

Identity may not be a favored category in postmodern thinking, but it still plays an important role in both the historical reconstruction and understanding of faith commitments. This collection of essays brings these philosophical and psychological processes into interaction with the current state of investigation into historical Jesus scholarship in an excellent way.

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*Medicine and Religion: A Historical Introduction.* By Gary Ferngren. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2014. Pp. xii + 241. \$24.95.

Ferngren offers a solid historical introduction to the intersection of religion and medicine. Within his evident sympathies for the significance of religion as a lens for interpreting medicine and illness in general, he chronicles a complex story providing basic information along with insights regarding the intricacies of the relationship between medicine and religion. F.'s repeated integration of ethical considerations as part of the story of religion and medicine illumines his early statement that he seeks to advance a "perspective that is often helpful as we struggle in confronting illness to make sense of some of life's most challenging issues" (13).

F. thoughtfully maintains the tension of "naturalistic models of disease" (161) with supernatural assumptions regarding etiology and treatments across the centuries with the persistence of this tension into modernity being a notable thematic underpinning for the book. While his recounting of this relationship in the ancient and classical periods is enlightening and historically interesting, F.'s analysis is most insightful when discussing the developments of care for the poor in the early church and the development of hospitals in the Middle Ages. Concurrently, he notes the integration of Islamic medicine into this period with its tradition of prescriptive prophetic medicine juxtaposed with its increasing commitments to learned medicine.

An important and historically pivotal issue noted by F. is the Reformation's role in ushering in modernity by framing the care of the sick as a function of the state rather than the more prevalent models of care common to the Catholic tradition. He rightly highlights the significance of Enlightenment commitments to personal autonomy, privatization, and individualism—which some would attribute to a Reformation lineage in Western culture—as formative to understanding the intersections of medicine and religion within the US context. While F. notes that much of the best contemporary medicine has to offer is no longer directly related to religious worldviews, he challenges modern medicine to remember the practice of compassion as a continuing contribution from the long-standing engagement of many of the world's religions with medicine.

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