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Illness of Body and Soul in Greek-Speaking Church Fathers

Martin Meiser

Diseases of the body pose existential challenges for the individual; an unhealthy and immoral lifestyle can also be conceived as a disease. Both lead to consequences for pastoral care.

The outline of the paper is as follows: First I will ask about the perception, then about the evaluation of physical illness, further I will offer evidence for the concept of spiritual illness used in anti-heretic and pastoral contexts. Then I will ask which healing subjects are named; besides Jesus and other biblical persons, charismatic healers of the respective present will also be mentioned. From the understanding of the church as a community, duties also follow for the believers.

1. Ancient Christian Perception of Bodily Illness and Medicine

1.1. Ancient Christian Perception of Bodily Illness

In general, there is no real interest in medical theory within patristic literature. Differences between the adherents of Asclepiades of Bithynia and Thessalos of Tralles, Athenaius of Attaleia, and Galenus¹ cannot be found in the literature of the Church fathers.

In their homilies and letters, Greek speaking Fathers mention externally visible illnesses like pestilence,² lepra,³ colics,⁴ worms,⁵ wounds,⁶ pus formation,⁷ inflammations,⁸ star (τύφλωσις)⁹ and their consequences like scarring,¹⁰ but also internal ones like fever,¹¹ fatigue after fever,¹² general weakness¹³ or liver diseases.¹⁴ The fathers are also aware that Short-cropped head hair strengthens the body against diseases¹⁵ or, on the other hand, overeating

¹ Cf. Nutton, "Medizin," 1113. Asclepiades and Thessalos emphasized the necessity to therapize not only the symptoms but also the causes. Athenaios of Attaleia grasped the "theory of the four saps" of Hippocrates and his adherents and implemented the term πνεῦμα for denoting the controlling power. Galenus developed within the Hippocratic tradition sophisticated theories concerning the human body and fostered especially anatomy, surgery, dietary, pharmacology and the interdependence of illnesses of the body and the soul (Nutton, "Galenos," 750–752). In the midst of the 1st century CE, Pedanius Dioscorides offers a detailed pharmacology, translated into Syriac in the 6th century.

² Ignatius, *Ep. Polyc* 2.1; Dionysius of Alexandria, in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 7:22.6, GCS 9/2:680.

³ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 17.4, Bartelink/Barchesi 72.

⁴ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 22.4, SC 257:128 describes the pains of the ill persons: "The pain and agony that this disease entails are well known to those who experience the suffering in their own bodies. ... The sick roll around like frenzied people, turn this way and that, stretch out their feet and pull them in. Sometimes they sit, sometimes they stand up and walk back and forth, all attempts to find some peace. So they often hurry to the baths, recovering some relief here."

⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 1.1, PG 31:165a.

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Paenit.* 8.2, PG 49:339.

⁷ John Chrysostom, *Paenit.* 8.2, PG 49:339.

⁸ φληγγμοναί: Clement, *Paed.* 1:83.2, GCS 52:138; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Eph.* 21.3, PG 62:152.

⁹ Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol* 1:7.2–3, PTS 44:24.

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, *Paenit.* 8.2, PG 49:339.

¹¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 138.1, Courtonne 2:54.

¹² John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 27[28].1, PG 57:344.

¹³ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 138.1, Courtonne 2:54 (ἀρρωστία).

¹⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 138.1, Courtonne 2:54.

¹⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3:62.1, GCS 52:271.

makes the body more susceptible to disease.¹⁶ John Chrysostom is familiar with the theory of the four juices whose imbalances lead to the various diseases,¹⁷ furthermore he knows that fever can develop caused by an excess of juices of the bile.¹⁸

Also, psychic disorder like dispiritedness¹⁹ and despair²⁰ are well-known. An interdependence between physical illness and pain of soul is sometimes recognized, especially in pastoral care in an ascetic context. According to John Chrysostom, Olympias should not devote herself to her dispiritedness.²¹ She should cure for herself with regard to her physical health: also tristesse can raise illness (Ποιεῖ μὲν γὰρ νόσον καὶ ἀθυμία).²²

1.2. Estimations of Physicians and Medicine in Patristic Literature

In the Greek cities of the Hellenistic period and after, there were physicians employed by the city, but also physicians who practiced freely, either resident or itinerant.²³ Sometimes also wealthy slave-owners employed slaves as physicians in order to guarantee the medicinal procure for the οἶκος.²⁴ There were highly qualified doctors, trained at one of the famous schools in Ephesus, Alexandria or Kos. Especially the city-employed physicians were subject to a procedure of selection and had to prove themselves by healing successes. People like Diaulus in Rome are not representative of ancient cities.²⁵

In ancient Jewish tradition, there was a divided perception of human medicine, based on Exod 15:26 (“I am the Lord who heals you”) which is sometimes interpreted as critique against human medicinal efforts.²⁶ This applies even for Philo of Alexandria,²⁷ despite his familiarity with medicinal tradition²⁸ and his positive evaluation of physicians²⁹ which allows the comparison of physicians with wise men, Moses or even God himself.³⁰ Other biblical and

¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 7:25.5, GCS 17:18; Basil of Caesarea, *Or.* 1.4, PG 31:168c; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Stat.* 5.6, PG 49:78.

¹⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. stat.* 10.2, PG 49:113. John Chrysostom justifies his arguing with medical theory in theological explanations with the example of the apostle Paul, who in 1Cor 15:36 used agricultural knowledge as an argument.

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. stat.* 9.4, PG 49:109.

¹⁹ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 174, Courtonne 2:111 (ἀθυμία); John Chrysostom, *Ad Olympiam* 3, SC 13bis:114 (τῆς ἀθυμίας τυράννις).

²⁰ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 174, Courtonne 2:111.

²¹ John Chrysostom, *Ad Olympiam* 3, SC 13bis:114.

²² John Chrysostom, *Ad Olympiam* 17.1, SC 13bis:368. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 174, Courtonne 2:111: Pusillanimity, despondency and despair (ἀθυμία, ἀπόγνωσις, δυσελπίστως ἔχειν) are harmful to the salvation of the soul. Another motif is tangled: Alcibiades, living as severe encratite, was rebuked in a revelation given to the martyr Attalus, he would despise the divine gifts. Alcibiades obeyed this revelation (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* 5:3.2, GCS 9/1:432).

²³ Wacht, “Art. Krankenfürsorge,” 831–836. In the countryside, medical care will have been worse.

²⁴ Wacht, “Art. Krankenfürsorge,” 837–838.

²⁵ Diaulus had worked first as a doctor, then as a mortician. Martial, *Epigr.* 1:30, 47, comments on this only by saying, that the effect was the same, to put people to death.

²⁶ Cf. SapSal 16,12; Ps-Philo, *De Sampson* 7 (Siegert, *Predigten*, 55).

²⁷ Cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:252: God is the true savior, not the mortal physicians (*Spec. Leg.* 1:252). Therefore, ἡ ὀλόκαυτος θυσία (Num 6:11) is offered to him, not to human beings.

²⁸ Philo, *Opif.* 105, knows Hippocrates’ teaching of the seven stadia of the individual’s development.

²⁹ Some physicians are successful in practice without deeper knowing of the reasons, other are excellent in theory and diagnosis but unable to cure human beings (*Det.* 43). Physicians are learned men (*Det.* 44: ἰατροῖς ... διδαχθεῖσι). A good physician does not use a single form of treatment for all his patients (Philo, *Jos.* 33). Philo admires also the ethos of physicians: they also help people for whom no hope is left, others should them regard as negligent (*Sacr.* 123). Of course, failure in success of physicians is also known (*Leg. All.* 3:226).

