

To Dr. M. Franciszyn
with appreciation
and warm regards.
James A. Knight
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WILLIAM OSLER'S CALL TO MEDICINE

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FOREWORD

The University of Texas Medical Branch in 1973 opened the Institute for the Medical Humanities, and thus became one of the few medical schools at that time nationwide to incorporate the humanities into health science curricula. While a novel idea at the time, the Institute nonetheless was, and remains, very much in the tradition of such physicians as Sir William Osler, who made a compelling argument for the humanist-physician, the physician for whom science exists not in a cultural vacuum but rather is wedded to the humanities in the practice of medicine. It is this tradition that the Institute is committed to continuing.

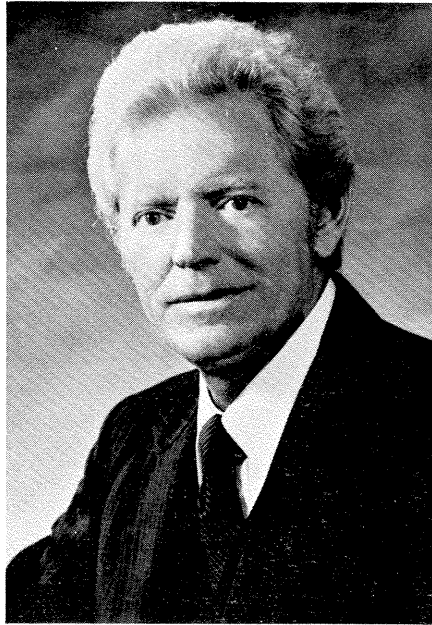
The establishment of the John P. McGovern Award Lecture in the Medical Humanities furthers the work of the Institute by making possible an annual presentation by a visiting professor of stature in the field. The lectureship is doubly significant in that it stands as a commemoration of Dr. McGovern's own longstanding interest in and contributions to the medical humanities.

Dr. John McGovern earned his undergraduate and M.D. degrees from Duke University. He took postgraduate training at Yale and Duke, in London, Paris, Washington and Boston. Internationally recognized for his scientific accomplishments, Dr. McGovern's earliest academic appointments were at George Washington University and Tulane University, where he served as a John and Mary R. Markle Scholar in Medical Science. In 1956, he moved to Houston to continue his career in teaching and research and to enter the private practice of medicine. There he founded the McGovern Allergy Clinic, which has grown to become the nation's largest of its kind.

Dr. McGovern remains director of the clinic which bears his name, and also is chairman of the board of the Texas Allergy Research Foundation. He is a member of numerous honorary and professional societies in medicine, humanities, science and health education. He is past president or chief elected officer of fifteen such organizations including the American College of Allergists and the American Osler Society, and he is the author or co-author of fourteen books and 175 articles. His service to governmental agencies includes a Presidential appointment to the board of regents of the National Library of Medicine, which he chaired in 1973-74, and to which he remains an active consultant.

Dr. McGovern is a generous benefactor of The University of Texas Medical Branch and its Institute for the Medical Humanities. The Award Lectureship serves as a public acknowledgment of his support of the medical humanities.

RONALD A. CARSON, Ph.D.
Kempner Professor and Director
Institute for the Medical Humanities



John P. McGovern, M.D.

This lectureship is dedicated to all who are enamoured by the calling of the art and science of medicine, past and present. The practice of medicine is neither an art nor a science, but rather is a continuously revivifying endeavor to correlate with art a rapidly changing science. But the science and art do not meld effectively and flourish at random, nor at a distance.

There is an additional essential, an all-pervasive substratum of human values, that must define and elaborate imperative moral and ethical judgments as well as nurture, leaven, guide, indeed, even inspire the medical enterprise. This vital element is embodied in what we call the medical humanities. In his classical monography *The Old Humanities and the New Science*, Sir William Osler pointed out that, "As twin berries on one stem, grievous damage has been done to both in regarding the Humanities and Science in any other light than complementary."

These nurturing humanities develop, encourage and sustain the innate yet often repressed human impulse toward genuine caring. And it is this dynamic of caring, the Sullivanian "dynamism of love," that must become a way of life in those significant interpersonal relationships inevitably involved in

giving first-class patient care and health maintenance. Indeed, our great physician forebear Paracelsus said, "Where there is no love, there is no art."

