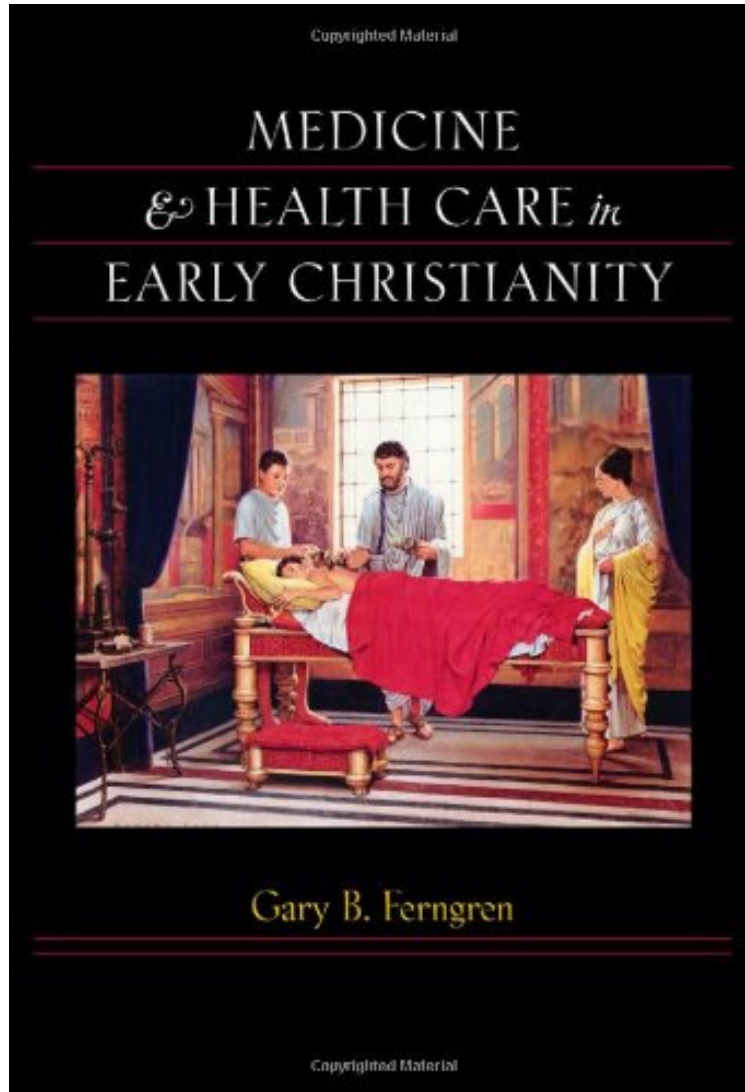


(Pdf free) Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity

# Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity

Gary B. Ferngren

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**Gary B. Ferngren : Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Rigorus Reserach Dispels MythsBy Christopher W. BogoshBook Review: Medicine Health Care in Early ChristianityGary Ferngren has done a great service for the church in researching and writing this scholarly book. The book itself is only 152 pages long but the endnotes and bibliography are another 100. There is a wealth of information in this book.In the first chapter, Ferngren explains method, approach, and primary references in researching this topic. He also explains why he engaged in this endeavor and that is because

much of the research in this field has been presumptive. In the following chapter, Ferngren discusses the early reception of Greek medicine into Christianity. He mentions Dr. Luke as well as some of the early Fathers who welcomed Hippocratic medicine. Moving on into the next chapter, Ferngren explores early Christian views of disease etiology. Here he dispels the common myth that early Christians saw all diseases as caused by demonic activity, and explores the naturalistic causes they saw behind some diseases. In chapter four, he refutes the common view that Christianity is a religion of healing. While he affirms the eschatological emphasis of physical healing at the second coming of Jesus, he sees Christianity cast primarily as a saving religion in the here and now. The next chapter considers medical philanthropy in the early church. Here Ferngren discusses how Christianity was the only religion in Greco-Roman society willing to care for those infected with diseases, exposed babies, and the leprous outcasts. In chapter six, Ferngren considers the early-organized healthcare efforts of the early church. Basil the Great founded the first hospital, and many would follow employing physicians and nurses. Ferngren provides some concluding observations and summarizes his study in the final chapter. Context is so important. As one reads the Gospels, it is obvious that demonic activity causes a variety of problems with people. The prevailing notion has developed that early Christians saw all illness and disease as attributable to demonic causes. This is simply not the case. Ferngren cites example after example of attribution to naturalistic causes directed ultimately by the providence of God. It is easy to forget that Jesus walked on the earth following Hippocrates and the advent of Western medicine. Dr. Luke was a physician trained in Greco-Roman medicine. Ferngren argues persuasively that it was not until late antiquity and the veneration of the saints that the church became more superstitious regarding illness and disease. Understanding original context is so important, and Ferngren does an excellent job to show why. Although the entire book is worth reading, I found this one of Ferngren's strongest contributions. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. I am a retired surgeon serving most of my time ...By [barrypartridge@xnet.co.nz](mailto:barrypartridge@xnet.co.nz) I am a retired surgeon serving most of my time in a public hospital resisting beneficently the inexorable drift into bureaucracy that has no knowledge of what a hospital is all about and where it came from in the first place. While there are signs of a turn around to the heart and soul of medicine, in our land, there is still a long way to go. While I have not finished the Ferngren book this is the kind of dedicated research that is just so necessary and should be in every library. We must explore our roots if we are going to get things right in this age of subjectivism that runs away with the truth often turning a text into a pretext which when repeated enough turns it into a heresy. Sincere thanks for getting this book so efficiently to me. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Learned a lot By M. O'Donnell I read a copy of this book from the library I work at. It was so good in fact, that I ordered 2 copies to give as gifts to our pastor and his assistant.

