



Medicine and Religion: A Historical Introduction

Gary B. Ferngren

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Medicine and Religion is the first book to comprehensively examine the relationship between medicine and religion in the Western tradition from ancient times to the modern era. Beginning with the earliest attempts to heal the body and account for the meaning of illness in the ancient Near East, historian Gary B. Ferngren describes how the polytheistic religions of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome and the monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have complemented medicine in the ancient, medieval, and modern periods.

Ferngren paints a broad and detailed portrait of how humans throughout the ages have drawn on specific values of diverse religious traditions in caring for the body. Religious perspectives have informed both the treatment of disease and the provision of health care. And, while tensions have sometimes existed, relations between medicine and religion have often been cooperative and mutually beneficial.

Religious beliefs provided a framework for explaining disease and suffering that was larger than medicine alone could offer. These beliefs furnished a theological basis for a compassionate care of the sick that led to the creation of the hospital and a long tradition of charitable medicine.

Praise for *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity*, by Gary B. Ferngren

"This fine work looks forward as well as backward; it invites fuller reflection of the many senses in which medicine and religion intersect and merits wide readership."? *JAMA*

"An important book, for students of Christian theology who understand health and healing to be topics of theological interest, and for health care practitioners who seek a historical perspective on the development of the ethos of their vocation."? *Journal of Religion and Health*

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