Our aim is to highlight aspects of a hard-wrought heritage in the medical humanities by providing this annual oration, delivered by an individual who has influenced and expanded it profoundly, one who has courageously bridged the gap separating C.P. Snow's "Two Cultures"—the humanities and science.

JOHN P. McGOVERN, M.D.
Director, McGovern Allergy Clinic



James A. Knight, M.D.

The first speaker for the John P. McGovern Lecture in the Medical Humanities was James A. Knight, M.D., professor of psychiatry at Louisiana State University School of Medicine, New Orleans. A medical educator and an ordained minister of the Methodist Church, he has written extensively on topics dealing with psychiatry, religion and medical ethics.

A native of St. George, South Carolina, Dr. Knight received a bachelor's degree in divinity from Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, in 1944 and was a U.S. Navy chaplain in the latter years of World War II.

He received his medical degree from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville, Tennessee, in 1952 and served residencies at Duke Hospital and at Tulane University Service of Charity Hospital. He began his career in academic medicine with an appointment to the Tulane medical faculty in 1955.

Later he continued his formal education with study at the C.J. Jung Institute, Zurich, Switzerland, and at the University of California, Berkeley. He received a master's degree in public health from Tulane University in 1962.

Dr. Knight joined the faculty of Baylor University College of Medicine, Houston, in 1958 and later became assistant dean. He returned to Tulane in 1961, serving as associate professor of psychiatry and preventive medicine and director of community

psychiatry until 1963, when he became director of psychiatry and religion at Union Theological Seminary, New York City. In 1964 he returned again to Tulane medical school as associate dean, director of admissions and professor of psychiatry. He became dean and professor of psychiatry at the College of Medicine, Texas A&M University, College Station, in 1974, then assumed his present position on the LSU faculty in 1977.

He is author or co-author of some seventy published papers and nine books. His book *Medical Student: Doctor in the Making*, published in 1973 and revised in 1981, is used widely in medical education.

WILLIAM OSLER'S CALL TO MEDICINE

by
James A. Knight, M.D.

There lived years ago on this continent and in England a physician who graciously deserved the biblical title of "beloved physician." His name was William Osler (1849-1919), and his life and work have left an influence on medicine that time will never erase. After Osler's death, the principal of Liverpool University, Dr. Adami, spoke these words about him: "So passed into history, untimely, even though he had attained to the allotted span, the greatest physician in history."¹ Some may argue that such a statement is not justified, but no one will hesitate in placing Osler in the select circle of great physicians of all time.

Besides being a superb diagnostician who promoted the highest standards of medical education, practice, and research, Osler was a cultured person of broad intellectual and artistic interests. He was a recognized classics scholar and humanist whom Chauncey D. Leake described as "an extraordinarily gifted biographer and bibliographer, appreciating fully the wisdom and comfort to be derived from sound persons and solid books . . . a richly human personage, who inspired thousands to strive for the best in the way of promoting health and happiness among peoples everywhere."² The enormous amount of time he spent in literary and historical studies did not divert him from his commitment to medicine but rather enhanced his clinical skills.

Today, in our efforts to bring the humanities into medicine, to make medical history an integral part of the teaching and practice of medicine, we find no better person to emulate than William Osler. Whether the subject be medical ethics, literature in medicine, the history of our physician forbears, or the physician as healer and minister, we find each of these roads illuminated and enriched by Osler as our guide and friend.

Gilbert Murray said of Osler, in nominating him for the presidency of the British Classical Association, that "he stands for a type of culture which the Classical Association does not wish to see die out of this world—the culture of a man who, while devoting himself to his special science, keeps nevertheless a broad basis of interest in letters of all kinds."³ Later, as Osler

concluded his presidential address ("The Old Humanities and the New Science") before that Association, his former colleague Dr. W.H. Welch turned to Lady Osler and said: "That was Osler at his very best." Afterward, Professor Welch went on to comment that there had been physicians, especially in England, well known for their attainments as classical scholars, but not since Linacre had a member of the medical profession achieved distinction in this field comparable to Osler's election to the presidency of the British Classical Association. It was a recognition of his sympathetic interest in classical studies and intimate association with classical scholars, as well as his mastery of certain areas of the field, particularly the bibliographical and historical. Further, he understood the relation of the work and thought of classical antiquity to the development of medicine, science, and culture.⁴

