Defining a Christian Doctor

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This essay will outline some principles and concepts that would distinguish a Christian doctor's worldview from the current neopagan one. Though the theme is not completely developed some implications for one who wishes to practice medicine as a Christian should become clearer. In writing the following I make no pretensions that I am close to achieving this goal.

A Christian View of History

The Christian doctor does not practice in a vacuum. A brief description of his setting in its historical and eschatological light is in order.

The poison and tragedy of the Fall lies in the fact that Satan wrenched all things from their union and communion with God. He did not and could not create another world, a new man, a new language or anything new. The devil took the same man and the same words and made their reference point something other than the living God. Satan thus usurped God's design for man and things and converted them into instruments of evil.

The servants of God and those of Satan are alike in that they are both fallen image-bearers of God with the same urges, impulses, and language. However, if analyzed according to their presuppositions, one servant's reference point is the living God of the Bible with whom he has been restored to a living relationship; the other's reference point is himself. Both speak about God and salvation, love and hate, good and evil, health and disease but from two radically different reference points. Both men are made in the image of God and will live as prophet, priest and king but one does so to the glory of God and the other to the glory of man.

In other words, Satan established a counterfeit kingdom. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan stand in opposition not primarily on moralistic grounds, but on where glory is given. The difference between the believer and the unbeliever is not one of degree but one of kind. Unredeemed man as the fallen image bearer of God is still acting as prophet, priest and king. But his basic impulse is to be as God, to build a city and make a name for himself; to build a kingdom on his own terms and to derive his identity apart from a relationship with the living God. He seeks to be autonomous. (Again, the unbeliever is also concerned with compassion, the poor, the homeless, etc. But, in the name of these things he has perpetrated monstrosities, e.g., Marxism. This is why the Kingdom of God begins in the hearts of men with repentance and faith.)

But, redeemed man, recreated man, restored man, as prophet, priest and king in Christ has rejected this autonomy. He now is able to continue, though imperfectly because of the continued effects of sin, the mandate given him in the Garden -- to subdue the earth thereby establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth; to build the city of God thereby living in community; to live in love as self-sacrifice and thanksgiving, the life of liturgy, of sacrament. Thus, he redeems the culture from the effects of the Fall.

Jesus' concern was not merely the salvation of men's souls but the establishment of God's Kingdom which includes men's souls but is much more comprehensive. His concern includes the totality of existence -- man and his entire habitat and culture. The Kingdom of Heaven is simply the restoration of all creation into union and communion with God. It is the referral of all things back

to God. It is the future in the present. It is here, but not fully. It is the task of the Church, the body of Christ, to complete this work. The historical and eschatological dimensions of the Church -- the entrance into the Kingdom -- meet in the sacrament. In its task of reconciling the world to God, the Church is involved in history but not simply as an activist. The Church sanctifies time by revealing its true significance and its consummation in the Kingdom as she refers all things to God -- restoration.

One implication of all this is immediately clear. Science and medicine are not neutral with respect to God. God has interpreted all things with respect to Himself. Truth therefore exists (i.e., is perceived) when all things are seen in their right relationship to God. Modern science and medicine boast neutrality with respect to God (secularism) but this boast is untrue. The real issue is whether one adheres to the science of Christianity or the science of secularism.

The foregoing is the setting in which a Christian physician ministers. It should be obvious from the start that the Christian physician is involved in a conflict. Two kingdoms are locked in a life and death struggle. God ordained a titanic spiritual war in the Garden between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan (Gen. 3:15). The continuous wars between Old Testament Israel and all other nations which are portrayed as the enemies of God are the types and shadows of New Testament Israel's (the Church) struggles against the forces of darkness (Eph 6:12).

Indeed, Christ did not come to bring peace but a sword (Matt 10:34), and Paul reminds us to live as soldiers at war (Eph 6:10-18). The Christian (physician) is de facto a soldier at war.

The Christian Mindset Presently

Having briefly described a Christian view of history, of reality, we must now add one more thing: a brief description of the Christian mindset presently.

