August 1971

Thomas Linacre: Humanist, Physician, Priest

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Recommended Citation
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treated by J. C. Ford and G. Kelly in: Contemporary Moral Theology II: Marriage Questions pp 365-367 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1964), who concluded that the licit of the use of contraceptive agents under these circumstances was at least solidly probable. Whether "intercourse" against the will (rape) can be equated with "intercourse" in the absence of valid consent (statutory rape) has not, to my knowledge, been analyzed by moral theologians. I do, however, believe that it would be difficult to maintain that mentally ill persons could not give consent to marriage but could give consent to the object of the marriage contract. The question does not imply that under certain circumstances contraception is permitted by the Catholic Church; it does imply that under certain circumstances the use of contraceptive agents does not belong to the species of condemned acts, namely the interference with a human act (as above described) of intercourse.

There remains the question of what, in the light of these questions (if they have validity), constitutes ethical behavior by the patient and by the physician. Foregoing an analysis of the ethical behavior of a schizophrenic patient, I do believe that guidelines may be established for the psychiatrist or obstetrician who does not have the time to await an opinion of the Rota. It would be my contention that a physician, faced with a psychically ill patient, and convinced that the patient could not validly enter into a marriage contract, can ethically pre-

scribe contraceptive agents to such patient until he is reasonably convinced that in the realm of intercourse she can act with the degree of ad
terence required for contractile marriage.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of whether the ad
drmination of contraceptive agents constitutes direct or indirect sterilizations is not the sole criterion for the analysis of whether it is licit to administer such agents. A separate analysis demands a consideration of whether the patient is capable of positing a human act in the realm of intercourse. It may be rea

sonably concluded that if the physician is convinced that the patient is not in a state of mental health to permit entry into a valid contract of marriage, she is incapable of validly entering into the object of that contract, namely intercourse. In arriving at a sound judgment in this matter it is wise to remember that the psychical capacity for mar
riage (and therefore for intercourse) "must be placed within the grasp of the vast majority of people"; "marriage" (and therefore intercourse) "may not be, as it were, placed beyond the psychological range of the average person, or even beyond many whose psychological range is below average" (W. M. van Ommeren in Mental Illness Affecting Matrimonial Consent, p. 102. Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1961).

Physician And Tutor

In 1501, in his 40th year, Linacre's role as Royal physician was cast: he was appointed a court physician in charge of the health of King Henry VII, one of the highest honors a doctor of medicine could at that time achieve. But he also was entrusted with the health-care of Prince Arthur, the young Prince of Wales, brother of Henry, future King Henry VIII, and

*Adapted from an address before The Osler Society, Baylor University College of Medicine, The Texas Medical Center, January 6, 1961.

Part I appeared in the May, 1971 issue of L.Q.

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Humanist, Physician, Priest

Fred M. Taylor, M.D.
It is in life as it is in ways, the shortest way is commonly the foulest, and surely the fairest way is not much about.

Bacon, Advancement of Learning, Book II, Chap. 23, pp. 45, 1605

Part II

Physician and Tutor

In 1501, in his 40th year, Linacre's role as Royal physician was cast: he was appointed a court physician in charge of the health of King Henry VII, one of the highest honors a doctor of medicine could at that time achieve. But he also was entrusted with the health-care of Prince Arthur, the young Prince of Wales, brother of Henry, future King Henry VIII, and

PRINCESS MARY, the elder son and daughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. In addition, he was appointed their Royal tutor.44 It is of interest that Linacre had already translated for Arthur, Proclus' astronomical treatise, De Sphera, and in 1499 it printed at Venice by Aldus Romanus.45 Linacre described Princess Mary as having not only a "marvelous disposition to every virtue ... but a noble and instinctive genius to learning..."46 At seventeen, however, in the interest of the King's diplomatic foreign policy, she would marry and become Queen Mary of France. Linacre, in an early grammatical effort, had prepared for Princess Mary a Latin grammar in English which was the forerunner of a famous publication, the Rudimenta Grammaticae (Rudiments of Grammar)
Tall and handsome, gifted and deeply religious, he would later earn for himself in theological controversy with Luther, the papal title, Defender of the Faith. But insufferably unpredictable—doubtless a strain on the character of anyone around him—he also had an immensely passionate compulsion for having his own way. Indeed, six weeks after his accession he proceeded forthwith to marry Catherine, 23 years old, the wife of a deceased brother, Arthur.