In our efforts to bring the humanities into medicine, we are surely heartened by Osler's example. Pellegrino, in challenging us to intensify our efforts to educate humanist physicians, cited Osler as a model par excellence and called special attention to those of his skills that traditionally have been identified with a liberal education—the ability to think, write, and speak with clarity, taste, persuasiveness, and moral sensitivity.⁵

Osler's skill with language evolved from his broad education. He knew the power of the word in healing, and how the alchemy of the word could be used in changing a life. He knew what the writer of Proverbs meant when he said, "The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life."

OSLER'S CALL AND CALLING

William Osler was born in a rectory in the frontier community of Bond Head, Ontario, in 1849. His father, a clergyman of the Church of England, had gone to Bond Head to establish an Anglican mission. From his early youth William was a knowledgeable student of the Bible and intended to follow his father's example and enter the priesthood. In pursuit of that goal, he actually studied divinity at Trinity College for a year before beginning his concentration in medicine.

When Osler was almost seventeen years old, his mother wrote him the following letter from the parsonage at Dundas:

My dear Willie, — . . . Papa had your letter a day or two ago and will probably write to you soon . . . about your remaining another

year at school. And now my dear boy let me have a little serious chat with you about entering the Church, which you say you have made up your mind to do. My first impulse was to thank God that he had heard my prayer and inclined one of my six boys to make the choice of that as his path in life. It is a matter not to be decided on hastily any more than is any other profession—take your time for consideration and above all search your heart for the motives inducing your decision, for remember that God always judges of us by our motives while man can only judge of our actions.... I send you a *volume of good advice* which was given many years ago by a good man to his son at Shrewsbury School. It is good for boys in all ages and at all schools. *Read it carefully and follow it fully*.... May God incline your heart to love and serve Him... is the prayer of your loving Mother,

Ellen Osler⁶

At this time William Osler was a student at Weston, a boarding school near Toronto, whose headmaster was the Reverend William Arthur Johnson, a high-church Anglican priest and distinguished biologist. Johnson was also the godson of Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington. As Osler recalled in later years, Johnson often read aloud to the students in the parsonage, selecting extracts from such works as Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*.⁷ This book, which had a continuing influence on Osler throughout his life, was the second book he purchased, and he referred to it many times in his published addresses. Fifty-two years later, in 1919, it lay on his coffin in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Another favorite book, *Varia: Readings from Rare Books*, by J. Hain Friswell (London, 1866), was inscribed in Osler's oldest brother's hand—"Wm. Osler from F.O. Xmas 1867."⁸ One of the finest essays in that book, "The Religion of a Physician," is about Sir Thomas Browne. One can imagine Osler reading that essay during his Christmas holidays of his first year at Trinity College. And one can wonder what impact it had in causing him to pursue medicine as an extension of his ministry.

During the summer holidays Osler worked in the office of Dr. A. Holford Walker, a family physician in Dundas, notable because he had a microscope. Years later Dr. Walker remembered Osler looking down the microscope and saying, "This is the work for me."⁹ Thus, when Osler returned to Trinity for his second year in 1868 he announced to his parents and to the

provost his determination to study medicine.

On numerous occasions Osler referred to medicine as a calling. For example, in his address before medical students at St. Mary's Hospital, London, October 3, 1907, he used the ancient religious term "calling" to emphasize what a commitment to medicine entailed:

You are in this profession as a calling, not as a business; as a calling which exacts from you at every turn self-sacrifice, devotion, love and tenderness to your fellow-men. Once you get down to a purely business level, your influence is gone and the true light of your life is dimmed. You must work in the missionary spirit, with a breadth of charity that raises you far above the petty jealousies of life.¹⁰

A statement about the word "calling," which has had such an honored place in our language, seems appropriate here. When calling is used, *Vocatio Dei* is implied, a term used by certain medieval preachers and mystics to describe the work of the faithful in their ordinary daily pursuits. The foundation of the notion of divine calling is the active presence of God throughout creation and human history. God and man are both workers in the world. As the basis of the concept of "vocation," work must contribute to the common life of all.