³⁰ For the comparison between the physician and the wise see Philo, *Sacr.* 121; *Congr.* 53; *Decal.* 150. Like a good physician, Moses relieved the sickness of the people plight, terrible as it was (*Vit.Mos.* 1:42).

post-biblical references (Exod 21:19; Sir 38:1–14) pave the way for a positive halakhic option. In rabbinic Jewish tradition, Exod 15:26 remains of course important. God is the true physician. However, the fact that people allow themselves to be healed is not merely human custom but can be justified by Exod 21:19.³¹

Also Christians are aware that only due to God's help, healing is possible.³² A critical point of view, concerning medicine, is offered also by Ps.-Macarius: Against the argument, God created the remedies for human use, he emphasizes that remedies are made only for the weak and disbelieving.³³ On the other hand, Clement of Alexandria quotes Sir 38 in order to justify knowledge and use of medicine.³⁴ In Christian tradition, Exod 15:26 is not explained.³⁵

In the first centuries, a rivalry between Asclepius and Jesus Christ was felt.³⁶ Tatian and Ps.-Macarius rebuked all those who sought to be healed by physicians.³⁷ Origen contrasts non-Christian medicinal explanation of epilepsy and Christian demonological one,³⁸ but against the denunciation of Christianity as a movement originated in unphilosophical masses, he dissociates Christian healing persons from magicians³⁹ and admits the God-given success of physicians.⁴⁰ In general, we find a positive evaluation of medicine; insofar, Origen and John Chrysostom can compare God's pedagogy which is sometimes harmful with the activity of a physician.⁴¹ Jesus healed physical diseases in order to expel the spiritual diseases from our soul.⁴²

Christian exorcists sometimes were successful, and the exorcism in some cases motivated the cured to join the church.⁴³ There are Christian physicians since the second century.⁴⁴ Some of them (not all) observed the rule given in Matt 10:8 ("You received without payment,

The lawgiver is the best physician for the souls (*Imm.* 57). In the public affairs, we can compare physicians with laws (Philo, *Jos.* 63). For the motif "God as physician of the soul" see Philo, *Sacr.* 70.

³¹ bBer 60a.

³² Origen, *Cels.* 1:9, GCS 2:62; Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. fus. tract.* 55.5, PG 31:1052b.

³³ Ps.-Macarius: Hom 48:4–5, PTS 4:314–15.

³⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2:68.2, GCS 12:198; in general, see Dörnemann, *Krankheit*, 103–121.

³⁵ We would expect an explanation in Theodoret, *Qu. Exod.*, PG 80:256d.

³⁶ Kudlien, "Heilkunde," 248.

³⁷ Kudlien, "Heilkunde," 244; cf. Tatian, *Or.* 18.1, PTS 43:37; Ps.-Macarius, Hom. 48.4, PTS 4:314. This author argues in a double way: Referring to Matt 6:25.31f., he states that the soul is more important than the body, and the ill person should not believe that Jesus Christ would be unable to heal him.

³⁸ Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 13:6, GCS 40:193 (on Mt 17:14). John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 57.3, PG 58:562; Theophylact, *In Mt.*, PG 123:332cd, follow the biblical text but does not repeat Origen's emphasizing of the contrast whereas Euthymius Zigabenus, *In Matt.*, PG 129:488d repeats the contrast between the physiological and the demonological explanation.

³⁹ Origen, *Cels.* 6:41, GCS 3:109–110. In later times, cf. Didymus Alex., *In Acta* (Cramer, Catenae 3:320), referring on Acts 19:19–20. Also in the reception history of Act 16:16–18 this is a motif, c.f. John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 29.2, PG 61:243: Paul imitated Jesus Christ who did not wish to have testimonies from demons. Amirav, "Application", 124–127, emphasizes that Christians in former times appreciated the success of magical healing whereas in later times they stressed the difference between common magic and sublime miracle-making in order to articulate the differences between the Christian and the non-Christian world; the emphasis lies on Acts 19:18–20 whereas Acts 19:13–17 sometimes is ignored.

⁴⁰ Origen, *Cels.* 1:9, GCS 2:62; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 26[27].6, PG 57:340.

⁴¹ Origen, *Cels.* 1:9, GCS 2:62; John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 26[27].6, PG 57:340; Dörnemann, *Krankheit*, 131–133.

⁴² John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 14.3, PG 57:220.

⁴³ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 5:7.4f., GCS 9/1:440–442.

⁴⁴ Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 5:1.49, GCS 9/1:422 (Alexander of Lyons); Epiphanius, *Haer.* 30.4.5, GCS 25:339 (an anonymous who is bishop ad physician); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 7:32.23, GCS 9/2:726 (Theodotos of Laodicea). Kudlien, "Art. Heilkunde," 244 mentions also Zenobius of Sidon (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 8:13.3, GCS 9/2:772), but in Eusebius there is medicinal profession is not mentioned. Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* 8:23.4–6, GCS 50:380, names Nicarete.

give without payment”).⁴⁵ Sometimes “physician” is given as the job title, when Christian deacons were active as doctors by profession, suggesting esteem.⁴⁶

In the fourth century, increasing Christianization gradually brought about a freer relationship with non-Christian achievements. The experience of unsuccessful physicians is present⁴⁷ but that does mostly not affect the estimation of medicine. The activity of a physician is a τέχνη,⁴⁸ and Church Fathers are aware of the distinction between medicine and magic, especially in the context of warning Christians against the use of magical practices.⁴⁹ Physicians and remedies are considered divine gifts.⁵⁰ This is the only reason why it is possible to compare God or Jesus Christ or an apostle with a physician. John Chrysostom recommends the physician as paradigm for the Christian priest who is the physician of the soul.⁵¹ The priest is to be treated with the same reverence as the physician.⁵²

1.3. The Familiarity with Diverse Kinds of Therapy in Christian Literature

Christian authors show a divergent degree of familiarity with kinds of therapy. This motif is also often used when bodily illness is compared with illness of the soul. In early times, cloudy sap of hyssop,⁵³ plasters and wet compresses are mentioned as remedies for fever.⁵⁴ In a metaphoric context (Jesus Christ is the physician), Clement of Alexandria names bandaging, grinding down, pouring, dividing by iron, burning, ablating.⁵⁵ Rebuke is the therapy of the ill soul by a surgeon, the passions are festering ulcers that must be cut open and exposed with the knife of truth.⁵⁶ Basil of Caesarea mentions preventive means in the case of contagious diseases, Gregory of Nazianzen exhibiting remedies and administering dietary.⁵⁷ John Chrysostom mentions e.g. plasters,⁵⁸ burning,⁵⁹ cutting,⁶⁰ exhibiting medicines and

⁴⁵ Kudlien, “Art. Heilkunde,” 246. I am not sure whether Tertullian, *Apol.* 37.9, CCSL 1:149 (*Quis autem vos ab illis occultis et usquequaque vastantibus mentes et valetudines vestras hostibus raperet, a daemoniorum incurisibus dico, quae de vobis sine praemio, sine mercede depellimus?*) refers to Christian exorcists or generally to Christian preaching; cf. Kollmann 362f. 378.

⁴⁶ MAMA III 167 (late 4th – 6th cent., Korasion in Cilicia); I.Cilicia 116 (5th – 6th cent., Anazarbos, Cilicia); Eph 3089/I.Eph 4206.

