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### The Center, 1986, V1 N2, Summer

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# CENTER THE

Volume One, Number Two

Newsletter of The Park Ridge Center

Summer 1986

## International scholars confer on 'Caring and Curing'

...Thud...thud. The thuds, "dull sounds of heavy objects falling on solid surfaces," were made by 625-page packets of manuscripts falling onto conference tables. Twenty scholars of anthropology, sociology, and history of religion were meeting at The Park Ridge Center near Chicago earlier this spring to appraise the papers. After the books were on the tables, there were no more dull thud sounds; despite the jet lag people acquire when they land from places like Japan, Sweden, India, and Germany, the weekend's critiques were lively.

What was going on at the conference? What was in it for anyone else? Obviously, this kind of scholarly critique session is not what is today called "a media event." It had to do with the body, or, since religion was involved, the soul, but the project belongs very much to "the life of the mind." And for those interested in issues of health, faith, and ethics, much of the weekend's discussion and scholarly jousting provided a high level of intellectual excitement.

Perhaps a brief historical note will put this conference into perspective: In

1981 the foreplanners of The Park Ridge Center chartered a book on health and medicine in the Western religious traditions. In fact, they tried to include all of the "major" traditions, as they called them, in one fat volume. Out of these efforts has come *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the Western Religious Traditions*, which will appear in September from Macmillan publishers.

What became clear in a 1983 conference on the book, however, was that not only was the book bursting its bonds by sheer bulk; it had also gotten conceptually out of hand. While it dealt with twenty separate families of health in the West, it could only clump together and sample the stories of religions elsewhere.

It was clear that a second volume was needed. Once commissioned, the two volumes acquired the jocular in-house names of "The West" and "The Rest," the latter of which was later modified to designate Volume Two as *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the World Religious Traditions*.

Under the watchful eye of editor Larry Sullivan (Associate Professor of the History of Religion, University of

Chicago Divinity School), The Park Ridge Center solicited contributions and critiques from the people it considers internationally preeminent in anthropology and the history of religion and medicine. To assure quality control, all of the authors submitted their papers to the Center for distribution among other contributors and readers attending the Chicago conference.

What surprised both the Center sponsors and the participants in the conference was that nothing like this has ever been tried before. Another surprise to the participants was that an agency far from where they worked had found a constituency that would encourage and profit from such an endeavor. A final, unexpected treat was, for many of the scholars, a chance to meet their respected and respectful colleagues from around the world for the first time.

One of the first issues that the conferees chose to address was the problem of terminology. What do we mean when we use the words magic, religion and medicine? Is not one culture's religion another's magic? It was generally agreed

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Among the international scholars who gathered at The Park Ridge Center were (left to right) Bernard Ortiz de Mantellano, expert on the Middle Americas; Sudbir Kakar, contemporary India; David Carrasco, commentator on The Americas; Don Browning (partially obscured), consultant to the conference; and Larry Sullivan, editor of *Caring and Curing* Volume Two.



## Scholars gather, *continued*

that Western cultures tend to compartmentalize, keeping medicine discrete from religion, while Easterners tend to blur such distinctions, taking a more holistic approach to health.

Related to this is the matter of who the patient is when discussing caring and curing. In the West, the patient is a person with a physical health problem, an individual in need of treatment. However, conference participants stressed that non-Western cultures have a more cosmic view of the patient, including not merely the ailing individual but also his or her family, kin group, spirit world, and cosmos. The healer (e.g., *shaman*) must deal with all of these identities when giving care and administering a cure.

Some of the problems the conferees encountered were peculiar to a single religious tradition. For example, one author had been commissioned to study Islam from a historic perspective while another was to base his chapter on current realities of the same religion. Because of the nature of Islam, the resulting analyses were very similar, since it is difficult to distinguish between historic dimensions and modern manifestations of the faith doctrine.

However, other dilemmas were applicable to a wider variety of faiths, such as the question of who or what shall speak for the great traditions. In other words, when the practices don't mesh with the texts, which evidence is

to be used? The scholars in attendance at the conference were divided over which evidence is a more appropriate reference. Discussion soon turned to identifying core traditions; for instance, do the three mainstreams of Buddhism share a common core of problems?