This contributory work is what Osler meant when he spoke of medicine as a "calling." The immediate question is: called to what and by whom? The call is from God, and it is a call to life. Ideals and spiritual values form the foundation of the vocation of medicine, a perspective that Osler never doubted. The physician has a mission, a calling, with a core that tends toward the sacred, that may even be sacred. Life cannot rightly be broken into segments, with certain experiences called secular and others religious. Religion can and should pervade all of life, for it is a devotion to the whole of life. If religion is thought of in terms of *divine vocation*, all life falls into a different perspective. To think in this manner is to conceive of religion as the calling forth of all of a person's capacities and skills into worship and work for the common good. Thus, priest and nonpriest are called.

In blending ministry and medicine, Osler had many great models. The first was his father, who on the frontier functioned frequently as both priest and physician. Then there was his beloved teacher, Father William A. Johnson, the priest and biologist who had had some medical training at Guy's Hospital,

London, and who frequently rendered medical services to his parishioners. Another teacher was Dr. James Bovell, who practiced and taught at the medical school in Toronto, was medical director of Trinity, and taught a favorite course on the subject of "physiology as related to theological conceptions." Later Dr. Bovell took holy orders and blended, in a more formal fashion, his commitment to ministry and medicine. Then one can reach into the distant past and select two of Osler's favorite models, Sir Thomas Browne and Robert Burton. Browne was a physician who was also a biblical and religious scholar, but not an ordained clergyman.¹¹ Burton, a cleric in the Church of England, has been described as a physician by "inclination only." He is referred to as a "whole physician," a title conferred by his holy orders and theoretical knowledge of physic.¹²

In seeing Osler's medical career as an extension of his priestly calling, one should not overlook his ministry of the word. Many of his addresses had a strong homiletical quality, and his papers, such as those collected in the book *Aequanimitas*, have been referred to as lay sermons. As noted by John P. McGovern in his foreword to Osler's essay "A Way of Life," an unidentified commentator on Osler's essay remarked that "the medical profession might well be proud of a leader who could, without affectation, preach a lay sermon which an archbishop might not be ashamed to have written."¹³ Furthermore, that essay and many others by Osler, described as resembling sermons, have endured for almost a century.^{14,15}

RELIGIOUS FAITH

Religion is usually considered to encompass five essentials: (1) a cosmology, (2) rituals, (3) theological systems and doctrines, (4) ethical and moral principles, and (5) a relationship to divinity.¹⁶ Although Osler's thought may at times have involved all five of these essentials, his major concerns were with the latter two—ethical and moral principles and a relationship to divinity.

Many have attested that Osler was reluctant to discuss religion from the standpoint of dogma or doctrine.¹⁷ That aspect of religion was of little interest to him because, at some level, he knew that discussion of dogma could be divisive. He also knew that when one tried to be too concrete about beliefs, debate over interpretation of doctrine seemed to increase and often separated

rather than united people. For example, in his Ingersoll Lecture, "Science and Immortality," he steered a careful course between what one could say as a person of faith and what one could say as a person of science.¹⁸ He knew that the need to maintain an inner sense of immortality in the face of inevitable biological death was a compelling universal urge and had been in some sense a part of human psychology since the rise of human consciousness. His knowledge of the world's great religions and of mythology made him fully conscious of that. He expressed his belief in the theologically based idea of a life after death as a form of survival and as a release from life's burdens into a higher plane of existence. His belief, however, did not rely on or contain a concrete vision of afterlife, and no such vision is prominent in many religious groups. Whenever any group has become too explicit in a doctrine of life after death, intragroup debate surfaces and threatens the solidarity of the group. In expressing his own belief, Osler spoke as a person of faith, who, while knowing something about doubt, also had had first-hand encounter with experiential transcendence and knew its power to break the ordinary bounds of existence. "On the question of immortality," he said, "the only enduring enlightenment is through faith."¹⁹

During Osler's youth and early professional life, the writings of Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley had generated considerable controversy. The controversy centered around "Genesis vs. Geology," and Osler was deeply interested in the philosophy of this new argument, labelled evolution.^{20, 21} Although Osler may have had some ambivalence about his childhood faith, his cousin Janet Osler described how he went regularly to church (St. John the Evangelist) and spoke of things religious with unflinching reverence.²²