⁴⁷ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 9.5, SC 234:414. Cosmas and Damian are said to contrast their ability of healing and the unsuccessful medicine (Kudlien, 244, referring to *Mir. Cosm. Dam.* 20[49].).

⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2Cor.* 15.3, PG 61:506; Theodoret, *Provid.* 4.48–51, PG 83:620b–d. For medicine as τέχνη cf. already Plato, *Gorgias* 512d; Thucydides 2:47.4.

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Col.* 8.5, PG 62:358. John Chrysostom associates magic with paganism, presumably knowing that magical practices were common among Christians as well.

⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Col.* 8.6, PG 62:359.

⁵¹ John Chrysostom, *Sac.* 1:7, SC.272:96. Both sometimes have to use subterfuge to achieve their desired ends.

⁵² John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2Tim.* 2.4, PG 62:611.

⁵³ Barn 8.6.

⁵⁴ Ign. Polyc. 2.1.

⁵⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrept.* 1/8.2, GCS 12:8: καταπλάττων, καταλαείνων καταντλῶν, σιδήρω διαιρῶν, ἐπικαίων ἀποιπρίων.

⁵⁶ Clemens, *Paed.* 1:64.4, GCS 52:128. For the motif of cutting up of ulcers cf. also Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 2.18, SC 247:114; Gregory of Nyssa, *V. Macr.* 28, GNO 8/1:405.

⁵⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Or.* 14.2, PG 31:448 BC (against drunkenness); Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 2:18, SC 247:114.

⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Tim.* 14.2, PG 62:574 (φάρμακον ἐπιτιθείς); *Hom. Poen.* 8.2, PG 49:339.

⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Eph.* 19.4, PG 62:132; 21,3; *Hom. Rom.* 9[10].4, PG 60:472; *Hom. 2Cor.* 15.1, PG 61:502.

⁶⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 30.4, PG 61:255 (σεῖρα ἐκτείνων καὶ σιδήριον ἐπάγων ἐκτέμνει τὰ σεσηπῶτα τῶν τραυμάτων); *Hom. 1Cor.* 37.4, PG 61:320 (σηπεδόνα ἐκβαλεῖν); *Hom. 2Cor.* 15.3, PG 61:506 (τέμνειν); *Hom. Eph.* 19.4, PG 62:132; 21,3, PG 62:152; *Hom. Rom.* 9[10].4, PG 60:472; *Hom. stat.* 6.6: PG 49:89.

administering diet.⁶¹ Sometimes also this topic is part of a comparison between a human physician and God himself:

... if the physician eagerly attends it millions of times, and if he applies medicines to the wound, he does away with the wound. Someone was wounded in the face many times, and the physician mended the wound; nevertheless, the scar, publishing the deformity of the face, remained as evidence of the wound. The physician struggles emulously and does all he can to erase the scar; but he cannot, because the infirmity of nature resists him, as well as the weakness of technology and the imperfection of the medicines. When God, however, wipes out the sins, He leaves no mark. He does not permit even a trace to remain. Rather, He grants the beauty together with the health. Together with the deliverance from damnation He grants righteousness; and He makes the sinner to be equal with the one who did not sin. For He annihilates the sin, and He causes it not to exist and not to have occurred at all. He annihilates it to such a perfect degree that neither a mark remains, nor a trace, nor a proof, nor a sign (p. 117).⁶²

A good physician regards the circumstances of the individual patient.⁶³ Physicians ... “who are experts in diseases, from having observed the same ailment in different persons, often make conjectures on the basis of their practice and foretell what will happen.”⁶⁴

It is a matter of experience that the physician sometimes must overcome, the resistance of the patient’s desires which hinder the cure.⁶⁵ Little children are anxious if they see the physician burning and cutting, because they do not realize that a short pain is better than dying due to this malady whereas minded people take the pain suffer for a short time to be healed permanently. Like-minded people prefer the punishment for sin, not the sinning.⁶⁶

The motif of “Luke the physician” is not important in these contexts, because the author of the Gospel and of Acts does not describe healing procedures in closer detail.

2. Evaluation of Bodily Illness

2.1. *Illness as Divine Punishment*

Within patristic literature, this motif is used in parenetic and especially polemic contexts. The Greek and Jewish motif of worms as divine punishment against the despisers of a deity is used also by patristic authors.⁶⁷ In general, the topic of illness as divine punishment can be applied to the restoration of paganism⁶⁸ but also to heresy⁶⁹ or moral failure.⁷⁰ According to Ps.-Macarius, diseases are the consequence of Adams’s sin.⁷¹

⁶¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2Cor.* 15.1, PG 61:502 (πικρὸν φαρμακόν); *Hom. 1Thess.* 10.1, PG 62:455 (physicians prescribe not tasty, but useful drugs and dishes).

⁶² John Chrysostom, *Paenit.* 8.2/11, PG 49:339; ET: FaCh 96:117.

⁶³ Origen, *Hom. Ezek.* 3:8, SC 352:144; John Chrysostom, *Sac.* 6:4, SC 272:320.

⁶⁴ Athanasius, *V. Ant.* 33.3, SC 400:226; ET: ACW 10:48

⁶⁵ Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 2:18, SC 247:114, but cf. already Philo of Alexandria, *Mut.* 170: No dissolute man on his sickbed is pleased when confronted with the physician.

⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 9[10].4, PG 60:472.

⁶⁷ 2Macc 9:9; Acts 12:23; Papias, *Frgm.* 3:2.

⁶⁸ Cf. Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 5.2, SC 309:294–96 against Julian the Apostate: “Who would be able to describe accordingly the deserved illnesses of the wicked, their obvious collapse, their other various afflictions and blows adapted to their misdeeds, the extraordinary manner of their death, their confessions given in distress, their belated recognition, the rebukes which they received sometimes in dreams, sometimes in real manifestations?”

⁶⁹ Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 1:14.8, GS NF 5:57 (alluding to Acts 1:18), against Arius; Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 2.21, SC 234:242, against Asterius.

⁷⁰ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 17.4 Bartelink/Barchesi 72 (on John, due to his avarice which is compared to the avarice of Giezi, the minister of Elisha, according to 2Kgs 5:20–27; id., *Hist. Laus.* 18.19–21, Bartelink/Barchesi 88–90 (on a priest whose cancer was considered a punishment for sexual misconduct).

⁷¹ Ps.-Macarius, *Hom.* 48.5, PTS 4:315.

2.2. *Illness as examination*

The fact that illness is perceived as a test is related to individual as well as collective situations.