Over the past few years there has been a renewed interest in religion, in "spirituality." Yet in the midst of this renewed interest in Christianity sin abounds. The values unremittingly opposed to Christianity are also on the increase. This startling situation is made possible because many Christians compartmentalize our faith, relegating it to one of life's many activities. Few of us are serious about our faith. We pray, worship, study the Bible, etc., But in the workplace with our colleagues and in the public square we do not speak candidly about what motivates our plans and policies -- because we are in a secular environment. This tendency is augmented as Zizioulas ponts out, by a tendency in Orthodoxy, because of our emphasis on the eschatological, to disincarnate the Church. The danger here is that a mindset develops in which the Scriptures are not understood as having much to say in, for example, the fields of psychology or medicine or law, etc. This means an inevitable turning to nonchristian sources.

On the other hand the dangerous tendency of the West is to historicize the Church, i.e., to emphasize the Church's role in the present as an activist body rather than as a manifestation of the eschata -- the future in the present. Western theology tends to limit ecclesiology to the historical content of the faith -- to the economy. The Church ceases to be a manifestation of the eschata, and ecclesial being and the being of God are no longer organically bound. The Church is reduced to a "God-ordained" institution on equal footing with other such institutions (e.g., state, family). But the Church is more than this. It is the New Israel, the body of Christ, a new nation, a royal priesthood.

Either way, the result is an artificial dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. There are "Christian" topics or activities and then there is the world at large which we evaluate in secular terms. A spiritual schizophrenia results in which believers bounce between their secular and Christian mentalities as their conversation changes from the business to sanctification.

Such categorizing might be acceptable if Christianity were nothing more than a set of profound teachings. But Christianity asserts itself as the central fact of human history. The Creator of all things visible and invisible, of man himself, invaded the world in the person of Jesus Christ, died, was resurrected, ascended, and lives

sovereign over all. Christianity is the central truth from which all behavior, relationships, and philosophy must flow. There is no sphere of life to which God has not spoken. Christianity bears on every aspect of life.

The modern "Christian" has succumbed to secularization. He accepts the morality, worship and spiritual culture of Christianity as religion but rejects the Christian view of life, the view that sets all earthly issues in the light of the eternal. As a result of this failure to apply truth to life, the secular mind-set enjoys a virtually unchallenged monopoly in the forum of public debate.

In March, 1986, the Journal of the American Medical Association published an article entitled "On the Death of Jesus Christ" which described the medical causes of Christ's death. The editors promptly received angry letters for publishing "religious" material. The article did not assert that Christ was resurrected, merely that he lived and was crucified. Few, if any, would discount this historical fact. Yet the hysterical response illustrates how defensive secularists can become when their monopoly on the mainstream of cultural communication is challenged.

The Object of Medicine

Disease, suffering, aging -- dying, the growth of death in us -- and death itself entered the world when sin entered the world; when man made his reference point something other than the life-giving, life-sustaining God (Gen. 2:17; Rom 6:23). Man in his state of sin and, thus, his state of decay, disintegration -- man in his process of aging, ugliness, disease and death -- this is the object of medicine.

Man's intellect, will and emotions have been corrupted and his body heads inexorably to decay and disintegration. God, however, in His infinite mercy ordained the healing ministry for He declares to the people, "I am the Lord your healer" (Ex 15:26). This is a ministry of life and healing -- a ministry that is redemptive in its scope as it speaks to ameliorating the effects of the Fall and the curses therein. The pseudointellectuals of our time ignore the relationship of the Fall to suffering, sickness, and death. They have uncovered God's ordinary agencies such as bacteria, genes, cholesterol, and the like; but the authors of the Bible do not hesitate to ascribe to God the ultimate cause as well as show its relationship to sin (Ex 4:11, Lev 26:16, Deut 28:21, Ps 107:17, 2 Sam 12:15, 2 Chron 26:20, Ps 103:3, I Cor 11:30). Modern man operates on the assumption that man is at least neutral morally, if not good. Implied is the notion that man does not deserve his suffering. But this assumption also strips suffering of its meaning and strips the cross of its victory.

