

Title: *Health as Liberation: Medicine, Theology and the Quest for Justice* (1995)

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This book, comprising a substantial introduction and five chapters, is based on a series of lectures delivered by Professor Campbell as a visiting fellow in the Religious Studies Department of the John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio in March 1994.

The central theme of the book is that health is best understood as "an aspect of human freedom". Consequently good health care is viewed as a liberation from bondage. The way health care delivery works in modern society however, is antithetical to freedom: rather it oppresses weaker members of society. This is the central issue for health care ethics for modern times.

Using ethical constructs and theological arguments from the genre of liberation theology, Campbell seeks to show why and how health care can respond to the needs of the whole community including the disadvantaged. He develops his argument along the following lines. There are two dimensions to health: personal and social. However, they are indissolubly linked. It is not possible to experience personal health in a society or community which is not conducive to it. Health is not so much "freedom from" (distress/pain/disability/anxiety/deviation from the norm etc) as "freedom to" enjoy (a sense of dignity/self-worth/community etc). Modern societies are not structured to promote individual health. Paradoxically, this is because the autonomy of individuals is their paramount concern. Society has a fixation on the power of technology

and sickness is seen as a deviation from the norm which should be susceptible to technological solutions. Society is aided and abetted in its attitudes by the "Medical-Industrial Complex" (a concept first introduced by Arthur Relman) which is driven not by a concern for healthy communities but by political and economic interests. Such a health system enslaves rather than frees, it marginalizes the poor and sick and disempowers rather than enhances self-worth and dignity.

An understanding of the teaching of Jesus as they are interpreted by the liberation theologians ("liberation theology" came out of South America in the 1970s) gives a perspective from which society could profit. Jesus challenged the social norms of his day and on the cross shared in the sufferings of humanity. The power of Jesus was not social, therapeutic, political or economic: it was the power of love and service to others, the desire to restore the outcast to the community. Liberation theology sees as one of the effects of sin, a withdrawal from others. Campbell argues that we will only develop community and individual health when we are prepared to listen to the voices of the voiceless in society, giving them the chance to be truly participants, not just recipients of largesse. In his early writings on stress, Hans Selye made a similar point about the importance of altruism to personal wellbeing. Campbell argues that the introspection of society with its emphasis on the individual and on internally generated values actually generates fear, stress and anxiety. Modern societies need to accept values from outside themselves if they are to be truly healthful. We need to emphasise the power of care over that of technology in our health systems and be morally committed to one another. Once we have such a process of health care and healthy caring, we will be in a better position to make the hard decisions about the ways in which available resources are to be equitably shared. If this is to be done equitably, some people will have to give up some things, but this is the price of liberation. The theories of

John Rawls are used to give a theoretical underpinning to an acceptable form of distributive justice in health care.

The thesis is a challenging attempt to demonstrate that spiritual and physical health are inextricably linked for individuals and communities. The level of scholarship shown is impressive. From an ethical point of view, Campbell's insights are persuasive and valuable. However, the theological arguments are not sufficiently developed. Is it possible for a society deeply committed to secularism to be able to reverse its course and embrace the teachings of Jesus, replacing self-interest with self-denial, autonomy with interdependence and so on, even if such a course might in the end prove beneficial to society as a whole? One can only be pessimistic. The essence of the teachings of Jesus as I understand them is not just that society should embrace his values, but that this would only be possible if people were open to the spiritual power which he provides to enable such a profound transition to occur in their lives. This is the function of the Holy Spirit. It involves the sort of major commitment to Jesus which fewer and fewer people in Western Societies are prepared to give.

The book is engagingly written. Each chapter presents an analysis of the particular issue under discussion, followed by illustrative examples from real life: the "voices of the voiceless". The theological perspective then follows and finally conclusions are drawn. One of its great values is that it challenges the unbridled utilitarianism which characterises so much of bioethics at the present time. For this, Professor Campbell deserves heartfelt thanks.