Illness proves faith,⁷² but also reminds us of our mortality.⁷³ Illnesses of the body are external whereas our internal being can grow.⁷⁴ Diseases can be sent by devil in order to weaken our love of God, but we can overcome it, aware of Ps 117[118]:18: Παιδέων ἐπαίδευσέ με ὁ Κύριος καὶ τῷ θανάτῳ οὐ παρέδωκέ με (“In disciplining the Lord disciplined me and to death he did not surrender me”).⁷⁵ Illness can strike us through no fault of our own, so sick people should not be stigmatized.⁷⁶

Concrete situations can mean individual and collective harm. Basil of Caesarea considers the protracted nature of his illness – it is a μάστιξ τοῦ κυρίου to be the scourge of the Lord: “since it is the scourge of the Lord which augments our sufferings by additional trials according to our deserts, I have acquired one infirmity after the other”.⁷⁷ This ongoing malady grants the grace of time for repentance.⁷⁸ An outbreak of collective pestilence in Alexandria is regarded by Christians as γυμνάσιον καὶ δοκίμιον.⁷⁹

2.3. *Illness of a Charismatic Person as Teaching for the masses*

Julian the monk was praised in Antioch; many people came to him in order to be cured. They should however in Theodoret’s view recognize that also Julian is a human being; therefore, a heavy fever befell Julian. He prayed to God to cure him if his health would be useful for the people surrounding him; God granted the pray, and he was healed.⁸⁰

2.4. *Denigration*

Whoever grieves over a disease does not make it better but worse; whoever grieves over sin finds a cure.⁸¹ Sometimes healing miracles are denigrated – they are useful only for the disbelieving whereas true Christians keep faith.⁸² Already in the so-called New Testament Apocrypha, the more importance of the spiritual healing is emphasized in comparison with the corporeal healing and the absence of fees in therapy of Jesus Christ against non-Christian practice.⁸³ According to John Chrysostom, the main problem is not the illness of body but the illness of the soul, the κακία.⁸⁴ By referring on Luke 10:20, John Chrysostom can state: “... to free people from a demon is not so great as to rescue them from sin.”⁸⁵ Therefore, John Chrysostom names the corporeal life ἀδιάφορον, using stoic terminology.⁸⁶ Physical illness is

⁷² Basil of Caesarea, *Hex.* 9.6, SC 26bis:510, referring on Ps 90[91]:13; Acts 28:3.

⁷³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Thess.* 10.2, PG 62:457.

⁷⁴ *Apophthemata Patrum* 7:23 (Syncretice), SC 387:354.

⁷⁵ *Apophthemata Patrum* 7:23 (Syncretice), SC 387:352. Translation of the Psalm quotation: NETS, 606.

⁷⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Hom. in Ps.* 14, PG 29:257c.

⁷⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 136.1, Courtonne 2:51. ET Way, FaCh 13, 278. Illness as μάστιξ also in Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. fus. tract.* 4, PG 31:1048c–1049d; cf. Prov. 3:12; 1Cor 11:30, 32. Cf. also Gregor of Nazianzen, *Or.* 14:18; 14:29f.; 16.5; PG 35:880c; 897a–c; 941a.

⁷⁸ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 136.1, Courtonne 2:52.

⁷⁹ Dionysius of Alexandria, in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 7:22.6, GCS 9/2:680.

⁸⁰ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 2.18, SC 234:236–38.

⁸¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2Cor.* 15,1, PG 61:503, in his comment on 2Cor 7:10.

⁸² Anonymous, in *Catena Graecorum patrum*, Cramer 3:410, on Acts 28:9.

⁸³ *ActIoh* 108, CC.SA 1:320; cf. Dörnemann, *Krankheit*, 72–73. The same seems to be true for *ActThom* 156, AAA 2.2:265, cf. Dörnemann, *Krankheit*, 75.

⁸⁴ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Eph.* 19.4, PG 62:132.

⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 41.4, PG 60:293; NPNF 1, 11:254.

⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Thess.* 9.4, PG 62:451.

not a matter of προαίρεσις whereas all vices are rooted in the badness of the soul.⁸⁷ John Chrysostom therefore can address the human mind as physician.⁸⁸ It is the work of the devil that we confuse illness and remedy, sin and repentance; the sinner feels ashamed by the admonition of repentance not by the sin itself.⁸⁹

2.5. Consolation

Not every disease can be cured⁹⁰, and there is untimeliness of one's departure.⁹¹ However, the limits of medical art in these cases were not considered an argument against medicine in general. One has to accept death and look for ways to cope with pain and grief. Christian literature of consolation has much in common with Greco-Roman literature, e.g. general mortality,⁹² death as sleep, life as loan, death as journey, grief as a sign of (temporarily admitted) weakness⁹³ and contrary to reason and contrary to mental health⁹⁴ but also the memory of the personal excellence of the deceased.⁹⁵ Christian authors added the motifs of God's dispensation⁹⁶ and providence, of death as purification, and of resurrection⁹⁷ and eternal life.⁹⁸

3. Illness of the Soul

The concept "illness of the soul" encompasses both spiritual and inner problems of human beings. In a wider frame of reference, this concept includes also terms of Christian self-dissociation from Greco-Roman and Jewish culture and inner-Christian quarrels. On the other hand, it is also a common topic in ethical contexts within post-conversional parenetic speech.

3.1. Anti-pagan and Anti-heretic Contexts

The first point is emphasized by Eusebius of Caesarea and Cyril of Alexandria. By this motif, Eusebius addresses the Greco-Roman "old illness of superstition" (δεισιδαιμονία) what means δαίμονική πολυθεΐα (polytheism).⁹⁹ Cyril of Alexandria relates the sickness of the

⁸⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Thess.* 9.4, PG 62:452, in his exegesis of 1Thess 5:10–11; cf. already Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 2.1, Reischl 38.

⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 11.5, PG 61:93, against high estimation of wealth, *Hom. 1Cor.* 11.4, PG 61:92–93.

⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Poen.* 8.2, PG 49:338–39.

⁹⁰ Whereas Plato did not accept any cure for such persons (*Rep.* 3:405c–408a), other authors do not share this severe position (Wacht, "Art. Krankenfürsorge", 842–843).

⁹¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 300, Courtonne 3:174–176.

⁹² Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 300.301.302, Courtonne 3:174–176, 176–178, 179.

⁹³ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 300, Courtonne 3:175. Emphasis on grief can underline the merits of the deceased, cf. Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 29, Courtonne 1:70–71, concerning the death of the bishop Athanasius of Ancyra: "What words could ever be found that would be able to heal such a great affliction" (ET Way, St. Basil, Letters, Vol. 1:73).

⁹⁴ Basil admonishes the mother of a deceased son not to make Nectarius', her spouse's affliction harder by wearing herself out with grief (Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 6.2, Courtonne 1:21).

⁹⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 302, Courtonne 3:180.

⁹⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 6.2, Courtonne 1:20; id., *Ep.* 300, Courtonne 3:176, referring to Job 1:21.

⁹⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 301, Courtonne 3:178; Cf. in general Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy*.

⁹⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Col.* 8.6, PG 62:359, in his comment on Col 3:15 fine ("and be thankful").

⁹⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 2:3.2, GCS 9/1:112. From a Greco-Roman point of view, Christianity of course is nothing but νόσος (Julian the Emperor, *Ep.* 41 to the citizens of Bostra, LCL Julian III, 135; id., *Ep.* 58, to Libanius, LCL Julian III, 207; id., *C. Gal.*, 327b, LCL Julian III 413).

Jewish mind and the Gentile lack of understanding to the fact that both do not realize, do not realize that Christ wanted to suffer in the flesh for our sake.¹⁰⁰

The anti-heretic context of use¹⁰¹ is favored by New Testament specifications (1Tim 1:10; Titus 2:1). Clement of Alexandria uses the concept of spiritual illness in a general sense.¹⁰² In later times, we also find sometimes general warnings¹⁰³ or summarizing remarks¹⁰⁴ but sometimes specifications: Marcion,¹⁰⁵ Manicheans,¹⁰⁶ Arius and his adherents,¹⁰⁷ Marcellus and Photinus.¹⁰⁸

3.2. Ethical and Pastoral Contexts – Vices as Diseases of the Soul

It was a common topic to Greeks, Jews¹⁰⁹ and Christians to compare illnesses of the soul¹¹⁰ with bodily illnesses, based on the philosophical concept, that affects and vices enslave human beings. Christian theologians use this comparison for sakes of pastoral and ethical admonition.¹¹¹ They propagate a life of seclusion and self-effacement free of the illnesses of soul like lawbreaking,¹¹² badness and sin,¹¹³ madness,¹¹⁴ envy¹¹⁵, covetousness,¹¹⁶ unrestraint,¹¹⁷ jealousy,¹¹⁸ wrath,¹¹⁹ drunkenness and fondness of dainties,¹²⁰ love for luxurious clothing,¹²¹ haughtiness,¹²² vainglory,¹²³ flattery,¹²⁴ lusts,¹²⁵ desires of wealth,¹²⁶

¹⁰⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *Quod unus sit Christus* 20, PG 75:1356d.