At this point the issue of suffering needs to be addressed. The twin perspective of God as healer and afflicter, whether through the Devil (Job) or directly, is shown when Job speaks to the Almighty: "For He wounds, but He binds up; He smites but His hands heal" (5:18). However, this very same book shows that there is not an inevitable connection between individual sickness and personal wrongdoing. It is not that Job was sinless but that there was not a causal link between his illness and his sin. Jesus corroborates this in John 9:3 as does James in 5:14-16. [James says, "if."]

Our culture is preoccupied with suffering and death. Or, rather, it is preoccupied with the denial of it. Numerous institutions have sprouted to neatly hide it all -- nursing homes, hospitals, hospices, funeral homes. All are unobtrusive, efficient, tidy. Man lives for the moment, the weekend. You only go around once ... go for it ... and the man of the hour, the man appointed to do something, to help, is the physician. It does not matter that the best epidemiologic studies have shown only a marginally beneficial effect of medicine on longevity and health. Many have previously addressed this. For false religion, whether secular or theistic, the final criteria is to help -- thoroughly utilitarian. But for Christianity the final criteria is Truth. In the words of Schmemann, "The purpose of Christianity is not to help people by reconciling them with death, but to reveal the Truth about life and death, in order that people might be saved by this Truth."

An Orthodox Christian view of life which embraces a vision of the sacramentality of life and therefore of our suffering and death is paramount.

Sacrament is passage, transformation; not from the natural to the supernatural but from the old to the new. It is passage from the Kingdom of Man and death into the Kingdom of God and life, the world to come, into the very reality of this world and its life as redeemed and restored by Christ. And healing is a "sacrament" because its purpose or end is not health as such, the restoration of physical health, but the entrance of man into the life of the Kingdom, into the "joy and peace" of the Holy Spirit. In Christ everything in this world, and this means health and disease, joy and suffering, has become an ascension to and entrance into this new life, its expectation and anticipation.

In this world suffering and disease are indeed "normal," but their normalcy is abnormal. They reveal the ultimate and permanent defeat of man and of life, a defeat which no partial victories of medicine, however wonderful and truly miraculous, can ultimately overcome. But in Christ suffering is not "removed," it is transformed into victory. The defeat itself becomes a victory, a way, an entrance into the Kingdom, and this is the only true healing. Here is a man suffering on his bed of pain and the Church comes to him to perform the sacrament of healing. For this man as for every man in the whole world, suffering can be defeat, the way of complete surrender to darkness, despair, alienation and solitude. It can be dying in the very real sense of the word. And yet it can also be the ultimate victory of man and of life in him. The Church does not come to restore "health" in this man, simply to replace medicine when medicine has exhausted its possibilities. The Church comes to take this man into the Love, Light and Life of Christ. It comes not merely to "comfort" him in his sufferings. A martyr is one who beholds "the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). A martyr is one for whom God is not another -- and the last -- chance to stop the awful pain; God is his very life, and thus everything in his life comes to God, and ascends to the fullness of Love.

Suffering remains in this world no matter how far from it we run. Yet Christ says, "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Through His own suffering, not only has all suffering acquired a meaning but it has been given the power to become itself the sign, the sacrament, the proclamation, the "coming" of that victory, the defeat of man, his very dying has become a way of Life.

The prescriptions for healing that God laid out in the Old Testament as well as the New affirm these truths. In Leviticus 13 and 14 the priest was appointed by God to diagnose and treat certain infectious diseases. It is beyond our scope to fully develop the significance of this legislation but a few points are in order.

Disease, like death, is an abhorrence to God, an abnormality, a product of the Fall, a reminder of our falleness. The law did not make an artificial distinction between physical well-being and spiritual vitality, exalting one at the expense of the other. It required that the true Israelite should be an integrated person whose spirituality involves all areas of his life. The real message of the legislation is that any type of uncleaness separates the believer from God. The leper would be cut off from spiritual fellowship with the covenant people and in a real sense would be without hope and without God in the world. Cure meant restoration to fellowship with his family and the whole community. Blood was shed as a part of the purifying ritual. Similarly, the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross reconciles man to God and makes it possible for the sinner to join the household of faith.