Drawing on New Testament studies and recent scholarship on the expansion of the Christian church, Gary B. Ferngren presents a comprehensive historical account of medicine and medical philanthropy in the first five centuries of the Christian era. Ferngren first describes how early Christians understood disease. He examines the relationship of early Christian medicine to the natural and supernatural modes of healing found in the Bible. Despite biblical accounts of demonic possession and miraculous healing, Ferngren argues that early Christians generally accepted naturalistic assumptions about disease and cared for the sick with medical knowledge gleaned from the Greeks and Romans. Ferngren also explores the origins of medical philanthropy in the early Christian church. Rather than viewing illness as punishment for sins, early Christians believed that the sick deserved both medical assistance and compassion. Even as they were being persecuted, Christians cared for the sick within and outside of their community. Their long experience in medical charity led to the creation of the first hospitals, a singular Christian contribution to health care.

"A succinct, thoughtful, well-written, and carefully argued assessment of Christian involvement with medical matters in the first five centuries of the common era... It is to Ferngren's credit that he has opened questions and explored them so astutely. 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." (Journal of the American Medical Association) "In this superb work of historical and conceptual scholarship, Ferngren unfolds for the reader a cultural milieu of healing practices during the early centuries of Christianity... His arguments are always compelling and usually convincing. He shows how Christians lived out their faith as a positive healing and caring witness, boldly living out their Christianity as a persuasive alternative to the failed pagan responses to fellow human beings in need." (Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith) "Readable and widely researched... an important book for mission studies and American Catholic movements, the book posits the question of what can take its place in today's challenging religious culture." (Missiology: An International Journal) "This is 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) "Medical historians and historians interested in the classical age will welcome this well written book to their libraries. Medical practitioners in every field with a strong interest in medical history will profit from reading it as well. Certainly, libraries at every medical university and graduate school will want this book." (Doody's Service) "Well written and well researched." (Catholic

Insight)"The story that [Fergren] tells is provocative for Christian readers who live in a culture of fear and who tremble at the thought of new pandemics." (Christian Century)"We must be grateful for this closely argued book and the light it sheds on early Christian health care." (Journal of Theological Studies)"Reading this book gives one the impression of discovering something new. One can see how some medical and social ideas were born, and how mutual relations between religion and medicine were developing." (Religion)"[An] excellent and thought-provoking work." (Medical History)"Fergren writes in an engaging manner that will be especially attractive to physicians who do not have a background in theology or Church history. This book would be of great interest to any Christian physician or health-care professional who is interested in learning more about medicine at the time of Christ and its impact on Christianity and, perhaps more importantly, Christianity's impact on the care of the ill." (Linacre Quarterly)"[An] excellent and thought-provoking work." (Ildiko Csepregi Medical History)"A highly important investigation in medicine and healing in early Christianity. A book that every scholar of healing in early Christianity should read." (Practical Matters)"Fergren's approach and evidence are persuasive and a wonderful introduction to an element of early Christianity frequently overlooked, misunderstood, or both." (Brethren Life and Thought)"A good book." (Catholic Historical )" Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity, written with deep affection for the subject, is a rich study, important for any scholar interested in the emergence and development of medicine in the Christian society of late antiquity." (Isis)"A very fine book. Well written, well researched, and remarkably original. It will have lasting impact." (Rodney Stark, author of *The Rise of Christianity*)

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