Meanwhile, Linacre spent increasing time on the preparation of his Latin grammars and translations of classical works in medicine. But he also entered the private practice of medicine. Irreplaceable in both work and practice, skill as a physician became widely recognized, and King Henry VIII appointed him Physician to the King.52 In London Linacre lived on KNIGHTRIDER STREET not far from the palace, nor far from the Cathedral of ST. Paul where John Colet, one of Linacre's closest friends and associates—and apparently the only person with whom he ever really quarrelled—as the Dean.53 Linacre, enjoying the confidence and favor of royal amities, fared well; he attended the births of those in state and Church, and developed a busy court and consulting practice. His position became one of influence, and he promoted increasingly the cause of science and the welfare of the public. Moreover, he carried out his painstaking studies of humane literature and compiled translations of some of Galen's Greek medical works: De Sanitate Tuenda (On the Preservation of Health) in six books, and Methodus Medendi (A Method of Healing), in 14 books, were published in 1517 and 1519.54 Lich was dedicated to Henry VIII, emphasizing that Linacre sought "not only to provide correct translations of sound Greek text, but to clarify errors in interpretation based, in part, on an incorrect textual tradition."55

De Temperamentum, et De Inaequali Intemperie (On the Temperaments and on Unequal Temperaments) were dedicated to Pope Leo X and printed at Cambridge in 1521. Linacre's first translations to be published in England. His last three works of Galen also appeared in England: De Naturalibus Facultatibus (On the Natural Faculties) 1523; and De Symptomatu De Symptomatum Differentiis (On the Differences Between Symptoms) (1528).56

Eagerness of the Humanists

In the turbulent reign of King Henry VIII—which witnessed the hardening of the King's will and the worsening of his temper, Linacre, whenever and however, gave immeasurable assistance to Renaissance learning in England. Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's Minister of State, and one of Linacre's patients, was so affected over the worth of the new learning that he not only encouraged scholarship wherever he could but endowed Oxford for a study of the humanities. Thus, for a brief decade of time (between 1509 and 1519) a gratifying change in England's intellectual climate was noted. There prevailed hope and optimism among English scholars that the new humanism was actually replacing medial ways of thinking and that it would pave the way to wider intellectual horizons and ultimately revive objective thought. Even Erasmus noted: "... It is marvelous how widespread and how abundant is the harvest of ancient learning which is flourishing in this country."57

But ignorance and secularism, as well as deep-rooted medieval complacency, were commonplace. Despite the eagerness of the humanists to reform ecclesiastical abuses by a stern spirit of faith and reason, Martin Luther, convinced neither of the value of time nor the worth of peace, and not foreseeing the savage consequences of his actions, hammered his Ninety-five Theses to the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The ground-swell of political and religious forays which shortly wrecked the backward and brilliant alike of Western Europe was well started.

By ignorance and secularism, as well as deep-rooted medieval complacency, not only was the descent of work of experimental effort. Nor did his ability as a physician even differ much from that of other consulting physicians of the times. His fame was his quality of objectivity—his ability to observe and describe carefully. Thus he "introduced the seeds of a more precise and objective mode of thought."

