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<http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/08/is_healthcare_a_commodity_a_necessity_or_a_responsibility_1.html>

**Health Care: Commodity, Necessity or Responsibility?**

*Health-care reform is an economic, political and medical issue. But On
Faith panelist and evangelical leader Jim Wallis says it's also a
"deeply theological issue, a Biblical issue and a moral issue." Do you
agree? Why or why not?*

Leaving out no "issue" - economic, political, medical, moral, theological - the health care question is *human*. And as the Bible leaves out nothing human, the health care issue is biblical.

A COMMODITY?

More than a century ago, a man made the mistake of saying to the man who was to become my father, "Everything's for sale, even your mother." I can still hear my father saying, "The only man I ever knocked down." Radical commoditization is rampant, runaway, ruinous capitalism. Jesus spoke a truism: "You cannot serve God and the Bottom Line" (for which he used the wealth-personified name, Mammon [for which the current spelling is "M-a-d-o-f-f"]).

Viewed as a commodity (as does the health-insurance industry), health care's primary focus is bottom-line: how can the company get and keep share-holders? The health of policy-holders is a secondary and instrumental concern. And public health in general is no concern at all.

A NECESSITY?

Health care is necessary to life, but whether it is a necessity in politics beyond the present legal structures continues to be an open question.

1.....Many Americans don't consider *personal* health care necessary: they just don't take care of their health. Should the public be concerned about their health even though they aren't?

2.....All Americans would like the public to take care of them when they personally can't (and their family and friends can't or won't). Here, "the public" includes both NGOs (non-government organizations such as Hospice) and government.

3.....Some Americans enjoy benefits from the socialistic components of American capitalism: SS (Social Security), SSI (Supplemental Security Income for the disabled), Medicare, Medicaid. (As China practices capitalistic socialism, America practices *socialistic capitalism*. In their pure-and-simple forms, neither socialism (communism) nor capitalism is practicable. Communism swells order at the expense of freedom: capitalism swells freedom at the expense of order.)

A RESPONSIBILITY?

1.....To the extent of their abilities, people are responsible for their own health care, including both sufficient rest and exercise (muscular and mental). Present American eating-habits are notoriously below current nutritional knowledge. We are not all poor, but most of us are poorly nourished. Not to be neglected is spiritual nourishment, howsoever defined. Each human being has *a moral responsibility for personal health*.

2.....Further, each human being has a moral responsibility for the health needs of the class of persons Jesus defined as "the neighbor," namely, *the person in need*. Around the world, thousands of Christian-founded hospitals are named "Good Samaritan" from Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Gospel of Luke 10:30-37): a foreigner personally and monetarily cares for a criminally wounded traveler. On the one-to-one (person) model, Good Samaritan hospitals are church-to-many (persons) and (indirectly) state-to-many (persons).

3.....The current On Faith question mentions all the dimensions of health care responsibility - economic, political, medical, moral, and theological. America's founding world-view is that we human beings are made "in the image of God" and have a moral responsibility to one another: there should be *no denial of that responsibility*, as Cain after killing his brother responded to God's confrontation with "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9)
(Jim Wallis' inclusion of the "Biblical" factor should apply to all five of the dimensions, for the Bible speaks to them all.)

4.....Adam Smith taught that order would emerge from freedom, and Karl Marx taught the reverse. Neither dealt adequately with the moral dimension, and Marx denied the theological. Answering both men, Max Weber took both dimensions into account, and reinvented economics. Now the time has come to re-reinvent economics, including health care. Microfinance (social business rather than profit business) is a highly significant reinvention of economics, and America has an opportunity and responsibility to*reinvent health care*.

5.....Tolstoy, following Jesus, said that societies should be judged from the bottom up: what is happening to the last and least? What an embarrassing question for health care in today's America! When I fell seriously ill in a certain foreign country, I offered to pay for my medical attention and was refused: "Here in......, the only qualification anyone needs for medical care is medical need." That country can afford its present medical bills: our country, with its far inferior (non)system, cannot continue to pay for ours.

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  AUGUST 24, 2009; 2:19 PM ET**

**Comments**

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Mr Elliot, you said

"Tolstoy, following Jesus, said that societies should be judged from the bottom up: what is happening to the last and least? What an embarrassing question for health care in today's America! When I fell seriously ill in a certain foreign country, I offered to pay for my medical attention and was refused: "Here in......, the only qualification anyone needs for medical care is medical need." That country can afford its present medical bills: our country, with its far inferior (non)system, cannot continue to pay for ours."

I could not agree more.

Did not Jesus say "As much as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto me?" Jesus judges the individuals' real motives by their exercise of true love in the way they treat others who are less fortunate.

I can understand those who do not believe in God, the Bible, Jesus, or Christianity, making the arguments that they do against health care reform. But how do religious conservatives who claim to be Bible believers justufy their opposition?

**POSTED BY: MGT2 | AUGUST 25, 2009 11:07 AM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Congratulations, Rev. Elliot, on the most reasoned discussion of the subject appearing in the panel. Indeed health care, at some level, for all is a wonderful goal but it is not an undiluted plus, especially the trade off between public benefit and freedom.

**POSTED BY: EDBYRONADAMS | AUGUST 25, 2009 9:00 AM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

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