In his Ingersoll Lecture at Harvard, in 1904, cited above, Osler characterized science as knowing nothing of an immortality of the spirit and described the man of science as one in a sad quandary: "He cannot but feel that the emotional side to which faith leans makes for all that is bright and joyous in life. Fed on the dry husks of facts, the human heart has a hidden want which science cannot supply; as a steady diet it is too strong and meaty, and hinders rather than promotes harmonious mental metabolism." In closing, he urged the audience to accept the perplexity of soul with good grace. As if describing his own long search, he predicted that they would wander

through all phases, to come at last to the opinion of Cicero, who had rather be mistaken with Plato than to be in the right with those who deny altogether life after death. This, he declared, was his confession of faith.²³

A fine statement on Osler's religious faith comes from Dr. Robert Palmer Futch, whose grandfather, Dr. Robert Palmer Howard, was Osler's devoted teacher and colleague at McGill. Dr. Futch's mother, in frequent contact with Osler from the 1880s through 1909, recalls him "as a frequent churchgoer, attending as he did the services of the Church of England. She also remembers him saying his prayers in his bedroom in Oxford. . . ."²⁴ Futch goes on to say that one cannot guess how many of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion (so prominent in the Anglican tradition) Osler subscribed to, but that at church he was surely warmed by biblical examples of loving concern. Also, no religious doubts ever appeared to obscure his warm charitable spirit that was clear to all and very likely emanated in part from his religious concepts. His faith in action is characterized by his statement: "We are not here to get all we can out of life for ourselves, but to try to make the lives of others happier."²⁵

Osler's frequent references to the "heart" or the cardiac side of life, and his avoidance of discussions of dogma, bring him close to an earlier Anglican divine and Oxford professor, John Wesley, who in bringing others into his fellowship would say, "If your heart is as my heart, give me your hand." This characterizes Osler's encompassing faith. In the same light was his counsel to the Yale University students in his address "A Way of Life," when he suggested that they begin each day with the Lord's Prayer: "Creedless, with it you have religion; creed stuffed, it will leaven any theological dough in which you stick."

Osler was close to Paul Tillich's way of defining faith as *ultimate concern*—concern as attached to an ultimate object, God. As mentioned, much has been written about the influence of Darwin and Huxley on Osler, a person in search of meaning, a quester who experienced the mysterious. Albert Einstein, in speaking of his own faith, captures what I believe also to be Osler's view: "To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in the most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the

center of true religiousness.”²⁶

In summarizing Osler's religion, one can say that he was a person of faith in an era in which science was in great conflict with religion. He was heir to a curious philosophic legacy from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: eighteenth-century Enlightenment and nineteenth-century reductive naturalism. These two traditions conflicted sharply with the Judeo-Christian tradition, primarily because God was ruled out.

Although confronted by this ideological development and drawing some strengths from it, Osler held to that faith which had served him well from his earliest years. That faith included the sense that a power greater than the individual exists in the universe, that the experience of this power is of supreme value, and that through this experience life acquires a new meaning, although the experience cannot be arrived at through the operation of reason.

While keeping abreast of the times, Osler held fast to the purpose and ideals embraced in his youth and became identified as a young modern and an ancient saint. He had a splendid model in Sir Thomas Browne, who, in writings such as *Religio Medici*, combined daring skepticism with implicit faith in revelation. Osler meant it when he proclaimed: “Nothing in life is more wonderful than faith—the one great moving force which we can neither weigh in the balance nor test in the crucible.”

THE WOUNDED HEALER

The healing quality in Osler's life has been stressed by patients as well as by fellow-workers. He was a healer whose charisma permeated the atmosphere around him. In his pity and understanding of those in adversity, his own soul acquired strength. His patients knew there would be no failure from lack of skill or interest in them. To those who had lost hope, he restored the desire to fight. Patient after patient testified that the hospital room was empty of all except Osler, the patient, and healing power.

We marvel at Osler's ability to use himself as an instrument of healing. Could there have been within Osler a wound from which his healing flowed? Was he not a wounded healer in the sense that such a figure is portrayed in the ancient myth of the wounded healer?

