



El conocimiento de la Medicina en los escritos de Basilio de Cesarea
El coneixement de la Medicina en els escrits de Basilio de Cesarea
O conhecimento da Medicina nos escritos de Basílio de Cesaréia
The knowledge of the Medicine in the writings of Basil of Caesarea

Eirini ARTEMI¹

Resumen: La medicina es un regalo de Dios para las personas. Basil insistió en que los monjes y muchas otras personas deberían usarlo en su vida diaria, porque es muy útil para el florecimiento de la vida humana. Conoce bien el campo de la medicina, por lo que algunas de sus referencias a problemas o tratamientos médicos se acercan tanto a las descripciones actuales de los libros de texto médicos. En su comentario sobre el profeta Isaías, se refiere a las definiciones de cirugía, hematoma, herida. Destaca los problemas médicos del embarazo y las enfermedades oftalmológicas. ¿Basil consideró la medicina mejor que la gracia de Dios? ¿Puede su enseñanza sobre la medicina persuadir a los cristianos de esta era a confiar en los médicos en lugar de en los milagros? ¿Puede su enseñanza y su actitud general hacia las enfermedades pandémicas del siglo IV ser un ejemplo para que las personas y los médicos enfrenten los problemas médicos como deben ser? ¿Hay fronteras entre la fe y la medicina?

Palabras-clave: Basilio de Cesárea – Cristianismo – Medicina – Enfermedades.

Abstract: The medicine is a gift of God to people. Basil insisted that monks and many other people should use it in their daily life, because is quite useful for the flourishing of human life. He is well acquainted with the field of medicine, so that some of his references to medical problems or treatments are so close to today's descriptions of medical textbooks. In his commentary on the prophet Isaiah, he refers to definitions of surgery, bruise, wound. He underlines the medical problems of pregnancy and ophthalmological diseases. Did Basil consider medicine better than the grace of God? Can his teaching about the medicine persuade Christians of this era to trust doctors instead of miracles? Can his teaching and his general attitude to the pandemic diseases of the fourth century be an example for people and doctors to face the medical problems as they should be? Are there boarders between faith and medicine?

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I. On the Connection Between Sickness and Sin in the Old Testament

The fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise had as a result the appearance of pain and sickness in the life of human beings. Their disobedience to God's order: "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die"² became the entrance of sin into the world and the advent of death, decay, and disease. "The effects of this disobedience were built into the very nature of being human"³. So disease became a basic part of human experience, though the Biblical story reveals clear that that's not the way it was presumed to be by God's original plan.

In the Old Testament the disease was thought as punishment for human sins and it had a role in God's plan for the salvation of Israel⁴. This principle was at the core of Old Testament's teaching and stated that those who kept God's will were rewarded with health and happiness⁵, while those who violated it were punished with pain and

² GENESIS 3:3.

³ GENESIS 3:16-17. ANANDA B. GEYSER - FOUCHE, THOMAS M. MUNENGWA, "[The concept of vicarious suffering in the Old Testament](#)", *HTS Theological Studies*, v. 75, n. 4, Pretoria, 2019, 1-10.

⁴ DEUTERONOMY 29:22-23: "The next generation, your children who rise up after you, as well as the foreigner who comes from a distant country, will see the devastation of that land and the afflictions with which the Lord has afflicted it all its soil burned out by sulphur and salt, nothing planted, nothing sprouting, unable to support any vegetation, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord destroyed in his fierce anger".

⁵ EXODUS 23:25: "You shall serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you". Ex.15:26: "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer".



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
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diseases⁶. Initially, the principle of retribution, the revenge referred to the whole population of Israel⁷. So in the Old Testament the idea of sickness was directly related to sin and had as a purpose to destroy the sinners whose sin was made by themselves or it was inheritance from their ancestors, “Every other malady and affliction, even though not recorded in the book of this law, the Lord will inflict on you until you are destroyed”⁸.

The disobedience to God’s orders had as consequence the separation from God. This condition brought sickness, misery and death in the life of the sinner⁹. Generally, in the Old Testament there was the form sin - punishment- disease and death¹⁰. Besides this sickness as a justification of the result of human’s sin, there was the view that illness was something natural for any mortal being. Qoheleth supported that death, pain and illness are a normal, unavoidable and natural part of life “under the sun”¹¹. Of course, sickness and sufferings were not always the result of sin. There was the example of Job whose suffering was not a punishment. Its ongoing purpose was to refine Job's righteousness to refine Job's righteousness.