In James 5:14-16 the elder oversees the health problem. In both cases the primary function of the Church, as represented by the priest and the elder, is to place the disease in its proper light, i.e., its ultimate and/or proximate relation to sin, the protection of the community because of the infectious nature of disease/sin, the restoration of the covenant child to the community life and worship and fellowship with God. The spirit of the Old remains though the letter has passed away as the Old Covenants have been consummated in the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. The grace ineffable that is spurned today is that, in Christ Jesus, the ill have immediate recourse; immediate forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation; immediate fellowship with the community and God. Here is the significance of the Sacrament of Healing. We pass from fallenness to exaltation; from defeat to victory; from disease and suffering to health and joy; from alienation to restoration. The sacrament that the Church performs

merely encapsulates ceremonially the nature of the physician's practice as he ministers health to his patient.

A Definition of Health: the Objective of Medicine

At the most basic level is God's command to us to do all that we do to His glory (I Cor. 10:31). What does it mean to glorify God? In the Hebrew "glory" means "weight." We can't add weight to God since all that exists is His. Rather, it means to bring to bear the full weight of God's relationship to all things. Therefore, if I am to practice medicine to the glory of God I must do more than say that this is the case, for Christianity is not magic. Something does not glorify God because I say it does, regardless of my motivations. Rather, when I practice medicine in such a way that I apply biblical principles, that is, His Word, to fully bear on it, then I glorify God. We must therefore develop a Christian view of health.

Thus health is a wholistic concern. Jesus exemplified this and so does the language of Scripture. The Greek word translated "salvation" and that translated "healing" in many of Jesus' miracles is from the same root word "sozein." The truly saved man was saved inside and out. Of the ten lepers that were healed, only the one that came back and gave thanks to God is said to be saved or healed. He was made whole. This wholeness is James' concern in his epistle 1:4.

As Jesus makes clear when He healed the paralytic brought down through the roof, true health is much more than the absence of disease. It begins internally with forgiveness of sins and a restored fellowship with God. It has to begin that way because disease and death entered the world when sin destroyed that fellowship. Christ's words corroborate the Old Testament. He alone had the power to forgive sin and restore the sinner.

In addition to the verb sozein noted above, the Bible uses therapeusein and iasthai as words for "heal." The former is used freely of Jesus' healing miracles. It is applied to healing diseases. Its root meaning is of "service," often of "worship" of God (Acts 17:25). The latter is also a general word for "heal" but unlike the former it is also used metaphorically of spiritual regeneration or restoration.

Since health has to do with the totality of creation -- with the Creator himself -- health cannot be equated merely with wellness or the absence of disease. If health in this wholesome, God-centered sense is our ultimate objetive, then, by definition, we are declaring our "unhealth." So what does it mean for one to be healed of, say, a duodenal ulcer, depression, a broken marriage, a resolutely nursed grievance or a hurtful childhood memory?

Perhaps it would be helpful if we did not speak of healing so much as a cure. This would be appropriate within the primarily physical framework of much of our work. Indeed, today's healing is not aimed at the total man but cure of the disease. To announce the cure of a peptic ulcer would mean a restoration to function whereas to announce a healing would imply something more far-reaching -- a restoration to purposeful living. We might say that the individual's relationship to God has been revived. He now stands in a position to bring glory to God, having discovered a new zest for living as a responsible member of his parish, community, family, etc.

The Scriptures primarily address issues of health over and above cure. One might say what does it profit a man to have his cure and lose his soul? Christianity does not idolize life or comfort. Indeed, the way of love, of self-sacrifice, is to lay down one's life as our Lord did. the Christian does not sacrifice Truth for life. He does not steal or lie or do "everything" to save it. He does not bankrupt his family or pilfer public funds to maintain life at any cost. The Christian worships the living God and nothing else.

Christ, God incarnate, is the Great Physician. His healing ministry was part and parcel of His overall mission to God's needy world. Jesus came to reveal the Father through His words and His works. The comprehensiveness of Jesus' ministry is implied in His name. Jesus (Greek) or Joshua means deliverance from and to.

