deserve mention in this respect. Galen, contributing very little himself that was new, collected

all the then known medical writings and compiled them in one large whole. He became the medical authority for a thousand years or so following. In passing, the name of Dioscarades also bears mention for he was the author of the first *Materia Medica*.

Philanthropy of all kinds was regarded as a religious exercise, consequently in the centuries that followed came the development and organization of religious orders, sisterhoods and brotherhoods. Too much cannot be said of the work done by the Franciscans, the Poor Clares, the Tertiaries, the Beguines and countless others.

It takes centuries for man to learn some lessons. The monasteries, with their enormous numbers of sick gathered together in one community, under fine management, tended by men and women who were the flower of their day, would have been ideal for the furtherance of medical research and progress. But men had not yet learned, even with the coming of so enlightened a teacher as Christ, that superstition and demonology were based upon imagination and fear and have no part in either religion or science. Further, men had so misinterpreted certain biblical teachings as to regard the

dissection of the body as blasphemy, even though that dissection might have meant the alleviation of suffering! A few daring souls such as Hildegarde of the eleventh century, kept the fire of true medical research and progress burning, although she had to do so by concealing her work under the veil of mystery and protecting herself by a claim of supernatural revelation.

THE DARK AGES:

This period need never existed had man not misinterpreted the spirit and meaning of Christianity. But man seems to learn best over long periods of time through misunderstanding, experience, and struggle. Hence the long search in the darkness for Light and Truth.

While the spirit of service prevailed and the work in the hospitals was carried out by the clergy, a fine piece of work was done. But gradually more and more use was made of servants and the poorer class who were entirely lacking in knowledge of the proper methods of care of the sick, even

cleanliness, and hospital care degenerated to the wretched, demoralized conditions of the Dark Ages. During the day time there was but one nurse to ten or twenty patients, while at night one person cared for as many or more than one hundred patients. It was not uncommon to find five patients in one bed. If a patient died at night, his corpse remained with the living until the following day. There were no rules of sanitation, no cleanliness, no segregation according to diseases. Filth, misery and wretchedness abounded on every hand.

Another factor which contributed to the breakdown at this period was the entrance of asceticism, of oriental origin. Through this practice the body was neglected, and such essential practices as bathing were omitted. Not only, as Lavinia L. Dock states in her "Short History of Nursing", "In Nursing sisterhoods, asceticism of the doctrinal type is, of course, quite out of place. It is alien to the whole program of health preservation and preventive medicine, and is at odds with hygiene and sanitation". It is unbilibcal also, because a sound healthy mind and body is advocated by the spirit of true religion.

THE RENAISSANCE:

This period is rich with the stories of the struggles of daring men and women, who made the medicine and religion of today possible. Not only have men of religion dared to stand for the Truth even when it meant death. Scientists have had this experience as well. Men have persecuted those who have seen ahead, both in science and religion. But those religionists and scientists have been right, and the Truths discovered by them have lived on. Such names as Vesalius, great anatomist, Roger Bacon, scientist, Ambroise Pare, the founder of modern scientific surgery, William Harvey, discoverer of the circulation of the blood, Servetus, pioneer in physiology, stand out as breaking through the blackness of the Dark Ages into the dawn of the Renaissance. While Wycliffe, Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin courageously championed the cause of religion.

Expansion carried over to the New World, first in the form of the establishment of hospitals. Care of the sick and education seem to be two points of emphasis by the Christian Church, so it is not strange that the first hospitals,

The Hospital of Immaculate Conception, Mexico City and Hotel Dieu of Montreal and Quebec were founded by religious orders.

MODERN TRENDS:

At the commencement of the period known as modern, we have scores of names of brilliant men and women who contributed much to the progress of medical science. Men and women such as Pasteur, Lister, Koch, Jenner, Morton, Florence Nightingale, and Madam Curie are outstanding in their accomplishment.

At the onset of this period medicine and religion were completely divorced. Neither could see the value of the other. But time and experience have taught us differently, and the practical, skeptical scientist is beginning to see that the mystical religionist does have a part to play in shaping man in his entirety, while the religionist has come to realize that the scientist is but working out the laws of nature, which to him are the laws of God. Together they become powerful allies, unitedly furthering their common cause--the upward progress of the human race.

RELIGION'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO MEDICINE

How insipid and dull a world this would be if all were thoroughly understandable. It is, however, so constructed that its complete understanding will always be a few paces beyond our comprehension--there will always be more to discover and to know. This fact has intrigued the doctor, the chemist, the physicist, and yes, the religionist too. It has constantly beckoned on the questing heart and mind, consequently new thoughts, new ideas and new concepts have continually been created. Sometimes it has been necessary to partially or wholly discard the concept created, and struggle on in search of Truth. Reward in this search comes only to those who are willing to put forth great effort and endeavor. It is a gradual, slow development, and when that struggle ceases, civilization decays.

One of the greatest thoughts that has been discovered in the individual's upward struggle and search for understanding is that there are fundamental laws of life which rule the universe. This has been as true in the realm of the spiritual and the moral as it has in the chemical, the biological, the

physical. Sin has been defined as the transgression of the law. There is a modern agreement to this fact. It is now recognized that most sickness occurs as the result of the breaking of Nature's laws. This is quite contrary to the old belief that sickness was a visitation of the wrath of God--a throw back to the primitive superstitions. One of the secrets of the operation of the laws of nature is that they control the coordination of the complete man--physical, mental, social and spiritual. Recognition of this means greater success in the field of medicine.