Issues and questions such as these kept the conferees busy from early morning until late at night, without even

a break for a swim. These experts were engrossed in the thickness and experience of each other's world, and they were caught up in the excitement and challenge of bringing these traditions closer to home. If they succeed, more of the promise of The Park Ridge Center will be fulfilled.

The West and the Rest: perhaps in this case the twain *shall* meet.



Other conference participants included (above) Karen McCarthy Brown, Peter Antes, and Ake Hultkrantz; (upper right) Gananath Obeyesekere; and (right) Fazlur Rahman.



## SPECIAL PROJECTS

### Project to study role of faith in 'hospital room crises'

In March, 1983, Dr. Glen Davidson and several colleagues proposed a project which would identify "significant manifestations" of faith traditions as they appeared in the modern clinical context. Davidson, head of the Department of Medical Humanities of Southern Illinois University and Board Chair of The Park Ridge Center, proposed that Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisors from across the nation be surveyed to see how faith traditions actually function in concrete clinical situations.

More than half of the 900 certified CPE Supervisors of North America received a questionnaire which helped the project team develop a more extensive survey instrument. Next, a group of 234 supervisors received a followup questionnaire which explored in greater depth the supervisors' own religious profiles, their experiences with medical-religious conflicts, and their encounters

with classic medical-ethical problems. Responses from 157 supervisors made possible a preliminary set of conclusions which demonstrate the difficulty of identifying how faith traditions actually function in specific situations.

The most frequently mentioned faith-medicine conflicts were those between Jehovah's Witness members and healthcare providers over blood-related issues. Except for the unusually stark Witnesses-type of conflict, the supervisors generally believed that clinical problems do not appear in faith tradition categories, and that these categories do not adequately organize clinical reality.

The project has now entered its third phase: phone interviews with supervisors about the findings of the questionnaire. At this point, however, it seems clear that even these most religiously-attuned members of the healthcare team find that faith traditions

are not explicitly operative or even present in most healthcare situations.

That conclusion poses an agenda for further reflections at the Center and elsewhere. Why are faith traditions difficult to identify in a clinical context? How adept are chaplains and CPE supervisors at identifying faith traditions and drawing upon them in individualized healthcare situations? In the absence of explicit faith traditions, what resources are healthcare providers and patients using to help interpret everyday hospital-room crises?

Dr. Davidson's project has been an initial attempt to provide statistical data about the relationship between faith and medicine as perceived by hospital chaplains. As the project results are reported they will undoubtedly raise new questions and summon further research in this heretofore uncharted territory.





RESEARCH

New bibliography will address issues of death

A bibliographic foundation is being built at The Park Ridge Center to explore subjects which are both pathbreaking and responsive to current scholarship.

While long-range plans call for publication of select bibliographies ranging across the health, faith, and ethics fields, early efforts are concentrating on subjects related to decisions in the face of death. Within this important subject domain, AIDS, Death in the Media, Death in the Classics of the Faith Traditions, and Decisions Not to Resuscitate or Intubate are receiving initial attention.

The Center hopes to publish its first select annotated bibliography in late

1986. This and subsequent bibliographies will provide an overview of the literature pertaining to human approaches to death, with useful annotations of materials at the interface of the fields of health, faith, and ethics. The goal of the project is to produce a bibliography that is easily useable, provides a quick overview of the subject, is readily accessible, and is timely.

This pilot Center bibliography publication is coordinated by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Project Director of the Center's Decisions in the Face of Death efforts. She is being advised by Albert E. Hurd, editor of Religion Index Two; Julie M. Hurd, professor at the Graduate Library School of the

University of Chicago; and Joanne Crispin, librarian of the Lutheran General Health Care System

In future years, the Center intends to serve as a bibliographic resource for those who have specific research questions on other subjects related to health, faith, and ethics. As our capacity to provide more elaborate support to these inquiries increases, such additional services for Center associates will be announced in this newsletter. At present, however, we are unable to respond to such requests in any more than an informal manner. For further information contact Ms. Miller-McLemore at the Center.