Jesus did not use the spells, incantations, conjurations, hypnosis, casting people into the deep sleep of "incubation," miracles of punishment, etc., that the Greek physicians of His day used. His healings were in the open and beautiful in their simplicity. Indeed, it is important to note the public nature of Jesus' healing. Almost all were done in full view of the community. This demanded a verdict from both the healed as well as the onlookers (Jn 20:31,31). The patient is restored to the community. the all-embracing nature of His healing of whole crowds, without comment many times on the faith of the healed, convinces that His power over disease, and not individual faith, is the arbiter of recovery. This conceptualization is not to denigrate the importance of faith in the equation (Mk 5:34, Matt. 13:58).

Perhaps at this point it is worth noting that God -- the Trinity -- is a community. He is the one and the many. Man separated from God is separated from men and even divided in himself. He is man in isolation, alienation and death. True health begins in restoration to communion with God which manifests itself concretely in restoration to communion with the new humanity, the body of Christ.

Although Jesus' miracles were motivated by love and compassion we also have the dawning of a new age -- the establishment of the Kingdom of God. His ministry was eschatological. He preached the Kingdom of God neither solely as a present reality nor exclusively as a future event. This is true of salvation/health in their broad dimensions. The Lord's casting out of demons predicts the Adversary's final defeat. His raising from the dead is a foretaste of the conquest of death. His healings anticipate the time when there shall be neither "mourning nor crying nor pain anymore" (Rev. 21:4). As a witness to this coming Kingdom, health and cures have dramatically improved in those nations where the Gospel has taken hold. The power of Jesus to restore true health has been entrusted to the Church, the body of Christ. True health involves the wellness of the total man and begins with repentance and restoration to fellowship with God.

Health and secularism

The unbeliever certainly understands health as a broad concept. The health industry is permeating every sphere of life and is the fastest growing industry despite the recession according to the Wall Street Journal. What are some of the forces propelling this?

Secularism is a worldview drawn from things "under the sun," to use Solomon's description. It interprets the temporal in light of the temporal rather than in light of the eternal and leads to pessimism and despair. Life becomes a treadmill of meaningless cycles. This interpretation is the form of today's Kingdom of Satan. As a counterfeit kingdom it corresponds to the Kingdom of God at every point. But the idolatrous nature of secularism, unlike its forerunners is insipid because the idols are not obvious to the naked eye.

The State takes on divine proportions in a world without God and the fallen image-bearers of God, cut off from any meaningful relationship with their Creator, will naturally look to the next "best" alternative for the solutions to their ills. The State is the only real option, and politics is the method of conjuring solutions from this many-tentacled deity. The State is the primary idol of power; our Father.

But there are other deities in secularism. An institution surrounding one of those deities is the "Church of Modern Medicine." This deity, the last enemy, is Death. We have already noted the culture's obsession with death. This fear of death catapults it into an idol and the physician is the man appointed to intercede on behalf of the patient. It is this fear of death that fuels the Church of Modern Medicine and the continuous expansion of the "health" industry. The institution of modern medicine and its priest, the physician, could not exist apart from the faith that modern man places in it. This is evident in that few of the vast number of procedures performed and pills prescribed have ever been conclusively proven to be of benefit to health. If you ask, "Why?" enough times in medicine you eventually come to the Chasm of Faith.

As the culture moves further away from its Christian

heritage, medicine as a ministry of life and health is being transformed into a ministry of death and exploitation. Modern medicine's definition of health is increasingly one that involves the complete disappearance of discomfort, suffering, pain, sacrifice. Having discredited the old God -- the God of Life -- as a cause of all our ills, modern medicine offers us a new God that can counteract all the pesky forms of life that inhabit our "quality of life," such as bacteria, viruses, genes, inconvenient fetuses, deformed or retarded children and old people.

Since the ultimate end of secularism is to exalt man, the modern physician sits on the pedestal of God and heals in his own name. He does not give due glory to God. To legitimize and further this new motif a new myth had to develop. On the surface, a myth is the illusion of an age or a culture whereby life and its origins are interpreted. As such the myth has an axiomatic truth to the age and is its criterion for judging and assessing reality.

