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MEDICAL FREEDOM

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Man as a spiritual being cannot be separated from the physical without harm to himself and society. The true physician is knowingly or unknowingly inspired with certain spiritual conceptions and the one weakness of modern science has been the danger of an ever-increasing lack of recognition of that force in man we call the spiritual. In recent years, so much emphasis has been placed on the physical side of life that we are witnessing the world chasing phantoms looking for so-called security.

To the doctor, these trends and tendencies are peculiarly ominous. Modern medicine is today still faithful to the oath of Hippocrates. Its ethics are based on a profound urge for service to man, not only as a physical being but as one possessed of a mind, a spirit, respondent to emotions and stimuli peculiar to man alone. In other words, man is more than a mass of flesh and blood that is generated, that lives and dies, just spending his days in resisting forces that would destroy his mortal body.

Those of us who have enjoyed the privilege of ministering to the sick in the home have often felt our kinship to the priesthood. Our pills and potions may have failed, but the family clung to us with a forlorn hope. We have, in those moments, often been called upon

to comfort the bereaved, soothe the sorrowing as well as use all the powers we possessed to sustain the fast-waning hope of the stricken patient.

In other words, there is in medicine a spiritual force that must prevail and, because of it, will eventually bring the doctor back to where he belongs, at the side of the priest. This concept seems today to be forgotten in the effort to transform medical service into a mechanized industry, where patients are but dumb beasts without a soul and without emotional reactions. All this and more, because the world has forgotten that the Creator made man a living soul.

When man once becomes the creature of the state and totalitarianism, he loses not only his liberty as an individual thinking human being, but all spiritual values are sunk in the mire of godlessness and fatalistic hopelessness.

Our only hope is the preservation of our American democracy. American medicine stands today in a peculiarly significant position in the present maelstrom of social upheaval.

The position of the family doctor in the home must be maintained, for I believe upon him hinges the future of our democracy. The family doctor enters the inner circle of every home from

palace to tenement at some time or other. What a powerful force we have in the band of 130,000 American physicians. That force will be for good only so long as he is permitted to enter that home as a free agent, enjoying the confidence of those to whom he ministers. I doubt whether we, as physicians, realize our own potentialities. On the other hand, transmute—and I use that word advisedly—that physician into a paid mercenary of an impersonal government and you remove from the structure of the home one of its most cohesive forces.

In other words, I believe the real family doctor is, next to the Church, the greatest influence in holding the home together and his removal spells disaster to every nation who tries it. Let political medicine enter the home and the day will not be far distant when all our other cherished liberties follow the wake of the family doctor. A godless country demands

a soulless doctor.

Today the medical profession is the spearhead of attack by those insidious forces that would destroy the home, religion and our democracy. We are the spearhead of attack because no totalitarian government can afford to have within its structure a free, independent unfettered medical profession.

We need offer no apologies for our past. We have fought a good fight; we have kept the faith. Unfortunately, however, the forces of evil are abroad in the land and if we are to preserve our heritage we must again gird on our armor and fight to retain that heritage.

The Catholic Church is fighting a valiant fight against the subversive forces of Communism and its ilk. If our American democracy is worth saving, if religious freedom is worth preserving, if civil liberty is worth having, then we must see to it that medical freedom is maintained.

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