

DISEASE AND HEALING IN THE BIBLE AND THEIR RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE*

It is a great pleasure and a great honour to me to be invited to address such a distinguished audience on such a memorable day which reminds you of your patron saint, who, as the author of one of the Gospels, happens to be also an acquaintance and a friend of mine. But at the very outset I must confess that the choice of the subject of my talk has been very embarrassing, for the subject either happened to be too specialized to arouse general interest, or too scantily attested by the Bible to provide sufficient matter for a conference. After many unsuccessful attempts and especially after reading a paper by Prof. Joh. Hempel, 'Heilung als Symbol und Wirklichkeit im biblischen Schriftum,' published in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* in 1957 and later, in an expanded form, as a book, I hit upon this subject: 'Disease and Healing in the Bible and their religious significance.' This subject, I dare hope, will strongly appeal to general medical interest and will help to clarify and strengthen your religious convictions.

Disease, as you know from your personal experience and from your studies, is the effect of external causes or of internal disturbances of the organism. The bible mentions several cases. The legislation contained in the so-called Book of the Covenant in Exodus, 21-23, contemplates the case of death caused by a deadly weapon, 'Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death'. (21,12) Injuries caused by external causes are also contemplated. 'When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and the man does not die but keeps his bed, then if the man rises again and walks abroad with his staff, he that struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed.' (21, 18) Nabab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, were killed by lightning: 'And fire came forth from the presence of the Lord, and they died before the Lord.' (Lev. 10, 2) The immoderate use of dried quails in the desert was the cause of the death of a large multitude of Israelites. (Num. 11, 33) People died of the bites of poisonous serpents. (Num. 21, 6) Nabal, a rich man of Carmel, had a stroke and died after ten days. Tobit became blind after a sparrow's excrements fell on his eyes. The son of a woman with whom

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the prophet Elisha was dwelling died of a sunstroke. So died also Judith's husband. Many other diseases are mentioned in the O. and N. Testament, but without any indication of their causes and their real nature. In the book of Exodus, 4, 24, we read that Moses on his way from Midian to Egypt was met by the Lord who sought to kill him. This means that Moses was stricken by a fatal disease about which we know nothing. The physical cause of the death of the first-born of Egypt is not specified. The book of Leviticus mentions cases of leprosy and various other skin diseases. The Philistines were afflicted with tumors, probably hemorrhoids. The Egyptian slave found by David's men in a state of exhaustion had fallen sick three days before, but the nature of the sickness is not specified. David's last illness seems to have been tertian fever. Other diseases such as consumption, scabies, pestilence, scurvy, ulcers, are mentioned especially in the minatory speeches of the Lord. In the N. Testament we read of lepers, paralytics, blind men, dumb and deaf men; we read of Peter's mother-in-law suffering from fever (Matt. 8, 15); of a woman suffering from hemorrhage (Matt. 9, 20); of a man with a withered hand (Matt. 12, 13) of a bent woman (Luke 13, 12) of dysentery (Acts 28, 8); of stomach trouble (I Tim. 5, 23) and many other unspecified diseases. It must be remarked that disease is sometimes described in such a figurative language as to render its identification extremely difficult or impossible.

Very often disease is attributed directly to God. God is represented as the immediate cause of disease and healing; He is the author of life and death: 'He kills and brings to life; He brings down to the Underworld and raises again.' (I Sam. 2, 6) This belief is frequently attested in the Bible. Moses' disease mentioned in Exod. 4, 24 was certainly inflicted by God who 'met Moses and sought to kill him.' The lightning which killed Nabad and Abihu 'came forth from the presence of the Lords,' that is, it was produced by God. Miriam's leprosy was the effect of God's anger against her. It was God who sent the fiery or poisonous serpents among the people who spoke against God and Moses in the desert. The Philistines were afflicted with tumors by God. A typical case of a disease said to be inflicted by God is the story of Saul. Saul suffered from a neurotic disorder, probably hypochondriasis and at times he had such paroxysmal fits that made him act in the most eccentric way. Now his disease is described as being due to an evil spirit from the Lord. In I Sam. 16, 14 we read that 'the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented Him.' This means that

