

THE
DOCTOR —
A
PERSON

by Reverend J. R. W. STOTT

specialisation and is such an extremely exacting discipline, that it is a great temptation to become a professional rather than a person and to be guilty of that kind of impersonal officialdom for which we like to poke fun at government employees. But it is impossible to practise any branch of Medicine as a detached impersonal scientist—unless you are engaged in pure research and have no companions around you except test-tubes and Bunsen burners.

In speaking of the doctor as a person, since I am a Christian minister, I interpret the title to mean: "How can Christianity help a doctor to become a real person?" Now I realise that there are some here who are Christians and others who are not. My subject is not to defend the truth of Christianity. I wish in many ways that it were. I think I should be happier about some such theme. But my task is for the moment to assume the truth of Christianity and to consider the relevance of the Christian religion to becoming a person as a doctor.

THE DOCTOR'S PERSONAL INCENTIVES

Now I want to suggest to you that there are five spheres in which Christianity is relevant. The first concerns *the doctor's personal incentives*. The question of incentives in work, whether it be in commerce, in industry or any other profession, is very much in the minds of people to-day. Only the clarification of incentives can turn a profession into a vocation. What is the incentive for being or becoming a doctor? Well, of course, there are many. There is the simple incentive of pleasure. There is, I imagine, with every scientist some fascination in the very work itself in which he is engaged. And to me this is an absolutely innocent incentive. It is, indeed, a reflection of the Creator's joy in His own work.

The second incentive is the incentive of pay. The gain motive can be a perfectly innocent motive, especially if you have a wife and family to support. But, at its worst, the pay motive is a tyrannical incentive. There are many of us in Great Britain who have recently been shocked by the news of some doctors in the National Health Service who said they were intending to strike if their pay were not increased.

The third motive is the motive of altruism. A doctor, it is quite obvious, has many opportunities simply of doing good to other people and finding this the great incentive in his work. But for a Christian, none of those three is the greatest motive.

For the Christian, the greatest motive, the greatest incentive of all, is co-operation with God. A man was one day walking along a country lane when he passed a stone quarry. Turning aside, he started talking to a number of the men who were hewing stone in the quarry. He asked the first man: "What are you doing?" The man replied in surly tones: "I'm earning ten quid a week." He went up to the next man and said: "What are you doing?" He replied: "Can't you see? I'm hewing stone." He went up to the third man and said: "What are you doing?" The fellow put down his pick, stood up to his full height, thrust out his chest, and said: "If you want to know what I'm doing, I'm building a cathedral." Well now, that man had an incentive. He looked beyond his job, beyond his pay, to the ultimate objective of what he was doing. I believe that every Christian, whatever his job, be it medicine or anything else, ought to have the same motive. The Christian believes that God has humbled Himself to depend upon the co-operation of mankind. Although the mysterious processes of conception, birth and life are in the hands of God Himself, He yet entrusts the well-being of human creatures to society at large: to parents, to teachers, to

educators, administrators and doctors. It is necessary for men to be fed and clothed, housed and educated, looked after and protected. In these things God depends on the co-operation of men and women. I cannot imagine a greater incentive than this for any person, certainly in the practice of medicine, that he sees himself as a collaborator with God.

HIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Secondly, the Christian religion can help a doctor in *his personal relationships*. I know enough doctors to know that a good many are thorough-going individualists. But it is almost impossible for a good doctor to be individualistic, because willy-nilly he is involved in a complicated network of personal relationships, with his patients, with the relatives of his patients, with his medical colleagues, and, if he is working in a hospital, with the whole team of nursing staff and many others. If there is anyone who needs to learn the art of harmonious relationships, it is without doubt the doctor. There are too many bad-tempered doctors, at least in England, and I am persuaded that we need to learn the art of how to get on with one another. So I take the liberty of bringing to you the passage from the New Testament which in my judgment is the most important on this subject. In the Epistle to the Colossians, Chapter 3, St. Paul gives us two general principles governing personal relationships. Here they are: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." The second is: "Whatever you do, work at it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men." (Verses 17 and 23.) Now let me tell in my own words what I believe these two principles mean. Firstly, I have got to learn, if I am a Christian, to treat other people as if I were Jesus Christ. That is what it means to do everything *in the name of the Lord*

Jesus. To do something in somebody else's name, is to do it as his representative. When David stood on the field of battle against Goliath, he said: "I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts." That is, I am not coming in my own name, I am coming as His representative. So to the Christian, to do everything in the name of Jesus Christ, is to do it as if he were Jesus Christ. I have got to learn, if I am a Christian, to treat other people with the respect and the consideration, the thoughtfulness and the graciousness with which Jesus Christ Himself would treat them.

