

**THE RELATION OF THE MEDICAL  
PROFESSION TO THE MINISTRY: A  
DISCOURSE PREACHED IN THE WEST  
CHURCH, ON OCCASION OF THE  
DEATH OF DR. GEORGE C. SHATTUCK**

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**C. A. BARTOL**

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PREACHED IN THE WEST CHURCH,

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DR. GEORGE C. SHATTUCK.

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## DISCOURSE.

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LUKE IX. 2: "AND HE SENT THEM TO PREACH THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND  
TO HEAL THE SICK."

SUCH was the commission which the great Physician of the human body and soul gave to his twelve disciples, when he clothed them with their office of carrying on his work in the world. In prophetic metaphor, the older revelation, too, had symbolized this very likeness of the mortal frame to the immortal spirit in their common exposure to disease, when it inquired if there were no balm in Gilead, and no physician there, to recover the health of the daughter of God's people. Nay, the pagan religion itself foreshadowed the same thing from the remotest point and faintest beginning of its mythology, owning the healing art for a sacred function. The first that practised it, to the heathen mind was a god and the child of a god; his immediate descendants, at the same time physicians and priests,

lived in the temple, and allowed none to be initiated into the secrets of their knowledge without a solemn oath; while the most famous of the Greek physicians, who founded a school and was the earliest to raise medicine to the dignity of a science, was reputed to stand in the line of the same divine descent. You know, moreover, how intimately medicine and religion have been connected by the rudest savage tribes of our own day, as well as by the most civilized races of antiquity. But, to vindicate for the pulpit my theme to-day of the medical profession in its relation to the ministry, — which you will allow me to treat in the plainest and most familiar manner, — it is enough to know, that a being before whom all the deities of classic story grow pale and fade away, in his own life and in his charge to his apostles, associated the ills of the flesh with those of the mind for the merciful remedies of his gospel.

There is something very touching in his selecting, for the particular proof of his own heavenly authority, this gracious work of relief and cure to the suffering human frame; restoring from fever and palsy and epilepsy and insanity, from blindness, deafness, dumbness, death. Ah! a cordial truth did his beneficent deeds express, that he came to be for ever the friend of the human body as well as soul, redeeming them both

from anguish and corruption, from the sin that runs over into the dying part, and the sickness that penetrates to the undying: for he saw, as a superficial philosophy does not, the companionship between these two natures, so intimate no thought can divide and bound their territories, and so he took the whole man for his love and tenderness; and when the age of outward miracles ceased, and the Christian believer, as such, could no longer wondrously bring back lost health to the sick man, they who religiously devoted themselves to the study and exercise of the art of healing, in worship of the Divinity that made them, and in love of their fellow-creatures, in a business essentially partaking as much as any other of piety and humanity, in some sense in this respect succeeded to the apostles and to the great Lord and Master of us all.

One of the most interesting aspects of this general statement is the friendly relation that should subsist between the professors of medicine and the ministry. Surely they should be friends. Jesus Christ has formed the bond of their amity. He is in his life their common parent. They meet in his spirit. They trace back all that is benign and holy in their several offices and highest purposes to his temper and his acts. Jealousy between them is nothing less than an



affront to him who, through all Galilee, taught in the synagogues, and healed the diseases of the people; and any mutual discord, from whatever cause arising, is a quarrel in the very body of the Son of God, and as though those messengers of his, when they went out through all Judea, bearing in one hand soundness for the flesh, and in the other comfort and salvation for the heart of man, had fallen out by the way. Distrust, alienation, divorce, between these professions, so long wedded, and ever in the daily round following in each other's track, would indeed be not according to history, or according to Christianity, or according to the best hopes and auguries of the future welfare, private or public, of mankind. Therefore let us rejoice in the wide and substantial harmony that has ever prevailed in these two classes. The minister who refers to this topic, truly should not only rejoice, but give thanks, because of a peculiar generosity of the physician's gratuitous service to his calling, a matter of less pecuniary than moral meaning. The minister, on his part, however, should at least pay with his gratitude his respect to the skill and science of the physician, honoring his vocation, and not lightly giving, as I see it said he sometimes does, the most precious, though commonly accounted the cheapest, thing a man can give, his name and recommendation.

to every presumption of ignorance and charlatan's elixir, by whose author or vender he may be entreated. It is not the less but the more necessary to say this, because, in these times of the broader diffusion of light and a growing individual independence, the once marked enclosures and high fences of all the professions are somewhat invaded; men without title or preparation choosing to argue their own case, to hold forth their own revelations, and be their own doctors. With the awakening of thought and the spread of knowledge has come the ascertainment of our ignorance; no claims, private or professional, pass as they once did; and no occupation can stand any more on the ground of mere caste, of a strange tongue or a black letter, but only on the actual benefit it can yield to human beings, in mind, body, or estate.

Yet, in this shock to confidence and loss of reverence, accruing on the universal assertion of intellectual freedom, on the reign, too, of empiric observation, and the custom here in all things of our proverbial and characteristic American haste, there is danger that men will desert the truly wise, who have patiently and expensively qualified themselves for their instruction, defence, or restoration, and foolishly rely on their own imprudence, or the shallow boasts of those who have more at heart their own gain and interest, than

any benefit to their kind. To this particular disadvantage, probably no one of the professions is so grossly exposed as the medical. For, while the severe preparation required for the law may reduce the number there of mere pretenders, and while the facts and themes of religion are for the most part matters of sober, scholarly investigation,—vulgar criticism, popular and rudely practical doubt, roused in part very possibly by many contrariant doctrines, seems to have fixed on the medical profession for its especial prey or chosen quarry to pursue; so that we ought not to be surprised were its members sometimes worried and vexed in this chase of hungry questioning and scepticism, sharpened by the lively concern everybody has in an affair so near to him as his own health, especially if this running after them be shared in or cheered on by any whose social position, reputation for learning, or personal hold on the affections of others, invests them with power to hinder or further any sentiment or cause.

It should, however, be some antidote to any irritation hence, that every one of the professions, in this curious and prying age, in some way, coarser or more refined, partakes in this trial of secret insinuations or open assaults. In the wisdom of God, no less than in the folly of man, it may be best for them that they