Saul lost his normal mental serenity and fell into a state of mental depression due, very probably, to the jealousy excited in him on seeing David set before him by the women singing and celebrating his victory over Goliath and the Philistines. And the story goes on: 'And Saul's servants said to him: Behold now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our Lord now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is skilful in playing the lyre: and when the evil spirit from God is upon you he will play it and you will be well. . . . Whenever the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre; and when playing it with his hands Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.' Once more, 'an evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand; and David was playing the lyre. And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear; but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped. David's son, born of Uriah's wife was struck by the Lord, became sick and died (2 Sam. 12, 15) The prophet Elijah accuses God for bringing a mortal sickness upon the son of the widow in whose house he was dwelling. 'O God my God, hast thou brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?' (1 Kings 17, 20) The army of the king of Syria became blind on the prayer of the prophet Elisha. We read in 2 Kings 6, 18: 'When the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said: Strike this people, I pray thee, with blindness. So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. Azariah, king of Judah, was smitten by the Lord with leprosy and he was a leper till the day of his death. (2 Kings 15, 5) Still more tragic was the plight of the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem. In one night the Angel of the Lord slew 185,000 men, and in the morning these were all dead bodies. (2 Kings 19, 35) It may have been an outbreak of plague attributed to the vindictive power of God of the Israelites. Elijah the prophet threatened, Joram, king of Judah, with a severe punishment: 'Behold, the Lord will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives and all your possessions and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out because of the disease, day by day.' (2 Chron. 21, 14f) Even Job's disease, though directly and expressly attributed to Satan, did not come upon him without God's permission. Satan accused Job of insincere and selfish religiosity. He said to God: 'Does Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast

blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has and he will curse thee to thy face.' And so Job lost his sons and daughters and all his possessions, but still he held fast to his integrity. Having lost the first urn, Satan tried another one accusing Job on other grounds: 'Skin for skin. And all that a man has he will give for his life. But put forth thy hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said to Satan: Behold, he is in your power; only spare his life.' (1,9-2,6) Therefore, although Satan is represented as the real author of Job's adversity, it was God himself who permitted Satan to ill-treat Job, and consequently God is, though indirectly the real cause of Job's disease.

In the NT we find no such imputation to God. And the reason is obvious. A part of the messianic mission of Christ was the healing of all sort of diseases. To those who were sent by John the Baptist to inquire whether Christ was the Messiah or not, Christ instead of giving direct answer, worked in their presence many miracles and healed many sick people and said to John's disciples: 'Go and say to John what you have seen.' In other words: Yes I am the Messiah, and these miracles and healings bear evidence to my mission... Therefore, how could God expressly permit disease to ravage mankind when He sent his own son on earth to deliver mankind from disease? Christ's mission was exactly the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy: 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.' (Matt. 3, 17)

Now, and this is the core of the problem: How are we to explain the different behaviour of God in the O and N. Testament? God of the OT represented as a vindictive God, the author of all sort of diseases and of death itself, while God of the NT is described as a merciful God, the healer of all disease and the author of life? There was a time when the heretic Marcion believed in two Gods, the God of the NT, who was a benevolent God, and the God of the OT, who was a malevolent God.

But we need not have recourse to such a duality in order to account for God's apparently contradictory attitude. The Israelites strongly believed in God as the supreme ruler of the world. He is the author of life and death. He directs the events of man's life and the events of history according to a definite plan. Man is absolutely powerless against God. God is holy, he delights in righteousness and rewards good deeds; but he hates wickedness and punishes the wicked. This unshakable belief in God rings persistently throughout all the pages of the Israelite

literature. After the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea, Moses burst out in a triumphant song to God:

Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods?
 Who is like thee, majestic in holiness,
 Terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?
 Thou didst stretch out thy right hand,
 The earth swallowed them.

And in his last song in Deut. 32 Moses solemnly affirms:

The most high gave to the nations their inheritance,
 He separated the sons of men,
 He fixed the bounds of the peoples,
 According to the number of the sons of God.

and again:

See now that I, even I, am he,
 And there is no God beside me,
 I kill and I make alive,
 I wound and I heal,
 And there is none that can deliver out of my hand.

