

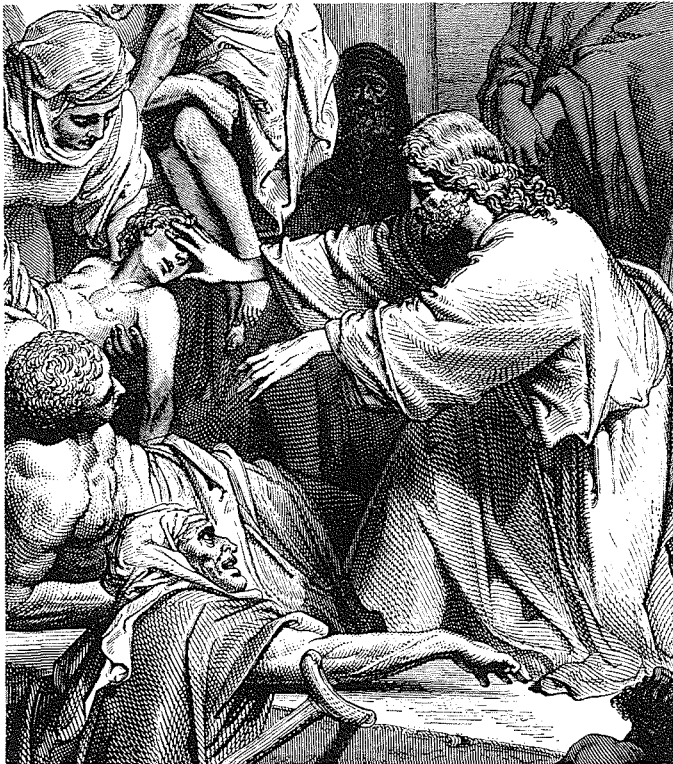
RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

*The Price of
Christian Healing*

"Religious Roots of a Medical Crisis" by David Kahn, in *Harvard Magazine* (Mar.-Apr. 1978), Wadsworth House, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

The concept of physician accountability dates back to 2000 B.C., but only since the 1930s has the incidence of medical-malpractice litigation begun to resemble a patients' revolt. The current rash of malpractice suits (some 16,000 claims are pending against U.S. physicians) may stem in part from some ancient religious assumptions about the role of physicians and the practice of medicine, says Kahn, a Stoughton, Mass., hospital executive.

Studies of medical patients today reflect a sense of abandonment by an overburdened, overspecialized, and impersonal physician who fails



Christ lays a healing hand on the brow of a sick child in this detail from an engraving by the French painter, Gustave Doré.

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to play the father role that many patients seem to cherish. This concept of paternalism in medicine (sometimes called the "Marcus Welby syndrome") probably originated during the early Christian era, when illness was equated with God's punishment visited upon sinners and health was a blessing bestowed by a heavenly Father. Prayer, the laying-on of hands, and treatment with holy oils supplanted medication and treatment, and 2000 years of empirical medicine by the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Greeks were largely discarded.

Healing by faith exerted a magnetic power to draw new converts to Christianity, especially during the recurring waves of pestilence that ravaged the Holy Roman Empire during the first 500 years of the Christian era. The emotionalism of the child-father relationship established between patient and priestly physician was enhanced by the principle of charity that found expression in the Christian monasteries of 5th-century Italy.

Later, there was a gradual reconciliation with empirical medicine; by the 12th century, Church councils were forbidding monks and regular clerics to practice medicine. In 1242 the Holy Roman emperor Frederick II drastically undercut the authority of the Church by giving a medical school at Salerno exclusive right to examine and license physicians, a privilege hitherto reserved for papal legates.

The reemergence of fee-for-service medicine in medieval Europe encountered resistance from a public conditioned by hundreds of years of Christian charity. Kahn wonders if there is not "still locked deep within the public mind . . . a longing for that venerable Christian doctor who dispensed his medicine out of love for humanity and as God's agent on earth."

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

*Losing the War
Against Malaria*

"Malaria Makes A Comeback" by Anil Agarwal, in *New Scientist* (Feb. 2, 1978), King's Reach Tower, Stamford St., London SE1 9LS.

The widely hailed 20-year-old malaria eradication program sponsored by the World Health Organization has failed. In those countries of Asia and Latin America where the disease had nearly been eradicated, there is now a serious resurgence. For example, India cut malaria cases from 100 million in 1952 to just 60,000 by 1962, but the incidence had grown to 6 million cases by 1976.

Worldwide, an estimated 200 million people suffer from malaria today. More than a billion people live in malaria-risk areas. Malaria, says Agarwal, editor of a London environmental news service, will not be