¹⁰¹ According to Dörnemann, *Krankheit*, 85, Pindar and Plato use the metaphor of the illness also with regard to the republic; Ignatius transfers this motif to the Christian congregation.

¹⁰² Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 7:90.4, GCS 17:64: An ill soul is plenty of fancies (ὁ τὴν ψυχὴν νοσῶν εἰδῶλων ἔμπλεως), cf. Plato, *Phaidon* 66c (εἰδῶλα παντοδαπά).

¹⁰³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2Tim.* 5.2, PG 62:626 καινοφωμία = v.l. in 2Tim 2:16: F G b d Lcf Spec.

¹⁰⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vit. Const.* 2:66, GCS 7/1:74 (μανία); 3:64.1–4, GCS 7:117–18 (against the adherents of Novatian, Valentinus, Marcion, Paulinus, Montanus).

¹⁰⁵ John Chrysostom, *Hom 1Cor.* 40.1, PG 61:347; *Hom. 2Tim.* 3.2, PG 62:615.

¹⁰⁶ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 16.7, PG 57:247; *Hom. 1Cor.* 38.2, PG 61:324.

¹⁰⁷ Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 1:4.7, GCS NF 5:10; *Hist. eccl.* 2:3.1, GCS NF 5:96.

¹⁰⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Hebr.* 2.1, PG 63:20.

¹⁰⁹ Concerning Philo of Alexandria, cf. the concept of “illnesses of the soul” in *Det.* 44; *Post.* 72, 74. He can denote e.g. cowardice (δειλία) as illness (*Det.* 51).

¹¹⁰ In general, affects are illnesses of the soul (Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1:4, GCS 12:92; Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 2.26, SC 247:124).

¹¹¹ Cf., in general, Blachos, *The Illness and Cure of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*.

¹¹² Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 2.1, Reischl 38.

¹¹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. catech. magn.* 8, GNO 3/4:31; Cyril of Alexandria, *Dial. Trin.* 6:6/595, SC 246:36 (φαιλότης καὶ ἀμαρτία); *Dial. Trin.* 7:13/653 SC 246:206 (ἀμαρτία).

¹¹⁴ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.6, PG 61:272.

¹¹⁵ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 62.5, PG 58:602; *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.6, PG 61:272 (βασκανία); John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.6, PG 61:272 (φθόνος).

¹¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Dom.* 1.1, GNO 7/2:7; Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. Brev. Tract.* 71, PG 31:1132d, name πλεονεξία.

¹¹⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1:83.2, GCS 12:138 (ἀκρασία).

¹¹⁸ John Chrysostom, *Virg.* 52.4, SC 125:292 (ζηλοτυπία).

¹¹⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives* 29.2, GCS 17:179 (ὄργαι); John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 26.1, PG 57:328; *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.6, PG 61:272 (ὄργη).

¹²⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2:93.2, GCS 12:213 (φιλονία).

¹²¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Col.* 10.5, PG 62:372–374, and Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 9.6, SC 234:416 (φιλοκοσμίαν).

¹²² Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. Brev. Tract.* 120, PG 31:1164b (ὕψηλοφροσύνη).

¹²³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 17[18].5, PG 60:570; *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.6, PG 61:272 (κενοδοξία).

¹²⁴ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 32[33].1, PG 60:676 (κολακεία).

¹²⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2:93.2, GCS 12:213, and Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. Brev. Tract.* 71, PG 31:1132d, (φιληδονία); Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives* 29.2, GGCS 17:179 (ἀπαταὶ ἡδοναί); John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 26.1, PG 57:328 (ἡδονή). Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.6, PG 61:272 (πονηρὰ ἐπιθυμία).

glory¹²⁷ and sexual sins¹²⁸ – but in the same context also fear and grief.¹²⁹ What we would attribute to different contexts they name in the same passage. Sometimes lists can be found¹³⁰; occasionally authors give a list of bodily diseases which they compare with diverse vices:

He saw him lying on the dung heap, ulcerated with worms, fevered, in the grip of hunger, the complete picture of sickness. Indeed, he was suffering from fever—for this is wicked desire; and inflammations had set in—for this is arrogance; and the so-called ravenous hunger had him in its grip—that’s greed; and there was putrefaction everywhere—that’s fornication; and blindness—that’s idolatry; and deafness and paralysis—that’s worshipping stone and wood and conversing with them; and extreme deformity—that’s evil, something nauseous, and the most severe illness. And he saw something worse again than mad people—us speaking and calling wood God, and the same with stone.¹³¹

In pastoral contexts, illness encompasses disbelief and doubt concerning hope, failing the apostle’s admonition Phil 2:14.¹³² The comparison between physical and mental illness also concerns external recognizability. Just as a hand covered with plasters and an eye smeared with ointment arouse suspicion of illness by the mere sight of it, so make-up and coloring suggest that the soul is sick in depth.¹³³

The necessity of moral healing in general is presupposed already in *2Clem* 9.7 where God is described as θεραπεύων. Our contribution is the repentance from ἄνοια and πονηρία (*2Clem* 13.1), distance from the desires. Fighting physical illness serves as a metaphor for fighting the evil within us.¹³⁴ An appropriate behavior can be concretized as eagerness to accept critique,¹³⁵ repentance, and prayer,¹³⁶ and ἀρετή.¹³⁷ To suffer offense is a remedy against all κενοδοξία.¹³⁸

4. Divine and Human Healers

¹²⁶ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 74.4, PG 58:684.

¹²⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. Brev. Tract.* 289, PG 31:1285b (φιλοδοξία); Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 4:59, SC 309:164 (δόξης ἐπιθυμία). That is typical for people like Empedocles but should not be typical for Christians.

¹²⁸ The authors name ἔρωσ (love; Clemens of Alexandria, *Protr.* 3/44.2, GCS 12:33) φιλογυνία and ἄσωτία (love to women and profligacy; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2:93.2, GCS 12:213) παιδεραστία (love to children; [Ps.-]Hipp, Ref. 4:15.4, GCS 26:50); ἄτοπος ἔρωσ (John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 32.6, PG 61:272).

¹²⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives* 29.2, GGCS 17:179.

¹³⁰ Cf. e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1:83.2, GCS 12:138: The illnesses of the soul are ἐπιθυμιαί ἀκρασία φλεγμοναί (desires, incontinence, inflammations etc.). Gal 4:16 is justified in Clements’s view.