God's absolute power is again celebrated by Hannah:

The God kills and brings to life,
 He brings down to the Underworld and raises up,
 The Lord makes poor and makes rich,
 He brings low, he also exalts,
 He raises up the poor from the dust,
 He lifts the needy from the ash heap,
 To make him sit with princes,
 And inherit a seat of honour.
 For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
 And on them he has set the world.

At the end of the long discussion with his friends, Job concludes:

I know that thou canst do all things,
 And that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.

Sirach writes:

The government of the earth is in the hands of the Lord,
And over it he will raise the right man for the time.

Deutero-Isaiah particularly emphasises God's supremacy and his absolute power to shape out the course of history. Let us listen to his doctrine:

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
And are accounted as the dust on the scales,
Behold, he takes up the isles like fine dust.
Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,
Nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.
All the nations are as nothing before Him.
They are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.
It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
And spreads them like a tent to dwell in;
Who brings princes to nought,
And makes the rulers of the earth as nothing; Thus says the Lord,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread forth the earth and what comes from it,
Who gives breath to the people upon it,
And spirit to those who walk in it:
I am the Lord, that is my name;
My glory I give to no other, nor my private to graven images:
Behold, the former things have come to pass,
And new things I now declare,
Before they spring forth, I tell you of them. (ch. 40, *passim*)

As a consequence of this belief the Israelites, whose medical knowledge was very rudimentary, attributed to God those diseases whose causes they did not know. This was a common belief in all the ancient Near East. Disease was due to the agency of evil spirits. To ward off and to heal diseases the Babylonians had a complicated system of incantations which have come down to us in innumerable texts. Insanity, which we call *genn*, was believed to be the effect of a *jinn* which enters man and deranges his mental power. Traces of this belief occur in the Bible. Saul's illness, certainly a mental disease, is attributed to an evil spirit coming from God. Job's disease too was caused by Satan.

In the NT we hardly have any allusion to evil spirits causing diseases, but we have many cases of demoniac obsession accompanied by epilepsy, dumbness, deafness and other diseases. But the bent woman, of whom Luke speaks in 13, 11-16, is said to have had a spirit of infirmity (v. 11) which in v. 16 is called Satan. This is a case in which a disease is attributed to Satan, though without any demoniac obsession.

Another point deserves consideration. According to Jewish mentality, an event, instead of being attributed to its immediate cause, is sometimes referred directly to God, who in reality is only its indirect cause. Thus God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart. In Exod. 4,21 God says: 'I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go', And again in 7, 3 we read: 'I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you.' This means that God had foreseen Pharaoh's obstinacy and permitted it for particular reasons. In fact God said to Moses: 'I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. (Exod. 3, 19) And God made Pharaoh harden his heart in order to make his mighty deeds and therefore his strong power known to the Egyptians and to all future generations of the Israelites. 'Go to Pharaoh' said the Lord to Moses, 'for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your son's son how I have made sport of the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them; that you may know that I am the Lord.' (Exod. 10, 1f)

Disease and physical pain is not only foreseen and permitted by God; sometimes it is directly and positively intended as a punishment of sin. God punished with blindness the men who wanted to abuse the foreigners who were lodged in Lot's house. (Gen. 19, 11) Sterility was the punishment of Abimelech's wife and female slaves, for the rape of Sarah, Abraham's wife. (Gen. 20, 18) God afflicted the Philistines with tumors for having captured the ark. (1 Sam. 5, 6)

David's son born of the unlawful union with Bathseba, was struck by the Lord, and died as a punishment of David's sin. (2 Sam. 12, 15) Azariah, king of Judah, was punished with leprosy for arrogating the priestly right of burning incense to the Lord. (2 Kings 15, 5) Job's book is a discussion of the problem whether disease and physical suffering are always a punishment for sin. While Job's friends argue for the affirmative, and exhort Job to repent of his sins and make atonement for them, Job protests his innocence. We find an echo of this belief even in NT times.