The second principle is the exact opposite. It is to learn to treat people as if *they* were Jesus Christ. I must learn to do everything as unto the Lord. The roles are now reversed and I must learn to treat every person with the graciousness, the humility, the understanding, and the courtesy, not now that He would give to them but that I would give to Him. This is another revolutionary principle. And I will give you one illustration of it which I hope you will not find childish. There was a prominent Methodist minister in our country of the past generation called Samuel Chadwick, and this is how he says he was converted: when he was a boy of nine, he went to a Sunday School anniversary and the person who was speaking at that Sunday School anniversary happened to say that if he were a shiner of shoes he would be the best shiner of shoes in the village. Now that hit young Sam Chadwick, aged nine, because it was his job at home to clean his dad's boots. Monday morning came. It had been wet all Sunday and the boots were extremely muddy and dirty. He picked up the Wellingtons on the principle of starting with the worst, and he made a sort of a job of cleaning them. When he had finished, there came to his mind the words of the speaker at Sunday School that he should clean shoes and boots as if Jesus Christ were going to wear them. He looked

at those half-cleaned Wellingtons and he wondered if they would look well on the feet of Jesus Christ. For an answer he took them up and cleaned them a second time; and he tells us that this simple action transformed his whole life. He learned to do everything he did as unto Jesus Christ.

I tell you that these two principles, to treat other people as if they were Christ and as if I were Christ, are as realistic as they are revolutionary. This is not idealistic rubbish. This is practical advice about personal relationships. It is perfectly possible for a doctor to treat his patients as if he was Jesus Christ and as if they were Jesus Christ.

HIS PERSONAL QUALITIES

Thirdly the Christian religion can help a doctor in his *personal qualities*. I don't know, but I imagine the last word has not yet been spoken or written about the various factors which promote healing. I suppose it is agreed that there are many psychological factors in the process of the recovery of health. I suppose that it is true to say that a serene, tranquil and confident atmosphere in some hospitals is very conducive to the recovery of health, and I suppose that the same could be said of certain doctors. Now I am not a medical man. I am a layman in this respect and I hope that you will forgive me if I am taking a liberty in saying this, but the patient, being on the receiving rather than the giving end, has the right to expect from his doctor certain personal qualities. He has the right to expect in his doctor an understanding, that his doctor shall be thoughtful, gentle, and never rude or gross. He has the right to expect that his doctor will be reverent about the intimacies of the human body concerning which he may be shy and embarrassed. He has the right to expect his doctor to

be confident and to inspire confidence; and above everything else, he has the right to expect his doctor to care about him and to treat him not as an interesting case to be discussed with his medical colleagues, but as a person about whom he genuinely cares. Indeed if the Christian religion teaches us anything, it teaches us the value of an individual person. Baron von Huegel, who was a great Christian theologian, wrote these simple words: "Christianity taught us to care; Caring is the great thing; Caring matters most." I do not see how anyone can be a good doctor if he does not care about persons.

Now caring about persons is what Christians mean by love. What is love? It is well known by any student of the Bible that the Biblical writers had to coin a new word, the Greek word "Agape", in order to convey what they meant by love, because the old words of classical Greek had become either too weak and colourless on the one hand, or too contaminated by sinful associations on the other, ever to be used of the love of God, or of the love that Christians want to show people of the world. For instance, the Greek word "philia" was a very anaemic word. It meant little more than a gentle and dutiful friendliness. It was often used in classical Greek of filial affection, but it was not robust enough or strong enough for the love of God. Then there was the word "eros". Now "eros" was strong enough all right, but it was too strong, for it was used in classical Greek for possessive and passionate emotion and it often meant little more than sexual lust. So "philia" was too sickly a word, while "eros" was too tainted a word. Christians had, therefore, to invent a new word for love. They chose this word "agape" in order to describe a new quality of love which they believed had been brought into the world through Jesus Christ. The word "agape" is never used by heathen writers. It is an exclusively Biblical word; it is hardly used before the New Testa-

ment, although it is found occasionally in the Septuagint. But in the New Testament it is used again and again; it is stronger than "philia" and purer than "eros". "Agape" describes that noble and positive compassion and concern for other people which leads to self-forgetful and self-sacrificial service. Christianity teaches us to love like that. Christianity teaches that love, "agape", is the pre-eminent virtue, that it is the greatest thing in the world. I venture to say that it is only Jesus Christ who can teach us to love like that.

