THE DOCTOR HIMSELF

In the introduction to his excellent book, "The Doctor, His Patient And the Illness," Dr. Michael Ballint wrote, "For a number of years research seminars have been organized at the Tavistock Clinic to study the psychological implications in general medical practice. The first topic chosen for discussion at one of these seminars happened to be the drugs usually prescribed by practitioners. The discussion quickly revealed—certainly not for the first time in the history of Medicine—that by far the most frequently used drug in general practice was the doctor himself, i.e. that it was not only the bottle of medicine or the box of pills that mattered; but the way the doctor gave them to his patient—in fact the whole atmosphere in which the drug was given and taken." Dr. Ballint goes on throughout the rest of his book, illustrating in a most unique and interesting way, the fact that the doctor himself is tremendously important insofar as the treatment of all manner of illness is concerned. In this regard, one of the most profound things which the physician can do is to indicate to his patient that he has faith in God. This does not of course, indicate that the doctor has any lack of faith in his own abilities, but he is simply making the patient aware of the fact that both patient and doctor are in God's hands and it is important to make this matter clear at the outset of any professional relationship medically. It may be that some physicians would be inclined to feel that the patient would wonder whether or not the doctor was questioning his own ability if he were to suggest prayer or turning a matter over to God for His guidance and direction.

Dr. Paul Tournier in his "A Doctor's Case Book In The Light Of The Bible," points out the fact that all patients have fear of going into the hospital and basically a fear that they may not come out of the experience alive. Certainly, the patient demonstrates confidence in his physician and in his surgeon in placing his life veritably in the physician's hands. However, it is gratifying to the patient to know the doctor in whom he is having such great faith, has faith not only in his own ability but in the guidance and direction of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

If Medicine possessed all of the answers to all of the complex problems of modern man, it might be different. What is one to do when he finds that the carcinoma which he is about to attack surgically, has spread beyond the confines of the operation? It used to be that the surgeon would have the patient "until the bitter end" no matter what complications or problems might ensue from the time of the operation onward. The surgeon in times past has always assured his patient that he would be with him no matter what occurred. In recent times—with the advent of the radiotherapist and the oncologist, the surgeon or the general practitioner often finds that the patient is taken over by the specialist in these areas. In these cases, the rapport which has been established between the family practitioner and the patient—or the surgeon and the patient—is lost and a new physician is called upon to take over during the terminal phases of the illness. In England, the family practitioner in his office establishes his rapport—often a Christian rapport—with the patient. However, the family practitioner does not as a general rule, have any contact with the hospitals in that country. So the patient is referred to the specialist who may not be one of the patient's personal choice, or anyone that he knows or has had any previous contact with. This kind of situation is gradually developing in Medicine on the western side of the Atlantic.
What Christian Medical Foundation of Canada is advocating is a more personal, humane, godly, Christ-centered medical practice and surgical practice which places the doctor and his patient in that kind of relationship which Dr. Ballint describes. It might be said that the modern doctor does not realize that one of the most potent medicines which he prescribes for his patient is he, himself. His words of assurance, his sense of competence, his interest and his empathy, have tended to be overlooked with our great flirtation with science and gadgetry. Christian Medical Foundation of Canada is attempting to interest Canadian physicians and nurses in the tremendous importance of the patient/doctor relationship, and beyond that, the relationship of patient and doctor toward the Lord Jesus Christ. This has been the tradition of Canadian Medicine since before the days of William Osler. Osler, who was born in Ontario, was the son of a minister—and the majority of his writings lead one to believe that his own personal relationship with God was deep; and certainly his relationship with the patient was always personal and caring. This great tradition needs to be rediscovered in Canadian Medicine in 1985 and beyond.

Doubtless this is what Jesus meant when He stated, "Physician, heal thyself." How can we heal our fellowman if we do not know how to be whole ourselves? It is this doctor’s point of view, that man is never whole and therefore never well, until he comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Beyond that, it could well be true that a Christian has never begun to complete his Christianity and his relationship toward God and Jesus until He is filled with the Holy Spirit. When one reads the New Testament with this in view, he sees that there is a dimension of the Holy Spirit which has been lost in the Church in just the same way as the doctor/patient relationship has been lost. The plea then for today is not only, "Physician heal thyself," but "Physician know thyself" and begin to know and appreciate God through Jesus Christ. Then you will begin to discern and know your patient in a deeper and more understanding way. Even if no great healing miracle were to occur from such a relationship, it would be a better Medicine and indeed, a better quality of life for the doctor himself and his patient.

Please continue to pray for Dr. Rod Davison, President of CMF of Canada — continued healing after surgery.

William Francis Reed M.D.

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THE REEDS' ITINERARY

JULY 12 - 14 BINGEMAN PARK, KITCHENER, ONTARIO — ABUNDANT LIFE CONFERENCE
Contact: Audrey Wagler 519/662-1748

JULY 23 - 28 ALLEGHENY HEARTLAND CFO LAURELVILLE, PA. (50 miles east of Pittsburgh)
Contact: Robert L. King, M.D. 814/366-5800

SEPTEMBER 13 - 9:30 a.m. 100 HUNLEY STREET

SEPTEMBER 13 - 15 CHRISTIAN MEDICAL FOUNDATION OF CANADA - ANNUAL DOCTORS' CONFERENCE
INN ON THE PARK - TORONTO, ONTARIO
Contact: CMF of Canada 416/431-2442

OCTOBER 2 - 6 13TH ANNUAL CHRISTIAN MEDICAL FOUNDATION INT. CONFERENCE AT THE
SHERATON SAND KEY on the beach in CLEARWATER, FLORIDA. Call CMF-- Tampa 813/932-3686

OCTOBER 25 - 27 ORDER OF ST. LUKE HEALING MISSION HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
Contact: St. Andrews United Church 902/422-3157