

From the President

The Peril of American Medicine

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America has been and still is the greatest nation on earth. It has held high the beacon of liberty and sought after justice for all, with distinction and noble honor. The bells of freedom peal loudly within our borders, and our prosperity has been the desire of many who are enslaved in poverty around the world. High ideals and visionary courage have not been lost among the threatening advances of cultural and political change. Although this letter will make scathing observations regarding our nation and our profession, we have reason to be very glad and thankful that we are free Americans and that we are privileged to be physicians.

The medical profession is in peril. If you are inclined to think this is stating it too strongly, consider that modern medicine is now regulated and controlled by non-medical entities. The practical implications of this truth will directly affect not only doctors, nurses, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and other medical professionals, but also, and most importantly, our patients. Our profession has been co-opted by the socio-political transformation of our nation into cultural Marxism. To state it negatively, control is what is at stake. To state it positively, our freedom hangs in the balance.

In medicine, the situation is so far gone that economic success today for physicians is unusual outside the hospital-governed medical-industrial complex. Physicians, as hospital employees, benefit from case-management specialists who are responsible for ensuring government and third-party reimbursements. The price they pay, however, is that they are now tethered to coding bundles and computer templates that do not tell the whole story. Whatever might be the latest promise from Washington, D.C., you can count on inefficiency and ineptitude at best, and deception, delays, and despotism at worst. Reimbursement dollars might be flowing now, but as one brilliant entrepreneur has said, "If you like your scam, you can keep it."

Standards of our medical professional ethic were founded upon principles of integrity, compassion, and sanctity of human life. This noble discipline, in order to preserve trust, must own its part in the fight for liberty necessary to preserve the patient-physician relationship. Because doctors have fallen to the scheme of pragmatic political enticements, we have failed to defend our freedom. Therefore, we must first acknowledge our failure.

We must then begin to think and work innovatively in two critical areas. First, we must recruit and win the next generation of doctors and nurses by exposing them to

our message and vision. We can do this by volunteering to proctor clerkships and rotations and by inviting students and colleagues to our meetings. Second, we must create "islands of liberty" by re-establishing practices that are not government-ordered or third-party managed. Workshops sponsored by AAPS are available to help in this endeavor. We cannot continue to say "yes" to government intrusion and submit to third-party control. If hospitals continue their usurpation of doctors' authority by contracted care and regulated reimbursement models, it will be our fault, and ours alone.

I am so thankful to be part of AAPS as we stand at this critical time, as no other professional medical organization stands, in the defense of the patient. For 71 years we have defended historic liberties and traditions that this nation has been given by God. So why are we facing this intense and vicious attack on liberty?

I believe medicine is in peril because America is in peril. In our broader culture, freedom is being exchanged for apparent financial security and the illusion of peace. Likewise in medicine, the heart and soul of our profession is being sacrificed for the same things. Economic incentives and easier lifestyles are the carrots offered to us in exchange for ceding power and political control.

Our nation has a heritage framed by and founded upon a Judeo-Christian worldview. This foundation has been under attack on all fronts by antithetical worldviews, which intend to replace what has birthed liberty and prosperity. Radical secularism and its political expression of statism represent our greatest threat to individual liberty and individual prosperity, both generally and in relation to medicine.

Henry Van Til, author of *The Calvinist Concept of Culture*, stated, "Culture is religion externalized." Cultural expression depends on the value of moral principles and their application. In *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine said, "These are the times that try men's souls." That sentiment, in evidence at the inauguration of our nation, is again evident at this hour.

What makes our day another of these "times that try men's souls?" We have become a society that denies moral absolutes because we have denied we were created by God. Chief among these denials is the value of human life. Abortion and euthanasia both are practical outcomes of rejecting a Biblical worldview. Since 1973 the *Roe v. Wade* decision has immorally legalized the destruction of innocent human life. To our national shame, this destruction has been protected by our government's legislative, judicial,

and executive branches. This failure to protect the sanctity of human life will inevitably lead to a growing acceptance of euthanasia, as enemies of true freedom continue to manipulate the minds and wills of susceptible youth who come to accept these as moral.