Charles Singer, the historian of science and medicine, was in

daily contact with Osler for nearly fifteen years when they were both together at Oxford. Singer was convinced that Osler was a melancholy man whose humor and seemingly light-hearted behavior served as a cover to hide a deep hurt that had never surfaced or been revealed. Dr. William Bean states that in one of Singer's letters to him, he wrote: "For some 15 years I saw Osler daily and he always seemed to me to be essentially a melancholy man. Witty, yes; energetic—abounding in energy, yes; flippant, even frivolous at times, yes perhaps. . . . Melancholy seems to me to be his essence, almost his driving force. Perhaps I saw wrongly but that is what I saw in him. I always felt that this is a man who had some deep sorrow. What that was, no living man knows."²⁷ Mention of Osler's melancholy disposition has also been made by others.²⁸

Was this melancholy the wound from which flowed his great sensitivity, his availability to others and their needs? Is it not one's own hurt, one's sensitive openness to the patient that gives the measure of the physician's power to heal? This is how Carl Jung interpreted the myth of the wounded healer, the myth of Aesculapius, paradigm of the wounded healer.²⁹ Further, "the mythological image of the wounded healer tells us that the patient has a healer within, and the healer a patient within."³⁰

A fine example of the wounded healer is described in Thornton Wilder's short play *The Angel That Troubled the Waters*. This beautiful one-act play, based on the biblical story of John 5:1-4, may help us to understand Osler's wound. The play deals with a physician who comes periodically and waits for the angel, hoping to be the first in the pool of Bethesda and to be healed of his melancholy and remorse. The angel appears, but blocks the physician just as he is ready to step into the water and be healed. The angel tells the physician to draw back, for this moment is not for him. The physician pleads with the angel, but the angel insists that healing is not for him. The dialogue continues between the physician and the angel—and then these telling words from the angel: "Without your wound where would your power be? It is your melancholy that makes your low voice tremble into the hearts of men. The very angels themselves cannot persuade the wretched and blundering children on earth as can one human being broken on the wheels of living. In Love's service only the wounded soldiers can serve. Draw back."

Later in the play, the person who was healed rejoiced in his

good fortune and turned to the physician before leaving and said: "But come with me first, an hour only, to my home. My son is lost in dark thoughts. I—I do not understand him, and only you have ever lifted his mood. Only an hour. . . . My daughter, since her child has died, sits in the shadow. She will not listen to us. . . ." ³¹

Possibly Osler had much in common with Wilder's physician. The similarity of their wounds helps us to understand, at least in part, why Osler loved so deeply and drew such strength from Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. This was one of his three favorite books, the other two being the Bible and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*.

ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY

Osler was not a formal or professional philosopher and left no direct writings on medical ethics. He did, however, write and speak persuasively about the basic moral questions in medicine. Further, he left us much about his philosophy of life and what it was that guided him and challenged his work and thought. For example, in his farewell address, "L'envoi," given in May 1905 at the dinner held for him before leaving America for England, he summarized the ideals that guided him: to do the day's work well and not to bother about tomorrow; to act the golden rule; and to cultivate such a measure of equanimity as to be able to bear success with humility, the affection of friends with pride, the meeting of the end when it comes with that courage befitting a man. ³² Of course, each of these ideals, which he had spoken and written about previously, would be subsequently addressed.

Philosophically, Osler was strongly influenced by William James and James's philosophy of pragmatism. ³³ Both physician and friend to James and his family, Osler referred to James as the "American Socrates." ³⁴⁻³⁶ Fundamentally, James held the view that it is not so much by thinking as it is by acting that a person arrives at an understanding of self and of the world. This Jamesian concept is close to Osler's answer to the question, "What is life?" Osler answered thus: "I do not think—I act it; the only philosophy that brings you in contact with its real value and enables you to grasp its hidden meaning." ³⁷

Osler's religious philosophy had a social gospel dimension that embraced his humanism. This quality shone forth in his University of Edinburgh address, July 3, 1910, "Man's Redemp-

tion of Man." Citing the progress in medical science as an example of man's redemption of man, he urged commitment to the development of new projects in curative and preventive medicine. He referred to the memorable phrase of the Greek philosopher Prodicus, "That which benefits human life is God," and suggested that it may come to be a new gospel of the glorious days of which Shelley sings.³⁸