¹³¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 11/12.4, PG 62:269: πυρετός = ἐπιθυμία πονρά, φλεγμοναί = ἀπόνοια, σηπεδόνας = προνεία, βουλιμία = πλενοεξία, πήρωσις ὀφθαλμῶν = εἰδωλολατρεία, κώφωσις καὶ παραπληξία = προσκυνεῖν λίθοις καὶ ξύλοις. ET: Pauline Allen, 247. We find this kind of comparison also in non-Christian Greco-Roman literature where a plurality of illnesses serves as metaphor for divergent vices (Epictetus, *Diss* 3:23:30).

¹³² Basil of Caesarea, *Reg. Brev. Tract.* 39, PG 31:11988c (ἀπιστία καὶ τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀμφιβολία).

¹³³ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3:9.2, GCS 12:241.

¹³⁴ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Thess.* 9.4, PG 62:452.

¹³⁵ Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1:88.1, GCS 12:141: Everyone who hints us to our sins is to be compared with a physician who tells the ill person what his illness is but is not responsible for the illness.

¹³⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 174, Courtonne 2:111; Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Dom.* 1.2, GNO 7/2:8 (προσευχή σωφροσύνης ἐστὶ φυλακτήριον, θυμοῦ παιδαγωγία, τύφου καταστολή, μηνσικακίας καθάρσιον, φθόνου καθάρσεις, ἀδικίας ἀναίρεσις, ἀσεβείας ἐπανόρθωσις).

¹³⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. catech. magn.* GNO 3/4:32: Virtue is the remedy for the therapy of the soul’s τραύματα caused by the sins.

¹³⁸ *Apophthegmata patrum* 16:18, SC 474:402.

This issue is relevant in apologetic and ethical contexts. Diverse agents of physical and spiritual healing are to be mentioned.

4.1. *The Healing of the Earthly Jesus*

The healing miracles of the earthly Jesus were part of the antagonism between Christians and Greco-Romans. Jesus' healings were an apologetic argument in early times of Christianity.¹³⁹ Justin claims the trustworthiness of the reports on Jesus' miracles in analogy to the reports on Asclepius.¹⁴⁰ Jesus is the real helper against the demons of the Greco-Roman religious world – many of the Christians were successful exorcists.¹⁴¹ According to Celsus, however, Jesus is a magician, a beguiler, with a bad demon.¹⁴² Origen refutes this critic: No magician would be interested to lead the spectators to moral mend whereas Jesus seeks the ethical progress of those who are healed by him. Against Celsus's remark on Jesus' inferiority when compared with Asclepius,¹⁴³ Origen refers to the great number of adherents of both Asclepius and Jesus.¹⁴⁴ Christians are successful as exorcists, which demonstrates the truth of the reports on Jesus' miracles.¹⁴⁵ But also in fourth century, the anti-Christian critique Julian the Apostate claims that Jesus did nothing out of the ordinary. Answering to this rebuke, Gregory of Nazianzen emphasized, that martyrs and other charismatic persons, who defended Christianity, were honored by the gifts of healing and prophesying.¹⁴⁶ Gregory of Nyssa defends the Christian claim of the world's benefit from Christianity against the critical question why Christianity was a relatively young movement within the world¹⁴⁷: God as ὁ τοῦ παντός θεραπευτῆς waits until nothing of wickedness can be hidden.¹⁴⁸

Christian authors occasionally try to answer the questions of devout inquisitive believers. One of these questions is why Jesus healed different people in different ways. According to John Chrysostom, Jesus healed often “by word, often by an act, often he also held out his hand, when the people were somewhat weak in faith, so that the cure should not seem to occur by itself.”¹⁴⁹

The motif of Jesus' healing ministry during his lifetime often served other purposes like confirmation of his doctrine¹⁵⁰ or contrasting his ministry to Moses' ministry¹⁵¹ or admonition to the believer to do good works.¹⁵² Far more important is the use of this motif in ethical contexts. Christians regard conversion as salvation from all moral disorientation.¹⁵³ In this context, the motif “Christ as physician” becomes significant, at first attested in *IgnEph 7.2*

¹³⁹ Quadratus, in Eusebius of Caesarea, *H.e.*, 4:3.2, GCS 9/1,302–305.

¹⁴⁰ Justin, *1.Apol.* 22.6, Minns/Parvis 136–138.

¹⁴¹ Justin, *2.Apol.* 5[6].6, Minns/Parvis 288.

¹⁴² Celsus, in Origen, *Cels.* 1:68, GCS 2:121–122.

¹⁴³ Julian the Emperor, *C. Gal.* 300b, LCL Julian III 374 also emphasizes the superiority of Asclepius who, after his ascension, “multiplied himself, and by his visitations stretched out over the whole earth his saving right hand.”

¹⁴⁴ Origen, *Cels.* 3:22; 3, GCS 2:218, 220.

¹⁴⁵ Origen, *Cels.* 1:46, GCS 2:96.

¹⁴⁶ Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 4:69, SC 309:178.

¹⁴⁷ Julian, *c. Gal.* 106 CD, LCL III 342.

¹⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Catech.* 29.1, GNO 3/4:73.

¹⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Act.* 8.1, PG 60:70, ET NPNF 1, 11:50, on Acts 3:7.

¹⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 26.1, PG 57:328. Theodoret names the earthly Jesus Christ physician for soul and body, rebuked by Pharisees, similarly to deviant adherents of Audianus who rebuked the so-called orthodox Christians because of seeming immorality (Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 4:10.5, GCS NF 5:228).

¹⁵¹ Ps.-Macarius, *Hom.* 20.6, PTS 4:190: Not Moses but only Jesus was effective in healing the diseases of the soul; cf. also id., *Hom.* 30:8, PTS 4:245.

¹⁵² Theophylact, *In Mk.*, PG 123, 508 C, on the duality of Jesus' preaching and healing in Mark 1:39.

¹⁵³ Tit 3,3–7; 2Clem 1,4–8; Justin, *1.Apol.* 14.3 Minns/Parvis 112.

and by Clement of Alexandria,¹⁵⁴ in later times by Athanasius,¹⁵⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem,¹⁵⁶ Gregory of Nyssa,¹⁵⁷ Ps.-Macarius,¹⁵⁸ John Chrysostom,¹⁵⁹ and in Syriac literature.¹⁶⁰ John Chrysostom latter develops this motif in a panegyric way:

Like an excellent physician he [scil. Jesus Christ] prepared very expensive medicines and tasted them himself first. You see, he followed virtue first and so gave it to us. And as a first antidote, he gave us baptism as a medicine, and thus we vomited all evil, and all ills were put to flight together, and inflammation stopped, and fever abated, and the putrefaction was cauterized. You see, everything that arose from greed and from anger, and all the other evils, were voided by the Spirit. The eyes were opened, the ears were open, the tongue spoke with a reverent voice, the soul took on strength, the body took on such beauty and bloom as is fitting for a son born of God to possess by the gift of the Spirit, such respect as is fitting for the beauty of a son newly born of an emperor to possess, who is being brought up in the purple.¹⁶¹

4.2. Other Healing Subjects

Sometimes also God¹⁶² or his word¹⁶³ is named physician. In addition, persons of Israel's history or biblical superhuman entities can be named or compared with physicians.¹⁶⁴ Abraham and Moses were physicians, everyone in his own generation, against the ill-minded contemporaries who did not worship the true God.¹⁶⁵ John Chrysostom combines this motif with anti-Jewish polemics when he names the prophets physicians against Jewish ἀκολασία.¹⁶⁶

Paul can also be compared to a physician.¹⁶⁷ He knows when it is necessary to comfort or threaten, when it is necessary to be indulgent or severe.¹⁶⁸ The motif of “Luke the physician” is not important in these contexts, because the Gospel of Luke and Acts are read as report on Jesus and the apostles, not as Luke's conception of them.