When a society embraces the culture of death, it is evident that there has been a denial of Judeo-Christian principles. Another framework of principles then operates to determine human behavior. This alternative discredits the basic societal building block, the family. We now are seeing marriage itself being attacked, its definition no longer subject to the “laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” Relationships ordained and established by God, namely husband/wife and parent/child, are no longer affixed with supreme authority and virtue. Now they are rendered obsolete and are exchanged for fornication, adultery, sodomy, bestiality, pederasty, masochism, etc.

The phrase “laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” comes from our Declaration of Independence, which stands as an icon of philosophical, political, domestic, and religious freedom. This document of freedom clearly and unequivocally validates the supremacy of Divine authority. It is no coincidence that such a Biblical perspective produces a culture of liberty and independence in any society adhering to it. To disregard its working foundation is to ultimately destroy freedom.

Therefore, it is not only enslaving, but lethal, for the social agendas today to push a culture of death and the culture of normalized perversions of human sexuality and family structure.

So, I contend there is but one answer to these issues, and others that follow from casting off our Biblical moorings. That answer is found in God and in God’s revelation of Himself.

The very fact that an institution like marriage is being redefined, and the fact that human life has been arbitrarily redefined, serves as evidence that our national peril is very grave. Our culture manifests an attitude of defiance against God, similar to a child insisting that water isn’t wet.

Yes, issues are multifaceted and multi-layered, but when one denies the absolute sovereignty of the Creator, morality, as a concept, ceases to have any meaning. Right and wrong become arbitrary and relative. Incidentally, this is a great irony in our public discourse. Those arguing for “tolerance” find “intolerance”—disagreement with them—intolerable. How is it wrong to believe that certain things are morally wrong if morals are arbitrary?

Morality surfaces as the defining value in the debate of cultural identity and human sexual expression. One’s basis of moral conclusion sets the foundation for decision-making. The Biblical standard is the design of the Creator God. The alternative, or antithesis, sets man as the standard or final authority. Who decides what is right, and on what basis? The answer to this question determines our conclusions for every issue.

In our arena of American medicine, is there a right way to pursue and a wrong way to avoid? Yes! We must actively reject the usurpation of our profession by outside interests such as government or third-party payers even if well-intentioned. We must aggressively fight for our absolute right to privacy in the patient-physician relationship. We must articulate these principles to educate the public and the next generation. If we do not, we will lose our ability to practice medicine freely. Our decisions will be made not according to what is right and best for the patient, but according to the dictates of an oversight committee or an advisory board. I contend this is evil because it denies the value of human life—our patients’ lives. It is a coming reality if we continue down our current path.

Science does not create truth; it discovers it. Knowledge is essential for survival, and the proper application of knowledge is wisdom. Knowledge, truth, and wisdom presuppose a perspective that is accurate. Therefore, epistemology matters. How did we get to think and believe the way we do? What is the basis for what we believe and how we behave? What shapes our cultural perspective?

The “whys of our ways” matters. I’m confident that faith in God, expressed in humble regard for Biblical instruction and wisdom that produces love and devotion for Christ, is essential to the correction of our individual and cultural chaos. “Natural Law,” reflecting design and a Designer, has been relegated to obscurity in our halls of academia.

Inspired poetry in Psalms 2 asks the question, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed...but he who sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” Public opinion, however strong and emphatic, which denies Divine demonstration, neither determines truth nor decides the ultimate outcome.

I am convinced we need a worldview change. The current ills in our medical profession, and culture at large, are merely symptoms of a more sinister, more deadly problem. Our society has rejected the reality of a transcendent God who defines reality in all areas—not just in religion, but in politics, economics, business, emotions, and morals. May we turn and acknowledge our Creator before it is too late.

I conclude with the Psalmist: “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

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