When, in May 1919, Osler made his last major address, "The Old Humanities and the New Science," he was aware that much that had been developed to help mankind had been misused for destruction in the great war that had just ended. He believed that solutions could be found and that there had to be a change—to be more humanist—or there would be no civilization at all. He went on to say that the humanists have not enough science and scientists sadly lack the humanities. "The gospel of the right to live healthy, happy lives has sunk deep into the hearts of people." Such a desire can become reality only if there exists in the person the love of humanity associated with the love of one's craft, the joy of working joined in each one to a true love of neighbor. Perhaps in this combination, Osler stated, the longings of humanity may find their solution, and Wisdom at last may be justified in her children.³⁹

As has been stated, Osler developed no detailed system of medical ethics or philosophy in medicine. Despite that, one can, from his writings, extrapolate basic principles that can serve the practitioner of medicine as well as any code that has been developed. These basic principles or moral insights grew out of two great biblical admonitions that were very much a part of Osler's life: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" and "Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Today there is a major interest in examining death and dying from a variety of aspects, including the ethical and psychosocial. Osler read widely in this field and collected many books on this subject.⁴⁰ He was well known for his ability and willingness to keep company with the dying, to support and comfort them to the end. He could communicate meaningfully with his patients by both direct and indirect discourse, as noted in this story about his care of a little girl who was dying. It is one of the finest examples I have ever seen of sharing the truth by indirection. Osler's way of doing that was described by the little girl's mother, Mrs. McDougall, in a letter to a friend about

Janet's death:

He visited our little Janet twice every day from the middle of October until her death a month later, and these visits she looked forward to with a pathetic eagerness and joy. There would be a little tap, low down on the door which would be pushed open, and a crouching figure playing goblin would come in, and in a high pitched voice would ask if the fairy godmother was at home and could he have a bit of tea. Instantly the sick-room was turned into a fairyland, and in fairy language he would talk about the flowers, the birds, and the dolls who sat at the foot of the bed who were always greeted with, "Well, all ye loves." In the course of this he would manage to find out all he wanted to know about the little patient. . . . The most exquisite moment came one cold, raw, November morning when the end was near, and he mysteriously brought out from his inside pocket a beautiful red rose carefully wrapped in paper and told how he had watched this last rose of summer growing in his garden and how the rose had called out to him as he passed by, that she wished to go along with him to see his little lassie. That evening we all had a fairy teaparty, at a tiny tea table by the bed, Sir William talking to the rose, his little lassie, and her mother in the most exquisite way; and presently he slipped out of the room just as mysteriously as he had entered it, all crouched down on his heels; and the little girl understood that neither the fairies nor people could always have the color of a red rose in their cheeks, or stay as long as they wanted in one place, but that they nevertheless would be very happy in another home and must not let the people they left behind, particularly their parents, feel badly about it; and the little girl understood and was not unhappy.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

Many stimulating questions have been raised about Osler's call to medicine, the essence of his faith, and his silence on matters of religious dogma and doctrine. These questions serve only to illuminate the portrait of a man gripped by a divine calling. He is a person for all seasons, and today, and probably always, any who touch his life and work will be deeply influenced in the conduct of their lives.

As a final word, I draw an analogy between Osler's work setting and an experience by existentialist Martin Buber. Martin Buber has spoken of visiting Berlin, his former home. He went into the cathedral and felt an overwhelming sense of beauty and awe in the music, stained glass windows, majestic arches,

symmetry, and solitude. Then he left the cathedral and stopped briefly at the nearby Jewish cemetery. The hinges on the gates had almost rusted away. Some of the headstones had been broken, and others had fallen down. Among neglected graves were a few well-tended ones. A bird had built her nest in a tree and was watching over her young. While standing at the roadside and looking into the cemetery, he noted that he felt more at home there than he had felt in the cathedral. The cemetery and its symbols spoke to him of the real world—its losses, its broken relationships, the continuity of life, and the sense of enduring community. The cemetery's symbols and atmosphere spoke more about life as it is lived and the human condition than did the cathedral. He realized that he was at home by the roadside and in the presence of the cemetery, for that was the situation in which he lived and worked.

William Osler experienced brief visits to the cathedral but lived and worked outside of the cathedral, at the roadside near the cemetery. In this setting, this healer as minister, this minister as healer found daily a new birth and a new vision—and through it all left a heritage we celebrate and honor this day in Galveston.

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