Significant is the fact that the body whose mind is sick and ill at ease cannot be cured until mental rest is secured. The medical world has recognized this, and has called in the assistance of the psychiatrist and the psychologist. These are very necessary, but not always sufficient. There remains a realm that is yet untouched which may possess the foci of infection--the spiritual. If spiritual laws have been transgressed, they must necessarily be remedied before complete physical recovery can be secured. In this, if consideration of every angle is given in making the diagnosis and prescribing treatment, religion, a silent, powerful force,

unobtrusively, but surely may contribute to the success of medicine.

By religion is not meant a superficial, emotional spasm that temporarily upsets and disintegrates an individual; but a deep, underlying force which gives an inner calm and poise, acts as a stabilizer in stress, gives purpose, meaning and integration to life, and rests upon an indomitable faith. Richard Cabot says this faith differs from primitive superstition in that it makes the leap after reflection, and not before. If used rightly religion, be it newly planted, or the development of what is already present, assists in bringing about recovery.

Fear and superstition played a very important part in the lives of the primitive and ancient man. For the most part, fear is demoralizing and disintegrating, it makes cowards and runaways out of individuals. The fears of the past were largely due to lack of understanding--superstitious fears. Science as well as religion has been largely responsible for dispelling many of these fears. But fears still persist today--and fear may cause disease, physical as well as mental. It is not always an easy matter to combat fear.

It may require the best resources of the nurse, the social worker, the psychiatrist and the doctor. Even then their efforts may prove futile. Should these means fail, confidence may be restored by tapping spiritual resources--or it may be that the religionist will be needed to coordinate his effort with the others, and by working together the desired result will be obtained.

Although in this age of specialism we may deem it necessary to call on one who has specialized in religion, how much more practical it is if the nurse, the social worker, the psychiatrist or the doctor can apply the necessary spiritual treatment. For the type of specialized individual necessary--intelligent, tactful, understanding, resourceful and trained is not always available at the most necessary time. Not only does this make the individual more useful to his patients, but from a purely utilitarian point of view, religion makes one more conscientious, more efficient, more successful and more happy. Strangely enough, religion cannot be forced upon an individual. He must recognize its value and be willing to receive it, make the necessary sacrifices, or much more harm than good may be done.

Hawthorne emphasizes the relation of the physical and the spiritual in "The Scarlet Letter":

"A bodily disease which we look upon as a whole and entire within itself, may, after all, be but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part."

A great deal of attention is paid to prevention of disease, and rightly so. Religion thoroughly permeates and cleanses the mental processes. It gives a radiant, healthy happy, wholesome outlook to life, which is very poor soil for either mental or physical disorders. It focuses one's attention away from himself onto the welfare of others. Yet it gives such even balance to the individual that he does not neglect his own well being. True religion therefore is helpful in preventing physical and mental disease. It is also of assistance in keeping the individual well adjusted to life, or in assisting the maladjusted. Religion is not an unhealthy inhibition or repression, but the highest expression of sublimation. It requires moreover, a temperate amount of self discipline, a fact that might be well for modern psychiatrists to consider.

E. Stanley Jones in "Victorious Living" says that there are over one hundred and fifty various definitions of religion. He further states the reason religion is so difficult to define is that life itself is difficult to define. When an attempt is made only a partial or even contradictory picture is obtained. "Religion having many forms has one root. That root is in the urge after life--fuller life." In every form of life from the very lowest cell up to the highest form, there is an urge toward completion and perfection. The religious urge is found in that urge for a completer, nobler life. Man feels that he cannot be complete unless that urge is fastened upon the highest form of life--God. "Religion is the urge for life turned qualitative. It is not satisfied with life apart from quality. The urge for quantitative life reached its crest in the dinosaurs. That failed--it was a road with a dead end. The huge animals died. In man the life urge turns from being merely big to being better. The qualitative and the moral emerge. We are religious then, because we cannot help it. We want to live in the highest, fullest sense, and that qualitative expression of life is called religion. So religion is identified with life itself. We are all incurably religious, whether we wish to admit it or not. Even the Communist, though repudiating religion, is deeply

religious. He wants a better social order. He may be right or wrong in the method of getting it, but the very desire for a better social order is religious. For religion is a cry for life." So the scientist, and in particular, the medical scientist might be classified as being a religionist, for if anyone seeks the betterment of life, especially physical and mental life, it is he.

SUMMARY

Reviewing the historical highlights, it is evident that science, particularly medical science was at first an outgrowth of religion, then developed simultaneously with it.

Persecution came to those who dared to venture beyond the pale of the known, accepted facts in science, as it did to those who dared to speak as their conscience dictated in the field of religion, and yet undaunted, they boldly continued until the Truth was established.

At times when hampered by its formalism, ritual and superstition, science has separated itself from religion and progressed, but all that has been said and done in the name of religion is not religion, and does not embrace the spirit of Christ, nor inculcate the true fundamentals and principles of Christianity.

When medicine is looked at from all angles, prevention as well as cure, both medicine and religion are an integral part of the individual. Neither can stand still and maintain its existence, either there must be a constant progress and forward movement, or stagnation and death result. Both can build on the mistakes and successes of the past. By

cooperation with religion medicine more readily attains its goal--religion quietly, unassumingly but very surely contributing to its success. Together they may arrive a little closer to the summit of an unconquered Mt. Everest.

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