Christ's disciples, on seeing a blind man from his birth, asked him: 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' (John 9, 2) So common was the belief that disease was the punishment of sin. And even the Apostles could punish a man for his sins. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that when Paul and Barnabas, announced the Christian Faith in Cyprus, 'Elymas the magician withstood them seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith. But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said: 'You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind and unable to see the sun for a time. Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking for people to lead him by the way.' (13, 18-11)

The belief that disease and physical suffering are or may be the punishment of sin is based on the teaching of God himself. In order to induce more effectively his people, the Israelites, who were yet moving the first steps in the way of religious life, God promises to reward the observance of the law with all sort of temporal blessings, but threatens the transgressors with severe temporal punishments. This was divine pedagogy which adapted the teaching to the mentality, to the needs and exigencies of an uneducated people. Does not a mother try to induce her child to obedience by promising sweets and threatening beatings? Let us listen to God exhorting the Israelites to observe the Law: 'If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.... But if you will not hearken to me and will not do all these commandments.... I will do this to you, I will appoint over you sudden terror, consumption, and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away.... Then if you walk contrary to me, and will not hearken to me, I will bring more plagues upon you sevenfold as many as your sins.... And if by this discipline you are not turned to me, but walk contrary to me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will smite you sevenfold for your sins... and I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.' (Lev. 26, 3-26)

And again in the last hortatory speech in Deuteronomy 28: 'And if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, the Lord your God will set you

high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon all of you and shall overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God... But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God, or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you... The Lord will make the pestilence cleave to you until he has consumed you off the land which you are entering to take possession of. The Lord will smite you with consumption and with fever, inflammation and fiery heart heat and with drought... The Lord will smite with madness and blindness and confusion of mind... The Lord will smite you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head... All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you, till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded you. They shall be upon you as a sign and as a wonder, and upon your descendants for ever'. (28, 1-46)

We may add God's admonition to the Israelites during the first days of their journey in the desert: 'If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, I will take sickness away from the midst of you'. (Exod. 23, 25)

What we have been saying about disease may be applied to healing. Both disease and healing are generally attributed to God. It is God who causes disease and it is God who heals, hardly is any mention made of natural causes of disease or of natural remedies against disease. On two occasions only we find allusion to oil and wine as lenients and medicaments. The prophet Isaiah describes the sin-laden nation of Israel as a man whose 'whole hand is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds; they are not pressed out, or bound up, or softened with oil.' (1, 6) And the good Samaritan of the parable seeing a man wounded and half-dead, 'went to him and bound his wounds, pouring in oil and wine.' (Luke 10, 34) Isaiah prescribes a fig plaster to King Hezekiah, 'Bring a cake of figs and let them lay it on the boil, that he may recover.' (2 Kings 20, 7; Isa. 38, 21) St. Paul recommends to Timothy the use of a little wine for his stomach troubles. (1 Tim. 5, 23) But healing is generally represented as the effect of God's immediate intervention. Thus Miriam was healed from leprosy at the intercession of her brother Moses. (Num. 12, 13f) The serpent-bitten

Israelites in the wilderness were healed by looking at the bronze serpent which Moses had set up on a pole. (Num. 21, 9)

King Jeroboam's hand, which had become paralysed, was restored at the intercession of a prophet. (1 Kings 13, 6) The commander of the king's of Syria army was cured from leprosy by washing in the river Jordan 'according to the commandment of the man of God.' (2 Kings 5, 14) Heliodorus, the commander of the army of king Appolonius, sent by the king to plunder the treasures and the temple of Jerusalem, was smitten by God with paralysis and healed by God at the intercession of the high-priest Onias. (2 Macc. 3, 32-34) In the NT Christ heals even incurable diseases by touch or simply by his word without any medical treatment. To a leper he said: 'Be clean', and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. (Matt. 8, 3) To a centurion, whose servant or official was lying paralysed, Christ said: 'Be it done for you as you have believed. And the servant was healed at the very moment this was said'. (Matt. 8, 13) As soon as Jesus touched the hand of Peter's mother-in-law, who was lying sick with fever, the fever left her and she rose up from her bed. (Matt. 8, 14) To a paralytic lying on his bed he said: 'Rise take up your bed and go home. And he rose and went home.' (Matt. 8, 6f) He healed two blind men by touching their eyes and saying: 'According to your faith be it done to you.' (Matt. 9, 29) If in some cases Christ made use of some natural remedies as when he anointed the blind man's eyes with clay made of his spittle, and bade him wash in the pool of Siloam. (John 9, 6f) On another occasion Christ healed a blind man by spitting on his eyes and laying his hands upon his eyes. (Mark 8, 23-25) But such remedies, which were apt to aggravate rather than to alleviate or cure disease, were intended by Christ not so much to heal a disease as to excite the patient's faith and render him worthy to receive the benefit of a miraculous healing. In fact the only condition which Christ required of his patients was that they should believe in him and in his divine mission.