Although he translated accurately the actual texts of the classic authorities in medicine and philosophy in their original language, his scholarly translations of Galen, however worthwhile, opened no magic-like doors to the immediate advancement of medical science. Nor was this even intended. If Linacre had anything at all to do with it, even the later advancement of medicine—and medicine, in order to advance, had to cut itself free from the unquestioning authority of Galen—he broke the chains of Galen's ancient authority and of intellectual infantilism primarily through his attitude of objectivity, obviously the very core of the scien-
tific attitude. He pointed out errors and mistakes of the past, but neither made nor urged a complete break with the past. He put tradition—whether it concerns medicine and art or religion and political science—in its proper perspective, and emphasized a fact, which eternally needs emphasizing, that new knowledge need neither destroy high ideals nor bury what is right and good.

For the More Learned

Linacre, however, was concerned over the quality of medical practice and the standards of medical learning existing in England at the time. On one occasion he said critically:

... whilst medicine, the most profitable of the sciences, whose reputation and power had been almost annulled by the presumption and impertinence of the unskilful and ignorant, has been duly estimated, [there is] certain hope exc

From this time on, all persons within their homes for seven days, to prohibit all animals inside and to appoint special officers to keep the streets cleaned and to ban refuse. 58 But in addition, there were epidemics of chickenpox, tuberculosis and smallpox, and indeed of the newly introduced syphilis, hitherto unknown in Italy. Each flourishing epidemic took a toll of life, and of body and mind, not only of the ignorant but of the brilliant. And however incredible now, the hysteria of witchcraft and all the frightful consequences of belief in witches, was everywhere rampant.

The English doctors were not organized then as the medical profession is today. As a matter of fact, only a few physicians were Doctors of Medicine, and they usually were consultants. Even most physicians lacked training, many only in schools of experience, and licensed only by human credulity. 12 Most general practice, for instance, was carried on by physicians but by barbers and apothecaries. Although the doctors themselves were not an untrained rabble, 12 the progression was set with persons plainly unqualified and untrained. It also was better with some, for it was made up of herb and root doctors, plain everyday quacks and unqualified midwives, and "wise women, of whom there was no scarcity. But the medical profession—and this would appear to be a handicap at any stage of the profession's evolution—was open to anyone who could read, indeed, to some who couldn't read. Thus medicine included not only illiterates and quackery but empiricism at its very worst. Linacre worked for a system which would correct this, a system that would not merely grant a person the right and license to practice medicine, but restrict the privilege to those qualified to practice it. In 1511, for the first time in England, and largely through Linacre's leadership, authority to regulate the practice of medicine by licensure was established. This authority and power was set up by an Act of Parliament but was granted to the Bishop of London, or the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, or in case of physicians practicing outside London, to the diocesan bishops. 60 Although this made the examination of physician-candidates in the hands of the Church, it nonetheless was the start of an effort to correct irregular medical practitioners and lessen incompetent practice.

The practice of medicine, as well as its control, however, was already emerging as a function distinct from the Church. Indeed, in England, seven years later, Linacre, with the assistance of Cardinal Wolsey, the Lord Chancellor, through whose hands for 14 years the entire affairs of the royal kingdom passed, and was succeeded by Thomas More, procured from King Henry VIII on September 10, 1518, through the authority of Parliament, a royal charter which established for the "more learned members of the profession," the Royal College of Physicaiians. 60 This was England's first coherent medical organization; but it was a stern organization. Linacre, a person also outstanding in affairs of state, drew up the constitution of the Royal College of Physicians, itself a standing monument to his constructive genius and far-seeing judgment. In the annals of the Royal College, John Caius, the second president of the College, and like Linacre, one of its most influential members, wrote of the Constitution:

Henry the Eighth, the most serene King of Britain, in order that he might preserve his people from the dangers and errors of unskilled persons, on 23 September 1518, and the tenth year of his reign, by his charter of letters patent, sealed with the great seal of England, granted in perpetuity the establishment of a College of Physicians of London, and, in the name of the College, he gave to John Chamber, Thomas Linacre, Ferdinand de Victoria, his physicians, and to Richard Halswel, John Francis, and Robert Yaxley, leading physicians of the city of London, power to choose a president from the fellows, to plead lawsuits before any judges to prevent anyone, unless licensed by the College, from practising medicine in the City of London, its suburbs or within an area of seven miles around, or be fined five pounds for each month; to make statutes, to call meetings, to establish four judges or censors of the writings, morals and medications of anyone practising medicine, to punish offences by imprisonment for a year, and to be exempt from the burdensome affairs, commands, and services of the city. 61