But much more is involved in the concept of myth. A myth is the attempt of a culture to overcome history, to negate the forces and ravages of time and to make the universe amenable and subject to man. Myth reveals a hatred of history. History shows movement in terms of forces beyond man and in judgment over man; is inescapably ethical, shows a continuing conflict between good and evil and clearly shows man to be the actor not the playwright and director. And this subjugation man hates. To fill a role he never wrote, to enter on stage at a time not of his choosing, this, man resents. The purpose man sets for himself in his myths is to end history, to make man the absolute governor by decreeing an end to the movement that is history. Where his myths acknowledge man's lot in history, man ascribes his sorry role, not to his depravity and sin, but to the jealousy of the gods. The goal of the myth more clearly enunciated in time, has become the destruction of history and the enthronement of man as the governor of the universe.

The means used by man to accomplish the goal of his myth is magic. The purpose of magic is the total control of man over man, nature and the supernatural. Whatever the form magic takes, this is its goal. Under the influence of Christianity, science escaped from magic. The purpose of science and medicine ceased gradually to be an attempt to play God and became rather the exercise of dominion over the earth under God. Redeemed man is God's vicegerent over the earth, and science is one of man's tools in establishing and furthering that dominion. For science to overstep that role is to forsake science and magic. The purposes of modern science are increasingly those of magic, the exercise of total control. Magic has thus again triumphed, and modern science is popular precisely because man today, wedded again to the world of myth, demands magic to overcome history, to eliminate the ethical struggle and to place man beyond good and evil, beyond judgment ... and death. On the whole, modern science has taken readily to this new role, and scientists and physicians are enjoying their new role as magicians to modern man.

Science thus has become magic, preoccupied as it is with the mystique of technique, ritual, precise formulations and a language of its own and is governed by myth. Indeed, what modern medicine holds increasingly more sacred are not human lives but mechanical processes and interventionist technological wizardry. This unhappy situation is made more difficult by the fact that the Church, frequently predisposed to accept contemporary mythologies, is today a particularly devout exponent of and adherent to the myth of the age, pockets of resistance from the remnant not withstanding.

Within the context of this paradigm shift another principle has been imposed, the idea of progress. To this presupposition, Charles Darwin gave substance in his classical formulation of that myth which summed all the basic presuppositions of the modern spirit, the doctrine of evolution. Essential to this concept of progress was its anti-theological nature: it was a revolt from the sovereign and all sufficient God who by His predestinating will and eternal counsel brought all things to pass. The predestinating will of God is replaced by the predestinating will of nature. And in the next to the last paragraph of the Origin of Species, Darwin informs us that " ... as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend toward progress toward

perfection." This formulation, then, is the 'scientific' version of Romans 8:28, "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." Thus, evolution must have all the total scope of God's eternal decree with none of His existence, controls and requirements! Better a world without meaning than a world without God.

This belief, of course, is a recrudescence of the ancient concept of all life as a chain of being ultimately linked to God dynamically, in a scientific formulation. But the Kingdom of Satan has matured. The present formulation exposes man as the pinnacle -- as God. Nature is god and as nature perfects man, man, the scientist, harnesses nature to conquer disease, death, man, finally even triumphing over nature itself only to spend eternity exploring space. The scientist becomes nature's tool to speed the process of man's perfected state. And the State is the essential means by which scientific man speeds along this process.

Church and state are distinct insitutions when Christianity is strong. When this is not the case, the two tend to merge. In cultures where unbelief is high and statism is strong the Church of Modern Medicine is merged with the State -- "socialized medicine" or "national health care." It is the State's work of benevolence -- the Savior it provides its people. (Process and technology are the Holy Spirit, the instrument that mediates this salvation in our lives.) The State's current involvement in medicine cannot be dealt with here. However, suffice it to say that the State's politics of control, indoctrination, and conditioning could not occur without the sanction of modern medicine.

