

THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN SHAPING MEDICAL PRACTICE

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Religion, ethics and medicine are recognized to be related since antiquity. This article discusses the ethical aspect of medicine and focuses on the moral qualities of a doctor in the face of modern challenges. The main focus is on returning to traditional values based on Christian morality. The Bible changed the relationship between humanity and the Divine, when a man is viewed as an image of the Creator and the need for divine intervention in healing is emphasized. Unlike ancient rationalism, Christian faith is aware of the cognition limits and understands the importance of the spiritual aspect of health. The article analyzes how the Hippocratic oath has changed under the influence of Christian values. The importance of cooperation between doctors and priests who healed patients is considered, and the need for compassion in medical practice is emphasized. The synthesis of faith and medical science makes us understand that healing involves achieving both physical and mental, as well as spiritual well-being.

Keywords: religion, ethics, medicine, Christian morality, compassion, traditional values, Divine intervention, Hippocratic oath, spiritual health, collaboration between doctors and priests, eternal life

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РОЛЬ ХРИСТИАНСКОЙ ЭТИКИ В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ МЕДИЦИНСКОЙ ПРАКТИКИ

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Связь между религией, этикой и медициной признана с древних времен. В данной статье обсуждается этический аспект медицины, акцентируется внимание на нравственных качествах врача в условиях современных вызовов. Основное внимание уделяется возвращению к традиционным ценностям, основанным на христианской морали. Библейское послание изменило понимание отношения между человеком и Богом, рассматривая человека как образ Творца и подчеркивая необходимость божественного вмешательства в исцеление. В отличие от античного рационализма, христианская вера предполагает осознание границ познания и понимание важности духовного аспекта здоровья. В статье анализируются изменения, которые претерпел текст клятвы Гиппократова под влиянием христианских ценностей. Рассматривается важность сотрудничества врачей и священников в деле исцеления пациентов, подчеркивается необходимость сострадания в медицинской практике. Синтез веры и медицинской науки подвигает к осознанию того факта, что исцеление предполагает достижение как физического и душевного, так и духовного благополучия.

Ключевые слова: религия, этика, медицина, христианская мораль, милосердие, традиционные ценности, Божественное вмешательство, клятва Гиппократова, духовное здоровье, сотрудничество врачей и священников, вечная жизнь

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The connection between religion, ethics and medicine has existed and been recognized since ancient times. Mercy, one of the most important Christian virtues, is largely manifested and implemented in the field of healing. In this regard, the ethical state of a doctor is one of the most important issues in modern Russian medicine. A modern man faces many challenges which are manifested through man-made, social and bioethical risks and threats. It is possible to respond to these challenges based on traditional Christian moral values. That is why it is especially important to turn to the spiritual heritage these days.

The Biblical message radically changed understanding of the reality and a man: "the word of Christ contained in the New Testament ... turned over all the concepts and problems posed by philosophy in the past, determining their formulation in the future" [1]. First of all, a new understanding of the "divine" and "transcendent" has emerged. Now, God cannot be compared with anything created. And if an ancient Greek thought was cosmocentric and understood a man as a kind of microcosm repeating all the laws of the greater cosmos and never going

beyond the laws of the outer space, in the Bible a man appears as an image and likeness of God the Creator and, therefore, becomes higher than any creation, higher than nature, higher than the cosmos. Man's ability to accept the will of God makes him superior to the created world. For the ancient Greek, the law is the law of the cosmos, which is the same for both gods and people, whereas in the Bible, virtue means to follow God's commandments, which God himself reveals to man directly. Now the moral law is given from above, and its essence is the coincidence of the will of man with the will of God. If virtue means to follow the will of God, then sin means to ignore that will, rebel against it, and strive to act according to one's own mind. By committing a sin, a person perhaps seeks to take the place of God without realizing it. With Adam, sin entered a man and brought diseases, suffering and death. The ancient Greek mind saw that a man can independently get rid of the consequences of sin, for example, through self-knowledge and moral improvement. The Christian world view does not abolish these great human abilities, but, at the same time, asserts that

a person can be freed from the consequences of sin only with God's help, when God himself comes to meet a person through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Only by patiently accepting his cross and becoming like Christ, a person can overcome the consequences of sin such as illness, suffering, and death.