Linacre was the first president of the Royal College of Physicians, holding that office until his death six years later. 61 He also was its first benefactor, providing the College substantial financial support and bequeathing it his books and his Stone-House on Knightbridge's Street. The College would continue to hold its meetings in Linacre's house for nearly a hundred years. Both house and the majority of the books, however, were destroyed in the London fire of 1666. 62

In addition to his reforms in medicine (and this would be of interest to administrators of modern university departments) Linacre was one of the...
first persons to endow, however modest the precedent might seem today, university teaching and a professorial chair to encourage both the study and the teaching of medicine. He appointed a board of trustees to which he conveyed his estates in Kent, England (apparently acquired in part from his successful medical practice), and founded at Oxford and Cambridge what is one of his lasting accomplishments: the Linacre Lectureship. Special medical lecturers would be required to have studied Aristotle and Galen, and during their teaching period, usually for three years, abstain from medical practice. The Linacre Foundation, however, was not granted an official license until eight days before his death. In addition, because of dawdling mismanagement, as well as administrative corruption which later came about in the universities, the lecturership would become completely lost at Cambridge, but eventually revived at Oxford to establish innumerable years later the present Linacre Professorship of Physiology.

Spirited Conflict

Like most Englishmen of the time, Linacre was Catholic. His intimate Catholic friends were often occupied with the innumerable complex factors leading to the full-blown Reformation, a brutal sequel, indeed a theological failure, to the once bright promise of the Renaissance. While both clerical and lay humanists openly attacked the abuses and egregious weaknesses of ecclesiastical life, and Erasmus was literally shaking the ecclesiastical timbers in all their parts, a series of women would prove the love of King Henry VIII both dangerous and deadly. As the shadow of papal wrath stretched ominously over the thunderous and stubborn will of Henry VIII, the latter, in 1533, announced his secret marriage to Anne Boleyn. On September 7, 1533, the future Queen Elizabeth was born, and after that number of men would keep their heads would be fewer and fewer. A matter of fact, however iconoclastic Henry VII's notions on the indispensability of a valid marriage and his views on the supremacy of the Holy Pontiff, his relationship with Anne and his efforts to secure an annulment from Catherine served to bring about in England the kind of political and theological chimera that would allow the Reformation to survive as a world force.

Erasmus had been in spiritual conflict not so much with Luther, but primarily with Church authorities. A deeply religious man, Erasmus decided passionately to repair what was wrong and clearly amiss, seeking however to strengthen the Church not by change and violent religious provincialism, but by reform of ecclesiastical practices through peace and unity. Thus he would gain in the history of the faith and growth of the Reformation and he was under serious pressure and suspect from both sides—the well-known paternal-like reputation: "Erasmus laid an egg: Luther hatched it." Erasmus and More, unlike their meleons, however, kept their faith.

"The problem of what is due the individual conscience, what to the State, is indeed an eternal one, and in a few people have been surprised and distressed to find it emerging today as much alive as ever it was." But for a point of individual conscience aside from the point of faith, and for denial of Royal supremacy, Sir Thomas More, on the morning of July 6, 1535, lost both head and beard on Tower Hill and had then exhibited upon London Bridge. Eighteen years earlier Erasmus, fearful of his future under Henry VIII, had left England and settled in Basel, Switzerland. When news of More's execution reached Erasmus, the latter, "worn out by work, disease and disappointment," and who would die the next year, wrote of his life-long friend: Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England, whose soul was more pure than any snow, whose genius was such as England never had seen, and never shall have again... In More's death I seem to have died myself; we had but one soul between us.