To sum up, sickness and death was the result; God’s punishment of human’s sin in the most of Old Testament’s references. This punishment covered not only the person who did the sin, but sometimes the consequences of disobedience against God influenced his family, his ancestors or his whole nation. The exceptions of the connection sin - punishment- disease and death can be found in Job and in Qoheleth.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ DAVID HAMIDOVIĆ, “About the Blurred Concept of Retribution”, in D. Hamidović, A. Thromas, and M. Silvestrini, (eds), “Retribution” in *Jewish and Christian Writings A Concept in Debate*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe, vol. 492, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2019), pp 1-12, esp. p. 5: “The term נָקָם naqam) mainly designates the “revenge” of God against sinners as in Ex. 32:34; Num. 31:3; 1 Sam. 20:6; Jerem. 15:15, for example. In carrying out his “revenge” God wishes to restore the original balance of the world and/or the respect of the Covenant contract. “Revenge” therefore is a divine punishment”.

⁸ DEUTERONOMY 28:61.

⁹ PSALMS 37 (38): 3-4: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; There is no health in my bones because of my sin”.

¹⁰ ZEPHANIAH 1:17: “I will bring distress on men. So that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; And their blood will be poured out like dust”.

¹¹ ECCLESIASTES 3: 1-3; 1: 14.



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

Additionally, in the Old Testament, it is underlined that God was the great physician and healer in times of illness¹². It was He that restored people to health by using human “instruments” like medicines, physicians and of course His divine intervention, “The Lord created medicines from the earth, and a sensible person will not hesitate to use them. Didn't a tree once make bitter water fit to drink, so that the Lord's power might be known? He gave medical knowledge to human beings, so that we would praise him for the miracles he performs. The druggist mixes these medicines, and the doctor will use them to cure diseases and ease pain. There is no end to the activities of the Lord, who gives health to the people of the world. My child, when you get sick, don't ignore it. Pray to the Lord, and he will make you well”¹³.

II. On the Connection Between Sickness and Sin in the New Testament

In the New Testament the sickness and death are not connected always with the sin. In the story of the blind man, his blindness was not the result of his sin or of any sin of his parents. It was blind, in order to Christ to reveal His divinity and glory: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world”¹⁴.

The texts in the New Testament clearly indicate that the reason for someone to be healed from any sickness is primarily to be healed from his passions. Another important reason for someone's healing was his faith to God or the faith of his relatives¹⁵. After the healing many of the previous ill people glorified God and thanked Him for their recovering. In the episode that Christ healed Peter's mother-in-law, it was stated that “the fever left her. She arose and served Him”¹⁶. And in the

¹² EXODUS 15: 26; 2 CHRONICLES 7: 14; PSALM. 106 (107): 20.

¹³ WISDOM OF SIRACH 38: 1-9.

¹⁴ JOHN 9:3.

¹⁵ MARK 9:14-29; MARK 2:3-12; MATTHEW 9:2-8; LUKE 5:17-26; MATTHEW 8:5- 13; LUKE 7:2-10; JOHN 4:47-54.

¹⁶ MATTHEW 8:14-15; MARK 1:30; LUKE 4:38.



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

healing of the paralytic it is noted “he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God”¹⁷.

The healing of the diseases and the resurrection of dead people showed that the only way for someone’s recovery from an illness was to be purified from the sins, to believe in God and to ask His help. Kris D’ Atri underlines that “The healings served as evidence that the Kingdom of God had come; they affirmed Jesus’ authority as son of God; they revealed God’s mighty power in the world”¹⁸. In the Kingdom of God, man will become free from the slavery of sin. He will obtain again the goods of his primordial situation before the original sin. The Preternatural Gifts of Integrity, Immortality,¹⁹ Infused Knowledge, and Impassibility - Don't feel pain or harm-, Freedom from concupiscence -sexual desire-, ignorance, and sin, Lordship over the earth.²⁰

In the Acts, the Apostles managed to heal people on the name of Christ, but before that they had prayed to God, so they connected the health with the prayer, the faith and the relevance of God’s glory. Peter in his epistle explained the spiritual aspects of healing: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed”²¹.

Of course, the faith is important for healing of any disease, but nowhere in Bible we have any references that Christians should not go for a treatment to a doctor or to

¹⁷ LUKE 5:25.