According to the Christian anthropology, a man is understood not as a contradictory unity of soul and body, but as a tri-partite unity of body, soul and spirit. The spiritual hypostasis is understood as the communion of the soul with God, as a godlike principle in the human soul, determining his ability to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, beauty from ugliness, that is, saving the soul from destructive elements. To live in the spirit means to live by "the main noble forces and aspirations" [2]. Humility becomes the highest virtue of Christianity, "for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35) [3]. The great example of true humility and love is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

A Christian does not rely on transmigration of the soul after death, as many ancients did, he believes in resurrection and union of the soul with the body after the Last Judgment, because, according to the Christian view, a full-fledged person is the unity of soul and body.

Returning to the ancient Greek medical ethics, which found its expression in the Hippocratic oath, we cannot help noticing its connection with religion. Doctors of antiquity understood the limitations of rational knowledge differently. It is known that in severe cases, when rational medicine was powerless, patients turned to the sanctuary of the Asclepius the God.

The need to rely on God the Creator in all cases of medical practice was intensified during the Christian era. A Christianized medieval version of the Hippocratic Oath appeared. It sounded as follows: "From the Hippocratic oath, how suitable is it for a Christian. Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever and ever; I am not lying. I will not tarnish the study of the medical art. Nor shall any man's entreaty prevail upon me to administer poison to anyone; neither will I counsel any man to do so. Moreover, I will give no sort of medicine to any pregnant woman, with a view to destroy the child. I will teach this art to those who need it, without claims and without a contract. I use treatment to help the suffering according to my abilities and my understanding. I will maintain my life and my art in purity and holiness. Whatsoever house I may enter, my visit shall be for the convenience and advantage of the patient; and I will willingly refrain from doing any injury or wrong from falsehood, and from acts of an amorous nature, whatever may be the rank of those who it may be my duty to cure, whether mistress or servant, bond or free. Whatever, in the course of my practice, I may see or hear (even when not invited), whatever I may happen to obtain knowledge of, if it be not proper to repeat it, I will keep sacred and secret within my own breast. If I faithfully observe this oath, may I thrive and prosper in my fortune and profession, and live in the estimation of posterity; or on breach thereof, may the reverse be my fate!" [4].

We see that in the Hippocratic oath much was in tune with the ideas of the Christian doctor. It included the willingness to teach those in need to master the medical art, inadmissibility of using lethal means and performing abortions, a promise to lead a virtuous life, abstinence from unethical behavior towards patients, and a promise not to disclose what they saw and heard during treatment. According to the French philosopher and theologian Jean-Claude Larchet, the distinctive feature of a Christian doctor is "the conviction that they can achieve

nothing if acting independently and relying on their art alone". Therefore, "before making a diagnosis, they pray to God for guidance and before prescribing treatment, they ask the Lord that it be appropriate and effective" [5].

Christians excluded the part of the Hippocratic oath devoted to loyalty to the mentor and medical community, which most likely show that Christian doctors distrust pagan associations. "Put not your trust in princes, in mortal man, who cannot save" (Psalm 145:3) [3]. But the trust in God the Father and Christ, God the Son, has been noticeably strengthened.