Man's calling is to exercise dominion under God over nature, to rule it, develop it, and exploit it under God and to His glory. Only regenerate man in Jesus Christ can do this. Fallen man is in captivity to his own nature and to the forces around him. Where men are not ruled by God they are ruled by tyrants. And the rise of evolutionary thinking has produced a world-wide rise of totalitarianism. Since man is no longer seen as a creation by God, he is becoming a creature of the total state, and the total state is determined to remake man in its own image. As a result man is now the primary experimental animal. People are alarmed at the use of animals in scientific experimentation. But the grim reality is that the primary experimental animal is man. Not only the mental health experts, but virtually every agency of civil government is today engaged in trying to remake man. When man, as in evolutionary thinking, is a product of nature, his being is determined by nature, and his psychology is passive, conditioned, a reflex action rather than a governing action.

Another way in which evolutionary thinking has altered the mind of man is with respect to responsibility. Whereas in Scripture the predestinating activity of God establishes liberty and responsibility, evolution strips man of it. His environment made him. Man is not a sinner but a victim. The means, therefore, of changing man is not regeneration, not moral responsibility and renewal, but changing his environment, which requires a Pavlovian world. Thus, education ceases to be education; it becomes brainwashing and conditioning. Responsibility disappears. All becomes other's fault: father, mother, poverty, riches, little discipline, much discipline, etc.

This approach is consistent with the quality of life ethic. The doctor's responsibility becomes the removal of the circumstance that hampers the quality of one's life or that engender ill feelings. The assumption is that circumstances determine feelings and that feelings are the final criteria of truth and success. But, biblically, such is not the case. Feelings are our habituated responses to circumstances and are not the final criteria of truth or success. Our feelings about anything are ultimately the product of deeply ingrained beliefs. For this reason God does not call us to change our feelings but our thinking. He calls us to the renewing of our minds and obedience. As these changes take place the appropriate feelings will follow. For example, it is not a patient's small breasts that are making her feel bad about herself. Rather, it is her deepest convictions, the worldview by which she interprets the significance of her small breasts that produces her feelings.

Modern man assumes that he is basically good and consequently should not feel bad about himself. The Bible teaches something different. It teaches that man is a sinner living in rebellion to God and that evil is a

product of sinful man's sinful choices. Jesus told the rich young man that no one but God is good. In Genesis 6:5, God tells us that every thought and inclination of man's heart is only evil all the time. Paul tells us in Romans 3:10 - 18 that no one seeks God, no one is good, no one is righteous. In other words modern man should feel bad about himself. He is living in rebellion to God. He has estranged himself from God, the very source of his life, identity and significance. He has shaken his fist at God and lives to do his own thing. In its approach to the patient modern medicine promotes blameshifting and irresponsibility. Modern man then wonders why in the midst of unprecedented material wealth and liberty he feels so bad about himself.

In pursuing this blameshifting course of medical practrice, that is, the assumption that feelings are caused by circumstances, in addition to the broader implications of disengaging the Fall from its relationship to diesease and death, the patient is completely stripped of any hope for a cure. The patient may be made to feel better for a while but, unfortunately, feelings change. Nothing substantive changes in augmenting breasts under these circumstances. And the patient is made dependent upon her doctor who ostensibly is the source of her well-being.

One thing is sure, when man makes an end (health) something that is the fruit of Godly living it becomes a destructive idol. Having rejected God's standards man is rapidly replacing a once objective and Christian concept of health with a destructive, materialistic one that cannot explain suffering and therefore give hope in the midst of it. Therefore, in attempting to eradicate suffering it is man that is being eradicated. Utopias cannot stand imperfection.

Conclusions

So, what does it mean to be a Christian doctor in light of the foregoing? First, it means to be a Christian. It means that one is part of a transformed humanity whose reference point is the living God. It means revealing all things in their relationship to God, understanding all things in light of God's word, offering all things up to God and exercising dominion in His name. It means striving to please God in every sphere of life including our vocation which is our calling, our ministry. It means to go forth as soldiers and servants of a King with a vision for His Kingdom fully aware of the spiritual war and equipped with spiritual weapons: the Word and Spirit of God, faith, prayer, righteousness. It means to serve God by serving and loving your fellowman.