¹⁸ KRIS D’ ATRI, “[Health and Healing in the New Testament](#)”, 9-10.

¹⁹ NIKOLAOS P. VASILIADES, *Mystery of Death*, (Athens: Sotir, 1980), (in greek) 59, 60: “However, we must make two basic clarifications. First, the immortality of the soul was not its natural attribute; it is a gift of grace of God. Secondly, in this way the creation of the body and of its soul, which is the work of the unalloyed divine love, also demonstrates the savior of divine wisdom and the divine economy about human being. And behold why? If God created man immortal, then the man would have to be without inclination to the sin, then God would limit the freedom of man. If again God created man mortal, he would be responsible for his death,” Cf EIRINI ARTEMI, “[Firstborn from the dead became. The death and the resurrection of the incarnate Word in the texts of Cyril of Alexandria](#),” (in greek) *24grammata*, 2014, 1-2, ref. 4.

²⁰ NIKOLAOS E. MITSOPOULOS, *Introduction into Orthodox Dogmatic and Ethic Theology*, (Athens 1993), (in greek) 118, 119. Eirini Artemi, “Firstborn from the dead became”, (in greek) 1-2, ref. 4.

²¹ I PETER. 2:24.



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

have a medicine healing. For this reason in Christianity, there were and are many doctors who try to heal people. Generally, we could say with certainty that there are two ways that God accomplishes healing in this world. The first category is through natural law's healing which is beautifully exemplified through medicine in every era. The second category is through supernatural acts of healing that are alive and well today, and best understood through the Word of God, not the scientific method.

III. Basil of Caesarea, the science of Medicine and his knowledge about it

Basil of Caesarea served God and people as a bishop and as a doctor. He had studied medicine, because he wanted to learn more about his fragile health as Gregory Nazianzus referred on his funeral oration on Basil: "Medicine, the result of philosophy and laboriousness, was rendered necessary for him by his physical delicacy, and his care of the sick. From these beginnings he attained to a mastery of the art, not only in its empirical and practical branches, but also in its theory and principles"²².

Basil underlines that medicine was the gift of God to people. He reasoned that God created plants, minerals, and sea creatures to feed people and gave humans the intellectual ability to use them as cures. The medical art had been vouchsafed people by God and was given to men to relieve the sick, in some degree at least²³, but this should not make people reject the hope in God²⁴. At the same time, Basil supports

²² GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Funeral Oration on Basil the Great*, Or. 43, 23. 61-6, PG 36, 528B.

²³ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Ascetical Works: The Long Rules*, 55, engl. trans. by M. Monica Wagner, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Vol. 9, Wash., D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962, p. 59-60 (=PG 31, 1044BC): "the medical art has been vouchsafed us by God, who directs our whole life, as a model for the cure of the soul, to guide us in the removal of what is superfluous and in the addition of what is lacking. Just as we would have no need of the farmer's labor and toil if we were living amid the delights of paradise, so also we would not require the medical art for relief if we were immune to disease, as was the case, by God's gift, at the time of Creation before the Fall. After our banishment to this place, however, and after we had heard the words: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread,' through prolonged effort and hard labor in tilling the soil we devised the art of agriculture for the alleviation of the miseries which followed the curse, God vouchsafing us the knowledge and understanding of this art. And, when we were commanded to return to the earth whence we had been taken and were united with the pain ridden flesh doomed to destruction because of sin and, for the same reason, also subject to disease, the medical art was given to us to relieve the sick".

²⁴ *Ibidem*.



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

with passion the use of medicine by ordinary people and even by monks, because he argues that the medical art produces very important and useful fruits²⁵. In his writings there are “numerous references and allegories relating the physician’s role as one of physical healer who grasps the metaphysical elements of life through the practice of the medical arts”²⁶. Basil argues that when a physician heals with medicines, people experience a miracle of God’s creation no less wonderful than those of the Bible. But he supports with emphasis that all healing ultimately has its routes to God: “God sometimes cures us... without visible means when he judges this mode of treatment beneficial to our souls; and again He wills that we use material remedies for our ills... to provide an example for the proper care of the soul”²⁷.

Basil tries hard convincing Christians that medical science was a donation from God to people, not a pagan deception. By purifying medicine of pagan associations, the bishop of Caesarea rejected doubts and misunderstandings that bishops or wealthy Christians harboured about supporting institutions that provided medical care or using for healing from any disease the medical art²⁸. He supports that people who are weak and ill need the service of medicine²⁹. The medical art uses medicines which sometimes are bitter but they help human body to be cured and heal a lot of illness which can be deadly for man³⁰.