In the light of a holistic approach to man as a unity of body, soul and spirit, a distinction has emerged between bodily, mental and spiritual diseases. Bodily diseases are associated with a violation of the normal functioning of organs and body systems, but even their real causes may be hidden in the spiritual life of a person. Bodily illnesses can be sent as a kind of admonition to a person from God. It is very important for the patient to understand what part of his life contradicts the Divine commandments, what kind of mental disharmony causes the body to suffer. In the book of Jesus, the son of Sirach, it is said: "Honor the physician with the honor due him, according to your need of him, for the Lord created him; for healing comes from the Most High...The Lord created medicines from the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them... And he gave skill to men that he might be glorified in his marvelous works. By them he heals and takes away pain...My son, when you are sick do not be negligent, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you... Give up your faults and direct your hands aright, and cleanse your heart from all sin...And give the physician his place, for the Lord created him; let him not leave you, for there is need of him..." (Sirach 38: 1–14) [3].

It is important to note that although the physicality of man makes it related to the animal world by composition, nevertheless, man has a high vocation to stand above the whole world, above nature. Since man, having fallen into sin, infected the whole world, it is through man, through his purification, that the environment is cleansed. Christ was the first person who cleansed the material composition of the human body and indeed the entire material composition of the universe from corruption and death.

If bodily diseases are associated with disharmony of the body, mental illnesses are reflected in a change in the human psyche. In the New Testament, Christ speaks of the high status of the soul: "Be not afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28) [3]. The soul is a symbol of life, God is its source. The soul needs a body, and the body needs a soul. The soul uses the brain, but if the brain is sick, the soul cannot reason sensibly. Illness shows a person the power of death over him, and this is already a religious problem related to the fall of man, the consequences of which are illness and death.

If the soul is "God's breath", as St. Gregory the Theologian claimed, the spirit is fullness of divine grace, "a particle of Divinity" [6]. A person has a healthy spirit when he lives in a Christian way, in accordance with the commandments given by God. Accordingly, a damaged sick spirit lives a sinful life, violating the commandments. That is why the concept of "healing" is more often used in Christian literature, since, escaping from sin, a person is not just "treated". He restores himself as a complete image.

A doctor is needed to treat physical and mental illnesses. And the priest provides assistance in spiritual healing and preparation for eternal life. In the New Testament, there is a canonical justification for the priest to perform the sacrament of unction: "If any of you is sick, let him call the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the

Lord” (James 5:14) [3]. Here, the union of a priest and a doctor is very important in accordance with such principles of bioethics as the principle of patient autonomy, principle of benevolence, principle of non-harm and principle of justice. Both the doctor and the priest, each in his own way, contribute to the healing of a sick person. The priest helps a person to find inner peace and spiritual strength both for the continuation of earthly life and for the transition to eternity. The participation of the priesthood in helping people under post-traumatic conditions and in the rehabilitation of addicts, along with doctors and psychologists, is an important component of the manifestation of spiritual care. According to the New Testament, helping the sick was an important part of the apostles’ ministry: “Heal the sick... cleanse the lepers...” (Matthew 10:8) [3]. As for terminal patients, priests help them overcome the fear of death. They confess, receive communion and administer unction to hospice patients, while doctors alleviate their physical suffering.

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, a doctor of secular education, draws attention to the fact that preparation of

terminal patients for death must be carried out throughout the development of their disease, but, he urges, “prepare the dying not for death, but for eternal life” [7]. Moreover, Metropolitan Anthony speaks of a “willingness to let a person die,” meaning that a doctor’s attitude towards a patient cannot be simply “scientific,” it must include compassion and pity. And this implies, in some cases, giving a person the opportunity to die peacefully, no matter how paradoxical it may sound. The task of a doctor, as Metropolitan Anthony precisely formulated it, is to “protect life.” “God created both medicine and a doctor, and sometimes our healing is in his hand.” St. Theophan the Recluse says that “there is no sin to turn to medicines, for the healer, and the medicines, and the recipes belong to God... As God has given these means to us, we should use them. God was pleased to surround us with supernatural means apart from natural ones. Access to these sources is available to everyone. Faith is the key. When God wants to heal this way, He absorbs the power of faith and takes it where He is pleased to give healing” [8].

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