The Orthodox Christian physician does not function outside the context of his community as an independent agent. His work is his community's expression of Christ's love for the world. Similarly, the patient is reminded of his responsibility to others as appropriate. Indeed, the physician involves the community (his and his patient's) in the healing process; whether it be family, friends, counselors, priest, etc. Having been ordained to ministry through baptism, he functions as a priest pointing people, through the totality of his life and love, to Christ, yet providing aid even to those who may refuse Christ.

In this liturgical/sacramental approach to the ill the patient is brought from the loneliness and alienation that disease produces into victory, health and being as communion. We must serve our fellow man by listening to his complaints and ailments. We must serve by comforting him, teaching him about his illness, diagnosis, prognosis and treatments; but most importantly we serve by reminding him that there is no comfort outside of Christ. We advise and counsel and rebuke on occasion. We sometimes use drugs or other remedies, if they may benefit; but we use nothing without open thankfulness to God, asking for His blessing in its use. We seek daily to see God's hand in this world. We recognize that to ignore God's hand in the world is to deny Him. We treat the patient as fallen, a sinner in need of redemption far more than he needs our medicine. We remember that the patient has responsibility for himself before God, that we cannot force others to pay for his care and nor can he. We do all this and more in humility for we are not sustained by medicine but by God. God brings disease and health ultimately for His purposes. We are His agents. When by our silence we give the impression that we are the source of health we have acted arrogantly. In humility, we properly amass data, inquire, research, reevaluate ourselves that we may constantly be learning and

improving ourselves for the sake of our patients. Above all, the love of Christ should overflow from us to our patients.

Endnotes

1. As prophet, man interprets all things in light of God's Word. As priest, he offers all things up to God. As king, he rules in God's stead as his vicegerent. (The unbeliever functions similarly in that he interprets all things in light of himself, offers up and does all things for himself and rules in his own name.)

2. Sacrament (mysterion) in Orthodox and early Church thinking is passage, transfiguration, transformation, restoration. This is the mystery now revealed by the Church. The differences between the western and eastern concepts of "sacrament" are radical and beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that in Orthodoxy the number of sacraments has no dogmatic significance. The whole Christian life is seen as a unity, as a single mystery or one great sacrament. Orthodoxy speaks of the sacramentality of life; of its transfigurement into the Kingdom of Heaven, the old to the new by the people of God -- the new creations. The many major and minor blessings of the Church from baptism to a blessing for a farmer's tractor are simply actions revealing the entity blessed in its relationship to God; referring the person or thing to God; restoring all creation to union and communion with God; covenantally binding the person or thing to God the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit.

3. An example of this is the language and psychology of feelings "high" vs. "low" self esteem that has also infected "Christian" counseling. These are unbiblical categories and set up false dilemmas. The Bible asks us to judge ourselves rightly. This judgment is an objective act because it is based on objective criteria. One's feelings may or may not be in accord with the objective reality. Feelings are our habituated responses to circumstances and are the product of our deepest convictions which is why God calls us to a renewed mind and obedience. The appropriate feelings will follow. Additionally, the unbeliever, as a rebel against God, has no basis to feel good about himself. The believers joy rests in the objective fact of what God has done for him, who he is in Christ and other objective facts.

4. As I explain later, Christ's miracles had eschatological significance and are an icon of the Kingdom of Heaven.

5. The physician in all cultures has always been associated with the religious institutions of his day. Indeed, he has functioned as priest. This was true of Byzantine times as well. The hospital was mainly an institution of the Church and many, if not most, physicians were ordained as deacons or presbyters. The physician today is also a priest of modern paganism because medicine is a redemptive, a salvific activity. The lack of the traditional gods is what dupes modern man. Secularism's reference point is man, thus man is God.

6. One cannot imagine the upturn in health that repentance, faith and a renewed mind would produce simply in the change of feelings that would ensue. Modern man lives off a rich Christian inheritance and does not appreciate the benefits accrued in quantity and quality of life this has produced. In his landmark book, The Health of Nations, Dr. Leonard Sagan shows that the most important factor in health is a positive life and worldview, one that produces knowledge. Only where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has gone has this occurred.

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