The bishop of Caesarea himself is well acquainted with many details in the field of medicine, so that some of his references to medical problems or treatments are so close to today's descriptions of medical textbooks. Specifically, besides the information about the conception of a child and its pregnancy in the womb by the

²⁵ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Hexaemeron*, 5.4.20, PG 29, 101C. EIRINI ARTEMI, “Church Fathers and the development of medicine in their writings”, *Papyri - Scientific Journal*, 6 (2017), 21-31, esp. p. 25, www.academy.edu.gr.

²⁶ JOHN W. LOVE, “The Concept of Medicine in the Early Church”, *The Linacre Quarterly*, 75:3, (2008) 225-238, esp. 233. DOI: 10.1179/002436308803889503.

²⁷ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Ascetical Works: The Long Rules*, 55, PG 31, 1045CD, transl. by Timothy Miller in Timothy S. Miller, “Basil’s House of Healing”, *Christian History* 101 (2011), 30-36, esp. 35.

²⁸ TIMOTHY S. MILLER, “Basil’s House of Healing”, esp. 35.

²⁹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homily on the beginning of the Proverbs*, PG 31, 393B.

³⁰ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Ascetical Works: The Long Rules*, 55, english trans. by Wagner, Ididem, 61 (=PG 31, 1044D).



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

mother³¹ in the writings of St. Basil the great someone can read the most detailed description of surgery, bruise and trauma which can be parallelized with today scientific texts³².

Basil speaks about human body, showing his knowledge about physiology and medicine. He bases on them in order to explain and support fasting according to Christian way of life. He says that the human body is very beautiful³³. It is “a vessel divinely moulded”³⁴ and “is an instrument of the human being, an instrument of the soul, and the human being is principally the soul in itself”³⁵. Basil explains that many diseases have a strong connection with food “In as much as our body is susceptible to various hurts, some attacking from without and some from within by reason of the food we eat, and since the body suffers affliction from both excess and deficiency”³⁶. So fasting is good not only for the soul but for the body, too³⁷. It is “mother of health”³⁸, because the latter gets rid of some destroying things which are related to food³⁹.

³¹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Against Eunomium*, II, PG 29, 581A. Basil mentions three stages of embryonic development: conception (σύλληψις), construction (διάπλασις), and shaping (μόρφωσις).

³² BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Commentary on the book of Isaiah*, 1, 18³⁸⁻⁵⁰, PG 30, 148A. english trans. by Nikolai A. Lipatov, *St. Basil the Great. Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, in *Texts and Studies in the history of theology*, vol. 7, Wolfram Kinzig, Markus Vinzent (eds), Mandelbactal/Cambridge:edition Cicero, 2001, p. 21: “So then, if a wound is a rupture of the body’s coherence when the connection is severed over a small area; and a bruise is the suffused mark of a blow when the body is crushed by a solid object striking it, and this too is inflicted on one part of the body; and an inflammation is a fiery swelling, when fluids flow together to the afflicted part and inflame the affected member with unnatural heat...”.

³³ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Haexaameron*, 9, PG 29, 257BC.

³⁴ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Haexaameron*, 9, PG 29, 264A.

³⁵ BASIL OF CAESAREA, PG 29, 264B. English transl. by Nonna Verna Harrison, *St. Basil the Great: On the Human Condition* (Popular Patristics Series 30; Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005), 31-64.

³⁶ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Ascetical Works: The Long Rules*, 55, english trans. by M. Monica Wagner, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Vol. 9 (Wash., D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), 60 (=PG 31, 1044B).

³⁷ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Homily on Fasting*, 1, PG 31, 164B, 177A.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, PG 31, 173C.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

On the other hand, the bishop of Caesarea explains how evil heavy consumption of wine is for the human body and he describes the results of the drunkenness similar with the way that doctors describe them today⁴⁰.

Generally, Basil tries to show how medicine is important in people's life. Also he explains that some things as fasting that help soul make and the body healthier. The Christian approach to health care integrates both spiritual and medical treatments for sickness and diseases. The possibility of miraculous cure should not prevent Christians to use medical remedies, and "the availability of medical remedies did not deter them from praying for divine healing"⁴¹.