HIS PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Fourthly, I want to say a few words about the doctor's *personal example*. I imagine that we all agree that medicine is not only dedicated to the treatment of disease but to the promotion of health and patients may be forgiven if they expect their doctor to obey his own rules of health, as much as the congregation may be forgiven if it expects the parson to practise what he preaches! There is great importance, therefore, in the example which the doctor sets. I wonder how many patients there are who, if they had the courage, would say to their doctor: "Physician, heal thyself"? The doctor is a watched man. The doctor is a marked man. Do you know that the Scriptures have a great deal to say about the power of human example? Jeroboam, I have no doubt, is a name known to all of us. He was the first king of the schismatic northern kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam I has gone down in history as the man who made Israel to sin. Almost whenever he is mentioned in Scripture, he is "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin". I suppose we remember too what Jesus said about the seriousness of making "one of those little ones to stumble". It is better for such a man if a millstone is tied round his neck and he is cast into the sea. Is it then quite un-

realistic to suggest that a doctor ought to be a living illustration of that way of life which he is advocating to his patients?

Now here is the Biblical description of health (1 Thessalonians 5, v. 23): "I pray," says St. Paul, "that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved sound and blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." We hear a great deal to-day about psychosomatic medicine. But here is something better still. Here is pneumato-psychosomatic medicine. Here is a health that includes spirit as well as mind or soul and body. The Scriptures teach us that man is tripartite. That is to say, that he has got a soul or spirit as well as a mind and body. I wonder if you know that the Greek word for "salvation" was originally a medical term, meaning "health", and often when the Authorised Version says "Thy faith has saved thee", the Greek could equally well be translated "Thy faith hath made thee whole"? Is it then unrealistic to suggest that a Christian doctor ought to exhibit to his patients a certain *wholeness*, a health of mind and body and spirit? I would venture, therefore, to say that a doctor ought to be a person of disciplined bodily habits, in food, sleep, exercise and recreation. He ought to be a person of wide interests who is capable of conversing with people on other matters than purely medical shop. And he ought to be a person of spiritual calibre who knows God, who has come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and who is walking with God from day to day. Without this it is not possible for a doctor to be a balanced or an integrated person.

HIS PERSONAL LIFE

Now I finish, fifthly, with the relevance of Christianity to a doctor's *personal life*. We need to recall that a

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doctor is a person outside his work as well as in it. A doctor is not a separate species of mankind. He is a person like other persons; he is a man of like passions to us. He too has a home and family responsibilities. He too has got to live and work and grow old and die. I think of an eminent radiologist in London who said to me a couple of years ago before the memorial service of his wife: "I have seen death many times, but I have never faced death myself." But a doctor is an ordinary person who has got to die and he has got to prepare for death. A doctor has the same temptations as other mortals, temptations to greed, to jealousy, to lust, to self-centredness. The doctor is haunted by the same fears, troubled by the same conscience, burdened by the same problems. Therefore I conclude by saying that as a person, the doctor needs Jesus Christ just as much as any other person. It is, in fact, this humble and honest admission of a personal need that brings people to Jesus Christ more readily than anything else. There are many roads to Jesus Christ. There is the philosophical road, which is long, tortuous and boggy. There is the historical road which goes straight to the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth and investigates Him. But, thirdly, there is the personal road. This is the shortest and straightest. It is a simple recognition of my personal need as a sinner; and that somehow or other my need corresponds to His offer.

It is an interesting thing that in emphasising this simple truth, Jesus resorted to a medical metaphor. He once said that those who are whole do not need a physician, but only those who are sick. He added, "I did not come to call the righteous, I came to call sinners to repentance." What he meant was this: that just as you do not go to the doctor unless you are ill and know it, so you will never come to Jesus Christ unless you are a sinner, and you know it and admit it.

If you are too proud to admit it, you will never come to Jesus Christ. He has no relevance to anyone else except sinners. He did not come to call the righteous, He came to call sinners. May God give us such a clear perception of our sin and need that we will come to Jesus Christ to be the Physician of our souls.

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