PUBLICATIONS

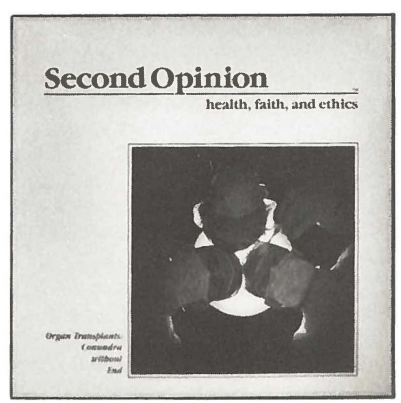
Second Opinion to feature Califano interview, focus on NICU

The inaugural edition of the Center's book-like publication *Second Opinion* was introduced in March; the second edition of this thrice-annually published review of health, faith, and ethics is scheduled for distribution in July. Volume One features an article on the ethical questions surrounding organ transplants and an interview with Arnold Relman, the editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Other highlights include pieces on hospital chaplaincy, nursing ethics, and "The Social Meanings of Illness."

The forthcoming Volume Two of *Second Opinion* focuses on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the ethical issues raised by our ability to sus-

tain babies born in ever-earlier stages of pregnancy. Also in this issue will be an interview with author and former HEW Secretary Joseph Califano and a trio of articles which address the Center's stated concerns of health traditions, faith dimensions, and ethical issues.

*Second Opinion* is sent three times per year to associates of The Park Ridge Center. For a limited time, persons and individuals who join the Center for one, two, or three years will receive the recently-introduced Volume One at no cost and officially begin membership with Volume Two. For the convenience of those wishing to become associates, a membership blank is printed below.



Second Opinion, Volume One, was published in March, 1986.

How to get a free Second Opinion:

Please enroll me as an associate of the Park Ridge Center and send me Volume One of *Second Opinion*. I understand that Volume One is free and my membership/subscription will begin with Volume Two.

☐ I'd like a one-year membership/subscription—\$35  
☐ I'd like a two-year membership/subscription—\$65  
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The Park Ridge Center was established in 1985 as an institute for research, discovery, and publication in the spheres of health, faith, and ethics. The Lutheran General Health Care System founded the Center to fill a perceived international need for the study of religious aspects of human well-being, especially as they relate to prevention and treatment of disease, interpretation of

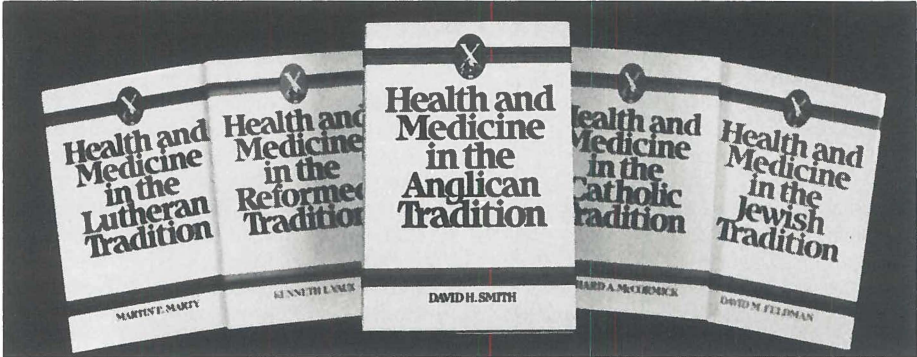
illness and health, and ethical issues connected with these matters. From its inception, the Center has been ecumenical, interdisciplinary, and open to ethical voices in the non-religious world. The Park Ridge Center welcomes responses from its constituents in the form of letters, research suggestions, and manuscripts for review and possible publication in *Second Opinion*.

PUBLICATIONS

Newest Health-Medicine book explores Anglican tradition

Like the previous four books in the Park Ridge Center monograph series, the recently-released *Health and Medicine in The Anglican Tradition* is designed for health professionals, clergy, and others who seriously struggle with issues of religion and medicine. Author David H. Smith explores how Anglicans face the question of suffering and death and studies the ethics of procreation, the ways of sexual being, and the responsibilities for justice in the delivery of health care services.

At the heart of Anglicanism and the way in which it perceives the world is the doctrine and the incarnation: the belief that God has identified with humankind in the person and mission of Jesus. This affirmation, author Smith



says, involves three subordinate themes: suffering, human nature, and community.

*Health and Medicine in the Anglican*

*Tradition* is published by Crossroads Publishing House, 370 Lexington Ave., New York, NY, 10017, and is available at religious bookstores for \$14.95.

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