¹⁵⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives* 29.2, GCS 17:179: Jesus Christ is physician against the τραύματα of the soul, the affectations of fear, desire, wrath, pain, disguising, lust. In the context of conversion and baptism, the motif of Jesus Christ as physician of the body and the soul is grasped also in *ActThom* 156 (AAA 2.2:265).

¹⁵⁵ Athanasius, *Inc.*, 44.1–8, SC 199:424–430: Jesus Christ the physician and savior became a true human being – otherwise the gift of eternal ἀθανασία for us would not have been possible.

¹⁵⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 10.13, Reischl 278 (ιατρός [ψυχῶν] καὶ σωμάτων καὶ θεραπευτῆς πνευμάτων, healer of bodies [and souls] and physician of spirits). Reischl, 278 fn 2 gives reason for his omitting of ψυχῶν: the anthropology of Cyril is not tri-partite; cf. *Catech.* 3.4; 4.18; 16.13. Cyril's context is the explanation of the name “Jesus” = σωτήρ.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. Dom.* 4.2, GNO 7/2:45: Jesus Christ as physician concerning the affects of the soul (ἀληθῆς ἰατρός τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθημάτων).

¹⁵⁸ Ps.-Macarius, *Hom.* 30.9, PTS 4:246: God is the true therapist ὃς ὁ μόνος δυνατός ἐστιν ἐλθῶν ἰάσασθαι τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν. From the context it becomes clear that Jesus Christ is meant.

¹⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 14/15.11, PG 60:540: Jesus Christ as a physician against spiritual illness, in this case high estimation of wealth (πλοῦτος). Tabitha (Acts 9) is a good example how to abstain from this vice.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Ephraem, *Serm.* 7,145–148; Murray, *Symbols of Church*.

¹⁶¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Phil.* 11/12.4, PG 62:269; ET Allen 246f.

¹⁶² 2Clem 9.7, further John Chrysostom, *Stat.* 7.4, PG 49:96: God is a physician of the human soul in that He does not punish but strives to mend.

¹⁶³ Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Orig. Paneg.* 17/200, FC 24:208: The divine Word is physician and watcher over all human beings giving orientation for practice and belief.

¹⁶⁴ Of course, this moment is present already in ancient Judaism. According to Philo, *Leg. All.* 3:177, Jacob calls the angel the physician of the evils.

¹⁶⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Basilium fratrem* 2, GNO 10/1:111–112.

¹⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 37.4, PG 61:320.

¹⁶⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1:83.1, GCS 12:138 (justifying Gal 4:16); John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 74.4, PG 58:684; *Hom. 2Cor.* 21.3, PG 61:544. John Chrysostom uses a medicinal metaphor in his exegesis on First Corinthians: a boil serves as a metaphor for the Corinthians' arrogance, which Paul rebukes them for (John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Cor.* 12.1, PG 61:97).

¹⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Rom.* 1.2, PG 60:393.

Sometimes also other persons of later Church history are named physicians, e.g. Stephanos of Apameia and Protogenes as physicians against heresy.¹⁶⁹

4.3. Charismatic Christians as Healers

It is a popular motif in hagiography that outstanding Christians like desert Fathers and monks in general also have the charism of healing.¹⁷⁰ From the Greek-speaking East, the histories of monasticism written by Palladius and of Theodoret should be mentioned, which mention the motif again and again.¹⁷¹ Such healing art was attributed a promotional effect: Healed persons brought other ill persons to the monk in order to get help.¹⁷² Sometimes the ability of the charismatic healer is contrasted with the inability of the doctors.¹⁷³

Occasionally, the healing activity of monks is said to have extended even to animals. Concerning Thalelaeus, some people told that at his prayer many miracles happened and not only people, but also camels, donkeys, mules received healing from diseases.¹⁷⁴ Another kind of enhancement is the assertion that miracle-working powers emanate from a saint even after his death. According to Theodoret, from the coffin of Abraames flow healing powers of various kinds to this day.¹⁷⁵

Beyond these external aspects, we will consider both method and authorization of healing.

Among the various healing methods known in ancient times, giving water¹⁷⁶ or anointing with oil is occasionally mentioned.¹⁷⁷ The fact that other healing methods are not mentioned may be occasional. The most important method of healing, however, is prayer.¹⁷⁸ That leads us to the question of authorization of charismatic healing.

Among reflective Christians, it was common belief that God is the one who actually works the healing. God as θεραπευτής of all evils of the body and the soul who is the authority behind the monk.¹⁷⁹

Part of authorization or charismatic healers is the construction of an analogy to the prophets' or apostles' healing activity.¹⁸⁰ The woman bringing her ill child to Maisymas imitates the woman whose child is resuscitated by Elijah (1Kgs 17:9–24).¹⁸¹ Gregory Thaumaturgos as miracle worker is regarded successor of Peter, cf. Acts 3:8; 5:1–11.¹⁸²

¹⁶⁹ Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 5:4.3, 6, GCS NF 5:282, 283.

¹⁷⁰ For the evaluation as χάρισμα cf. Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 12.1; 39.4, Bartelink/Barchesi 54; 204.

¹⁷¹ Palladius mentions Benjamin (*Hist. Laus.* 12.1, Bartelink/Barchesi 54), Moses from Lybia (*Hist. Laus.* 39.4, Bartelink/Barchesi 204), Macarius the Egyptian (*Hist. Laus.* 17.13, Bartelink/Barchesi 76), Macarius of Alexandria (*Hist. Laus.* 18.11, Bartelink/Barchesi 84), Paulus (*Hist. Laus.* 22.12, Bartelink/Barchesi 126), Posidonius of Theben (*Hist. Laus.* 36.5, Bartelink/Barchesi 180), Innocent (*Hist. Laus.* 44.4, Bartelink/Barchesi 216). Theodoret mentions Marcianus of Cyrus who cured a young maid from a bad demon (*Hist. rel.* 3.9, SC 234:258–64), Macedonius (*Hist. rel.* 13.10–11, SC 234:492–496: He cured a young girl from a demon. He cured Astrion, a rich woman, from her madness by prayer and water, He saved the mother of Theodoret from miscarriage), James who cured fever (*Hist. rel.* 21.14, SC 257:90).

¹⁷² Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 9.9, 10, SC 234:422, 424; cf. id., *Hist. eccl.* 1:24.3–4; GCS NF 5:74–75.

¹⁷³ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 14.3, SC 257:12 (Maisymas).

¹⁷⁴ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 28.5, SC 257:230.

¹⁷⁵ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 7.4, SC 234:370.

¹⁷⁶ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 13.9, SC 257:492.

¹⁷⁷ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 18.11, Bartelink/Barchesi 84.

¹⁷⁸ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 18.11, Bartelink/Barchesi 84; *Hist. Laus.* 22.12, Bartelink/Barchesi 126; *Hist. Laus.* 36.5, Bartelink/Barchesi 180; *Hist. Laus.* 44.4, Bartelink/Barchesi 216; Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 9.8, SC 234:422; Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 14.3, SC 257:12.

¹⁷⁹ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 9.7, SC 234:420.

¹⁸⁰ We can theologially this line of interpretation prolong a step back: The apostle Peter's healing is the fulfillment of Jesus' prophesying (Joh 14:12) "greater deeds" (John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acts* 12.3, PG 60:102).

¹⁸¹ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 14.3, SC 257:12 (Maisymas).