IV. Basil and his nursing to sick, ill and lepers. Foundation of the first hospital the "Basileias"

Basil as a monk and as a bishop later tried to find a way to serve suffering. His idea was to build a charitable institution that would provide healing and cure to ill people, to poor. Despite his fragile health and his infirmities, he didn't want other people to suffer without having any hope of remedy. Basil's idea of creating of hospital was born in the period of a famine in 368/367, or in 369/370 during which he had organized a distribution of food. In his hospital, medical staff was employed and took care of both the pagans and the Christians⁴². In 372, he managed to create the organization⁴³ of his dreams, which included many buildings, the "Basileias"⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, PG 31, 184A.

⁴¹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Epistles* 94; 150; 174, PG 32, 489-492; PG 32, 601-604; PG 32, 656.

⁴² GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Funeral Oration on the Great S. Basil*, oration 43, 61-63, PG 36, 528. GARY B. FERNGREN, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, 124.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 125: "It included a separate section for each of six groups: the poor, the homeless and strangers, orphans and foundlings, lepers, the aged and infirm, and the sick. The *keluphokomeia* housed lepers, who were gathered together from the countryside around Caesarea into one place where they could be cared for".

⁴⁴ Gregory Nazianzen called this new city, the organization that Basil built as Basileias in the honor of his friend, "Go forth a little way from the city, and behold the new city, the storehouse of piety, the common treasury of the wealthy, in which the superfluities of their wealth, aye, and even their necessities, are stored, in consequence of his exhortations, freed from the power of the moth, no longer gladdening the eyes of the thief, and escaping both the emulation of envy, and the corruption



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

cantering on a church. By this way he wanted to show that the medicine and philanthropy should have a reference to God and He will be their central point. Basil appeared the medicine as a gift of God and managed to persuade wealthy people to invest in this attempt⁴⁵. Also, he explained to poor and ill how important was the medical art for their health without rejecting the prayers to God, His divine grace and the miracles.

In “Basileias” Basil showed his care for any sick, and tried to heal the wounds and to deal with lepers. The latter were rejected by all; they were obliged to leave their houses, their cities and to isolate themselves in leper colonies that nobody who was healthy could come. This was essentially like a very slow death. Basil took care of them. He served them as a doctor, as Christian as a priest. For Him, these people were the Image of God. Believing in God and without fear cared these infectious patients, washed out their wounds, cooked soup for them, gave them the “kiss of peace”⁴⁶ and remained most of the day with them.

Of course he knew how dangerous the Leprosy was. But his faith to the grace of God, served them as well as he could without any fear of a possible infection for himself. By this way the lepers were housed in a place that they lived as humans, they had nourishment, medical care and general care and most of all they had love and sympathy⁴⁷.

of time: where disease is regarded in a religious light, and disaster is thought a blessing, and sympathy is put to the test.” GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Funeral Oration on the Great S. Basil*, PG 36, 529-530. Matt. 6:19.

⁴⁵ GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Funeral Oration on the Great S. Basil*, PG 36, 531, transl. by Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 7, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight: “He... took the lead in pressing upon those who were men, that they ought not to despise their fellowmen, nor to dishonour Christ, the one Head of all, by their inhuman treatment of them; but to use the misfortunes of others as an opportunity of firmly establishing their own lot, and to lend to God that mercy of which they stand in need at His hands”.

⁴⁶ PETER BROWN, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press/University of New England Press, 2002), 40.

⁴⁷ JEAN BERNARDI, *La Prédication des Peres Cappadociens: Le Prédicateur et Son Auditoire* (Marseille: Sopic 1968), 104-108. Carlo Calleja, “The Orations of the Cappadocian Fathers on Lepers: A



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

In “Basileias”, there were doctors with medical knowledge and not healers. Additionally, the important was that the healing of any sickness combined the treatment of the physical ills of the patients with ministering to their spiritual diseases⁴⁸. Of course Basil didn’t discard the secular medicine for treatments with supernatural means only. He knew the catalytic role of the medical art in therapy of sickness, but as a Christian couldn’t reject that God is the omnipotent healer of human body and soul⁴⁹.

Basil managed to serve God and man as an image of God. He first left the world in order to dedicate himself to God. He explained the significance of the monastery for a Christian monk but he didn’t neglect people who were poor, weak, orphans and ill. By this way, as a bishop fought against heresies, against injustice but also took care of any man in need. He joined the monastery, but eventually brought the monastery to the world through the city of Basilius.

