

❖ Other Voices ❖

The unique aspects of the biblical definition of health are as follows: (1) it is based on a doctrine of humankind as a unity – both within us and with our environment and community; (2) its definition of health as wholeness and of sickness as brokenness include a spiritual dimension; (3) it orients us to health instead of sickness; (4) its primary goal is others' health, not our own; (5) it broadens healing to include any activity that moves us toward wholeness; and (6) it understands healers as persons who move us toward healing. These aspects provide the foundation for a radically different understanding of health care.

ABIGAIL RIAN EVANS, *Redeeming Marketplace Medicine: A Theology of Health Care*

The word “health,” in fact, comes from the same Indo-European root as “heal,” “whole,” and “holy.” To be healthy is literally to be whole; to heal is to make whole. I don't think mortal healers should be credited with the power to make holy. But I have no doubt that such healers are properly obliged to acknowledge and respect the holiness embodied in all creatures, or that our healing involves the preservation in us of the spirit and the breath of God.

If we were lucky enough as children to be surrounded by grown-ups who loved us, then our sense of wholeness is not just the completeness in ourselves but also is the sense of belonging to others and to our place....

I believe that the community – in the fullest sense: a place and all its creatures – is the smallest unit of health and that to speak of the health of an isolated individual is a contradiction in terms

WENDELL BERRY, “Health Is Membership”

Our society, founded in the optimism of the European Enlightenment, while enjoying unprecedented and unparalleled biomedical progress, cannot be said to enjoy happiness, health, or well-being. The burden of morbidity is increasing. The obsession with health and sickness has intensified. The cost has burgeoned to the breaking point.

...Rather than medicalizing and consumerizing our existence further, we need to take initiatives for preventative medicine and health care. We need to find ways to sustain health in one another through responsible use of the environment, mutual love, and fairness.

KENNETH L. VAUX, *This Mortal Coil*

The medical art was given to us to relieve the sick, in some degree at least.... [But] whatever requires an undue amount of thought or trouble or involves a large expenditure of effort and causes our whole life to revolve, as it were, around solicitude for the flesh must be avoided by Christians. Consequently, we must take great care to employ this medical art, if it should be necessary, not as making it wholly accountable for our state of health or illness, but as redounding to the glory of God and as a parallel to the care given the soul.

ST. BASIL THE GREAT (c. 329-379), *Long Rules, Rule 55*

God is our absolute good; health is an instrumental, subordinate good, important only insofar as it enables us to be the joyful, whole persons God has created us to be and to perform the service to our neighbors that God calls us to perform. Any pursuit of personal health that subverts either of these obligations of joy and loving service is the pursuit of a false god. Health is to be sought in and for God, not instead of God.

MARGARET E. MOHRMANN, "The Idolatry of Health and the Idolatry of Life," in *Good Is the Flesh: Body, Soul, and Christian Faith*

In their reverence for dying human bodies Christian care-givers keep company with the dying, a company that witnesses to the divine transformation of bodily destruction by a love that overcomes alienation. Likewise, respect for the personal histories of the dying involves material forms of honoring the dying person's unique worth in community.... Christian care-givers ought to enable the dying person to confront his death by accompanying him into that darkness as they can, through concrete forms of care alert to and trusting in the perfect efficacy of Christ's grace, divine love's thoroughgoing transformation of our spiritual and bodily life.

DARLENE FOZARD WEAVER, "Death," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*

The test for justice in the story of Scripture is not the impartial and rational standard advanced as part of the project of a liberal society, the standard that simply identifies justice with "maximum freedom." When the contemporary Good Samaritan invokes the standard of justice imbedded in the larger story of Scripture, she encourages people to test policy recommendations not just against a standard of impartial rationality but against the plumb line of 'good news for the poor,' including especially the sick poor.

ALLEN VERHEY, *Reading the Bible in the Strange World of Medicine*

The church has too long settled for health promotion and health care as the purview of the health care delivery system. It's time to reclaim health ministry at the congregational level. It's time for people to see, incarnated in the neighborhood church, "the true compassion of [Jesus'] face."

JEAN DENTON, *Good is the Flesh: Body, Soul, and Christian Faith*