¹⁸² Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Gregorii Thaum.* 10, GNO 10/2.42–43.

Athanasius of Alexandria defends the trustworthiness of Antony's healing miracles by reference to Matt 17:20; John 16:23–24; Matt 10:8.¹⁸³ John of Lycopolis justifies his preferential treatment of a Roman official – another client had to wait – with Luke 5:31: a doctor is not there for the healthy but for the sick (Luke 5:31).¹⁸⁴ Peter of Galatia is said to have healed a woman of fever by asking the bystanders to intercede, following the example of the apostle Peter's raising of Tabitha due to the weeping of the widows, interpreted as prayer (Acts 9:39).¹⁸⁵ Theodoret regards the healing of a lame beggar in analogy to the event reported in Acts 3.¹⁸⁶

Charismatic Christians also emphasize the necessity of the healing of the soul. A young woman's malady of eyes was cured by the monk Peter of Galatia. He cures her because she learns to abhor all φιλοκοσμία due to his admonitions.¹⁸⁷ The monk James is hailed because he suffered a lethal disease at his gall and overcome it by his virtue.¹⁸⁸ Sometimes the spiritual activities of monks are compared with the activity of physicians. According to Theodoret, Abraames "under a thousand hardships [...] imitated the art of the physicians of the body. He practiced healing, sometimes giving sweet admonitions, sometimes making people swallow more bitter remedies, and sometimes resorting to cutting and burning."¹⁸⁹

The ministry of a charismatic Christian is sometimes generally characterized as a healing ministry. At the end of his biography on Antony, Athanasius praises him:

"In a word, it was as though a physician had been given by God to Egypt. For who came to him in grief and did not return in joy? Who came weeping for his dead and did not immediately put away his mourning? Who came in anger and was not transformed into friendliness? What down-and-out pauper met him, and seeing him and hearing him did not despise wealth and feel consoled in his poverty? What monk grown careless did not gain new fervor from a visit with him? What young man coming to the mountain, and seeing Antony, did not promptly renounce pleasure and love chastity? Who came to him plagued by a demon and was not freed? Who came with tortured mind and die not find peace of mind?"¹⁹⁰

4.4. *The Ministry of Priests as Healing Ministry*

The comparison between physical illness and diseases of the soul has its counterpart in the concept of the priest as physician of the soul, attested, e.g., by Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzen, and John Chrysostom.¹⁹¹ That is the Christian variant of the Greco-Roman comparison between philosopher and physician.¹⁹²

But also the believer should imitate a physician if he sees another human being in prison due to sin and vice.¹⁹³ Sometimes people act as doctors without knowing it. The poor people are the physicians for the believers in order to facilitate their burden of sins.¹⁹⁴ Someone who offends his neighbor acts like a physician sent by Christ insofar the very evaluation of offense reveals the malady of the soul of the offended.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸³ Athanasius, *V. Ant.* 83.1–3, SC 400:350.

¹⁸⁴ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 35.6, Bartelink/Barchiesi 172.

¹⁸⁵ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 9.14, SC 234:430–32.

¹⁸⁶ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 2.19, SC 234:238–40.

¹⁸⁷ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 9.6, SC 234:416.

¹⁸⁸ Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 21.5, SC 257:76.

¹⁸⁹ Abraames, according to Theodoret, *Hist. rel.* 17.5, SC 257:40–42.

¹⁹⁰ Athanasius, *V. Ant.* 87.3–6, SC 400:358–360. ET ACW 10:92.

¹⁹¹ Basil of Caesarea, *Or.* 14.2, PG 31:448 BC; Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 2:26, SC 247:124; John Chrysostom, *Sac.* 2.3, SC 272:106–108.

¹⁹² Cf. Democritus, *Frgm.* 31 Diels, quoted in Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1:6.2, GCS 12:93; Seneca, *Ep.* 52.9; Epictetus, *Diss.* 2:14.20–21; 3:23.27.30 (The lecture room of the philosopher is a hospital). See also Dörnemann, *Krankheit*, 54–55 for further examples from Plutarch and Plotinus.

¹⁹³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 29.3, PG 57:362.

¹⁹⁴ John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1Tim.* 14.2, PG 62:574; cf. also *Hom. 1Cor.* 30.4, PG 61:255.

¹⁹⁵ *Apophthegmata patrum* 16:17, SC 474:400.

5. Duties of Christian Believers

Private care and sympathy for the sick were considered a self-evident duty in antiquity, especially within the οἶκος,¹⁹⁶ but also among friends.¹⁹⁷ In Judaism, there is a duty to visit ill persons.¹⁹⁸ In other rabbinical texts, biblical references are Exod 18:20 and Num 16:29.¹⁹⁹ Also in Christianity, there are diverse justifications of health care, e.g. imitation of God's mercy or biblical references like Matt 25:36; Luke 10:30–37.²⁰⁰ It is considered normal that the slave owner calls a doctor when an οἰκετής has a fever.²⁰¹ Visiting the sick was considered a duty.²⁰² The divine worship in both the Jewish and Christian communities includes intercession for the sick²⁰³ and acts of subsidiarity.²⁰⁴ To support poor and ill persons is a duty for wealthy persons who can legitimate their wealth in this way.²⁰⁵ Sometimes individuals have perceived this as a life task for themselves, to care for the sick, e.g. in monasteries²⁰⁶ or within the city.²⁰⁷

6. Conclusion

Eastern Church fathers address illness in pastoral and ethical contexts. In pastoral contexts, consolation, but also the rehearsal of dying are the main aspects. Spiritual accompaniment of the sick was considered a duty for Christians. In ethical contexts, the Church Fathers use the topic of illness in a metaphorical way, following Greek philosophy; but they use the concept of illness also for disbelieve, heresy etc. This discourse also is relevant for Christian self-dissociation of Greco-Roman culture. Charismatic healers were seen as successors of Jesus, Peter and Paul.

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¹⁹⁶ Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 4:125.3, GCS 52:303, quotes an unknown fragment of Euripides. – An οἶκος in ancient times included not only members of one's own family, but also slaves and freed persons.

¹⁹⁷ Wacht, "Art. Krankenfürsorge," 847–849.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Matt 25:26; bShab 127a; bSot 14a (referring to Gen 18:1: God visits Abraham when he is ill due to the pains of circumcision); bBM 96b.

¹⁹⁹ Wacht, "Art. Krankenfürsorge," 854.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Wacht, "Art. Krankenfürsorge," 876–880.

²⁰¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 74:4, PG 58:683.

²⁰² Polycarp, *Ep.* 6.1, Lindemann/Paulsen 248 (task for the presbyters); Gerontius, *Vit Mel.* 9; John Chrysostom *Hom. Rom.* 19[20].8, PG 60:594.

²⁰³ bShab 12a.b; 1Clem 59.4.

²⁰⁴ Justin, *1.Apol.* 67.6–7, Minns/Parvis 260.

²⁰⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 11.7, PG 31:348c.

²⁰⁶ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 13.2, Bartelink/Barchesi 56–58 (Apollonius).

²⁰⁷ Cf. Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 43.63, SC 384:264 (Basil of Caesarea); Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 14.3, Bartelink/Barchesi 60 (Isaias); *Hist. Laus.* 21.5 Bartelink/Barchesi 108 (Eulogius); *Hist. Laus.* 40.3, Bartelink/Barchesi 208 (Ephraem); *Hist. Laus.* 68.2, Bartelink/Barchesi 280 (monk of Ancyra).

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