Looking more closely into the conception of disease and healing in biblical times, we notice a close relation between this disturbing factor of men's happiness on earth and the general plan of divine providence in relation to man's ultimate end. God created man in a state of innocence and happiness. Man was free from any internal impulse to sin. His lower nature was entirely subject to his higher faculties. At the same time he was also free from all physical ills. He was not subject to death and disease. Though mortal man had the extraordinary privilege of immor-

tality, and he would have fully enjoyed it, had he been obedient to God. But man was not faithful to God; and he disobeyed and lost all his privileges. He became subject to death and disease. The tragic story of this is told in the 3rd chapter of the book of Genesis. We read in the book of Wisdom (1,13), that God did not create death; He made man to live for ever; it was the devil who introduced death into the world.

'God did not make death . . . He created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.' (Luke 13, 23, 24) Of all the hardships and miseries that became man's lot on earth as the consequence of sin the writer of Genesis mentions only two that are characteristic of each of the two sexes: the pains of childbirth and the hard work of man to earn his living. But the most disastrous effect of man's first sin was that its consequences were to pass on to all his posterity till the end of the world. This conception of pain, suffering, toil, disease and death itself runs through all the pages of the Bible. But in order to comprehend better how the personal sin of a single man could be considered as passing on to all his posterity, we must consider another aspect of the Israelites' mentality. Man is a member of a group with which he is bound with family, tribal and national bonds forming a domestic, social and national unit. Man, as we know from experience is a member of his own family; he is a member of his tribe, of a whole nation, of the whole human race. This union of the individual with his group is called 'corporate personality' or 'corporate solidarity' and it was strongly developed in all the Ancient Near East. Thus Lot was saved from the catastrophe of Sodom together with his two daughters. The sin of Abimelech who took Abraham's wife was punished with the sterility of the king's wife and all her female slaves: and they were all healed through Abraham's intercession. Abraham's obedience to God was rewarded with a numerous offspring. All the firstborn of Egypt were punished with death for the sin of Pharaoh alone. In the third commandment God commands the Israelites, as one people and one person, to keep the Sabbath holy. Korah and his companions were punished together with their households for the sin of one of them. Achan, together with his sons and daughters and all he had, were stoned to death and burned with fire in penalty of Achan's sin who had transgressed the covenant of the Lord by appropriating to himself some of the spoil of the Canaanites. In Prov. 20, 7 the principle is enunciated:

A righteous man who walks in his integrity,
blessed are his sons after him.

in Ps. 112, 1:

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord,
who greatly delights in his commandments;
His descendants will be mighty in the land,
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

And again in Ps. 25, 12f

Who is the man who fears the Lord
He himself shall abide in prosperity,
and his children shall possess the land.

The principle of solidarity is acknowledged by God himself. In the decalogue, after the prohibition of idolatry, the text continues: 'I am the Lord thy God, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.' In the light of these considerations on solidarity we can better understand how the consequences of man's first sin, hardships, toil, miseries, sickness and death are shared by all mankind which together with its head and representative forms a closely knit natural unit.