One of the choice specimens of the ideals of wisdom and virtue. More, however venegefully disliked by Henry VIII, would grow immensely in stature and importance as the years passed. He would be proclaimed a martyred Saint, and become popularly known not only as the Saint of the Renaissance, but as the Patron of Catholic laymen everywhere. More, like Seneca, it is said, died for freedom of conscience, with a list of potent meaning on his lips:... that they should pray for him in this world, and he would pray for them elsewhere, protesting that he died the King's good servant, but God's first.

But also as the years passed, however, once keen-witted the master of political art, Henry VIII would instead not only bring about the dissoluition of hundreds of monasteries in England but the plunder of hospitals for the sick, poor, and aged, and deliberately lay waste more things of beauty—indeed the very things he once wanted, loved and stood for—and more things of promise than any other man in European history.

An Eminent Person

Meanwhile, Linacre had undertaken the study of theology in order to prepare for the priesthood. Four years before his death— and probably about the time of Pope Leo X's official excommunication of Luther—Linacre was ordained priest. "More confusion (however) exists as to the time, place, and prelate at his ordination." He gave up his practice of medicine, serving neither as parish priest nor as member of an order. He lived quietly in London, and devoted his time to further translations and writing "in ways dictated by the ideals of manhood.

During his scholarly lifetime Linacre left no original creative work except his Latin grammar. His chief occupation was the translation of the Greek writers into Latin which would continue as the major language, even in medical writing, through the eighteenth century. And because of a lack of proper English words at the time, the translations of the Greek medical words would result in our modern Greco-Latin medical vocabulary. Thus Linacre gave to medicine, to paraphrase Sir William Osler, one of its most distinctive features—the light and liberty of Greek thought. But he also left what has been even more valuable—"an example of a life of devotion to learning, to medicine, and to the interests of humanity." In 1522, two years before his death, Linacre published Leoniicus's earlier translation of Galen's manuscript, De Motu Musculorum (On the Motion of the Muscles). Leoniicus, one of the first medical humanists and author of one of the first clinical accounts on syphilis, with whom Linacre had visited many years previously in Ferrara, Italy, had looked up to Linacre as the person who would become one of his brightest and soundest pupils. However prophetic Leoniicus apparently was confident in Linacre's ability as a Greek scholar.
and translator, and in his ability as a leader to develop in medicine the attributes of intellectual and objective perspective.

On October 20, 1524, in London, Thomas Linacre died in his 64th year from complications of kidney stones, and was buried in old St. Paul’s Cathedral in London in a spot he himself chose. 74

Upon Linacre’s death John Caius, distinguished graduate of Cambridge and Padua, and admired of Thomas Linacre, was appointed a physician to King Henry VIII. 75 He would also become a court physician to Edward VI, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. Caius himself was elected second president of the Royal College of Physicians, and 33 years after Linacre’s death, had erected at his own expense at St. Paul’s Cathedral a memorial brass to Linacre’s memory. “This monument was erected near the north door of the Church, over or near Linacre’s grave, and remained till the year 1666, when the great fire of London involved the Church, monument, and remains of him whom it commemorated in one common ruin and desolation.” 76 The text, however, has been preserved:

Thomas Linacre, physician to King Henry VIII; a man in Greek and Latin and in the art of medicine most learned of all; during his lifetime he restored to life many who were ill, some even who had despaired of life; with marvelous and unique eloquence he translated many works of Galen into the Latin language. At the request of his friends he published, a little while before his death, an outstanding work on the grammar of the Latin language. For students of medicine he endowed two public lectureships at Oxford and one at Cambridge. In this city, he organized the College of Physicians by his industry, and was elected its first president. Marvelously also from

gule and deceit; faithful to his friends distinguished in every class of society, a few years before he died he was ordained priest. Full of years he departed this life much beloved, in the Year of Our Lord 1524, on the twentieth day of October, Virtue lives beyond funerary rites: John Caius has erected this monument to Thomas Linacre, a most distinguished physician, in the year 1557. 77

REFERENCES

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