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THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOELOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

Nigel M. de B. Cameron, Ph.D.

The development of an understanding of bioethics which is rooted in the health care professions and set within the context of Christian faith will neither answer all our current problems nor readily commend itself to the secularists who largely adorn the bioethics arena. But it will achieve two vital results. First, it will enable those many physicians, nurses, administrators, and ethicists who work self-consciously within and lend the foundations of professional identity. These changes have gone hand in hand with a growing reduction of the medical "profession" to essentially a consumerist-corporatist exercise in the delivery of saleable skills to the market. Now in this context, how should Christian physicians and other believers who support them position ourselves? We must seek to maintain a presence within the medical culture of our day. But it must be a presence characterized by dissidence. As in the culture at large, so here, there is no virtue in withdrawal. By the same token, there is not much more in simply conforming to the image of the new medicine and being absorbed. We must be present, but present as dissidents. In order to prepare ourselves to engage in that kind of task, we must turn first of all to a theological understanding of medicine, which in turns derives from a distinctive perspective on the nature of human being.

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