Conclusions

Man was created by God to live without pain, sickness and death. Unfortunately, after Adam’s and Eve’s fall, evil, illness and death came to our lives. In the Old Testament, sickness was the result of sin of the ills or of their parents. Diseases were the result of theodicy of God to people who didn’t follow His Commandments. Of course, in the Old Testament, there were cases that illness and pain were not a kind of punishment for sinner, but it was the trial for the relevance of their fruit of holiness, as Job did. In

Blueprint for Exhorting Solidarity with the Socially Alienated Today”. *Lumen et Vita* 9.2 (2019), 1-20, esp. 4. Doi:10.6017/lv.v9i2.11123. “For these reasons, historians have argued that “the hospital was, in origin and conception, a distinctively Christian institution”, GARY B. FERNGREN, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity*, The John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2009, 124.

⁴⁸ BASIL OF CAESAREA, [To Eustathius the physician](#), letter 189, Transl. by Blomfield Jackson, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 8. Ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1895. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight: “medicine is seen, as it were, with two right hands; you enlarge the accepted limits of philanthropy by not confining the application of your skill to men's bodies, but by attending also to the cure of the diseases of their souls”.

⁴⁹ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Ascetical Works: The Long Rules*, 55, PG 31, 1048B: “God's grace is as evident in the healing power of medicine and its practitioners as it is in miraculous cures”.



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

the New Testament, Christ and the apostles underlined that no ironclad relationship exists between suffering and sin. Just because people suffered trials or tragedies did not mean God was punishing them for some sin.

Besides God's help for man's recovery from any disease, people tried to find remedy and healing for their sickness in the medical art. Apostles and Church Fathers didn't reject medicine which was thought as a gift from God to people. Of course they didn't stop saying that God was and is the omnipotent healer, but also underlined the necessity of the existence of doctors and medicines in human life. So in early years of Christianity, there are many references to Christian doctors who helped the ill with their medical art. Some of them were Luke the evangelist, Panteleimon, Damian and Cosmas, who were known as the "Anargyroi", Basil of Caesarea and many others.

These people had studied the medical art and they were physicians and pharmacists. Additionally, Basil thought that the medicines were gifts of God for the natural healing of disease, because He had created herbs and all the other natural things which were the ingredients of medicines, "...the herbs which are the specifics for each malady do not grow out of the earth spontaneously; it is evidently the will of the Creator that they should be brought forth out of the soil to serve our need. Therefore, the obtaining of that natural virtue which is in the roots and flowers, leaves, fruits, and juices, or in such metals or products of the sea as are found especially suitable for bodily health, is to be viewed in the same way as the procuring of food and drink"⁵⁰.

Basil's of Caesarea didn't care only of the theological problems of his era and to teach people theological ethics according to Christianity. He managed with practical efforts to organize charitable work in Caesarea and to build the institution "Basileias". Through his writings, it is profane that this Church Father, who had studied medicine besides with his other important studies of rhetoric, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, music, had the medical art in high regard. Doctors served men, healing of men's bodies and Christian doctors tried to cure the human body and the spiritual ills.

⁵⁰ BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Ascetical Works: The Long Rules*, 55, engl. trans. by M. Monica Wagner, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, Vol. 9, Wash., D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962, 330-337.



Ricardo da COSTA (org.). *Mirabilia Journal* 32 (2021/1)

Jan-Jun 2021
ISSN 1676-5818

In his writing, *Ascetical Works: The Long Rules*, he analyses how important if the fast for human body and soul.

Finally, Basil was the father of the first organized hospital for poor and lepers. There, sick could be cured by doctors and nurses. Basil himself served the most serious sick, the lepers, with compassion and Christian love. This Christian philanthropy was motivated by Christ-like agapeic service. Gregory Nazianzen on his funeral oration on Basil of Caesarea explain the importance of Basil's hospital for the lepers, for these unfortunates. They were "dead before death and have already perished in most parts of their bodies.

They are driven from cities, homes, market places, and sources of water, even from their best friends. They are recognized by their names rather than by their bodily appearance." These sickest of the sick, the Basileias's most numerous patients, were lepers. Physicians didn't know how to cure them, but Basil didn't felt discouraged. These people deserved care as all the other sick. In his hospital, there was a place of them and much love. They were served by the bishop of Caesarea Himself. Basil put into practice the example of Jesus Christ and behaved to people as real image of God.

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