But solidarity and collective responsibility, which involves the suffering of the guiltless, does not provide a complete solution of the problem of disease. Individual responsibility is a fact which must absolutely be taken into consideration if we wish to have an adequate idea of the biblical doctrine of suffering. The Israelites, since Patriarchal times, recognised individual responsibility and admitted it in their legislation. Thus 'Whoever strikes his father and his mother shall be put to death;' (Exod. 21, 15) 'Whoever steals a man... shall be put to death;' (Exod. 21, 16); 'Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.' (Exod. 21, 17) In all these cases the posterity of the criminal is not involved in the punishment, which is merely personal. The doctrine of personal responsibility is clearly formulated in the book of Ezechiel, Chapter 18: 'Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die. If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right... if he walks in my commandments and is careful to observe my ordinances, he is

righteous, he shall surely live, says the Lord God. But if he gets a son who is a robber, a murderer... he shall not live... he shall surely die. But if he begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done and fears, and does not do likewise... he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. Yet you say: Why shouldn't the son suffer for the iniquity of the father? Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe and do my commandments, he shall surely live. The soul that sins, shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous, shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.'

Individual responsibility does not entail the abolition of corporate responsibility. Man is by nature a social being. This necessarily involves corporate personality and corporate responsibility. Ezechiel, therefore, did in no way eliminate corporate or collective responsibility; he only emphasises individual personality in order to correct some false conceptions of his contemporaries as regards their culpability or that of their fathers.

But neither corporate nor individual responsibility adequately solves the problem of human suffering. How many were and are those who bear great sufferings through no fault of theirs and through no fault of their parents or of their countrymen. And how many people deserve the severest punishment for their misdeeds, and yet passed all their lives in happiness and prosperity? The sufferings which the prophet Jeremiah had to endure at the hands of his countrymen are a clear illustration of this truth. Let us listen to his outbursts of agony and despair: 'Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land. I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.' (15, 10) And on another occasion the prophet complains: 'Righteous art thou O Lord, when I complain to thee; yet I plead my case before thee. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all those who are treacherous thrive? Thou plantest them and they take root, they grow and bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth and far from their heart. But thou, O Lord knowest me; thou seest me and triest my mind toward thee. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and set them apart for the day of the slaughter. How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who dwell in it the birds and beasts are swept away because men said: He will not see our latter end.' (12, 1-4) The whole book of Job is a heated contest

between innocence and suffering, between a man who is not conscious of any sin and yet smarting under the most dreadful pain and his friends who accuse him of the most grievous sins.

The suffering of the innocent was a part of God's providence and a way by which God intended to lead man to the revelation of the doctrine of final retribution. As God had once promised temporal blessings to those who would keep his commandments in order to induce them more effectively to the observance of his law, so at a later period he permitted the faithful observers of his law to suffer temporal physical pain in order to excite in them the hope of a better retribution in a future life. The Israelites believed that God was just and that He would never leave sin unpunished nor virtue unrewarded. How is it possible, then, that the pious suffer in this world and the wicked prosper? 'Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?' (Jer. 12, 1) The answer is given in Ps. 73, 27:

Those who are far from thee shall perish;
 Thou dost put an end to those who are false to thee.
 But for me it is good to be near God,
 I have made the Lord God my refuge.

The doctrine of final retribution was gradually revealed in the OT. The first stage consisted in a temporal retribution of good and evil; this was only an initial step. The next step consisted in throwing doubt upon the credibility of temporal retribution. How could it be true that retribution was merely temporal when God himself allowed the pious to suffer and the wicked to prosper. And yet God was infinitely just. There must, therefore, be a place and a time where and when everyone will receive just retribution for all his deeds. And this place is future life. It is in the latest books of the OT that we find the doctrine of final retribution fully revealed. Thus we read in the book Wisdom:

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
 and no torment will ever touch them,
 In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
 And their departure was thought to be an affliction,
 And their going from us to be their destruction;
 But they are at peace.

For though in the sight of men they were punished,
 Their hope is full of immortality,

Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,
 Because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;
 Like gold in the furnace he tried them,
 And like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.

In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,
 And will run like sparks through the stubble,
 They will govern nations and rule over peoples,
 And the Lord will reign over them for ever.
 Those who trust in him will understand truth,
 And the faithful will abide in him in love,
 Because grace and mercy are upon his elect,
 And he watches over his holy ones.

But the ungodly will be punished as their reasoning deserves,
 Who disregarded the righteous man and rebelled against the Lord,
 For whoever despises wisdom and instruction is miserable,
 Their hope is vain, their labours are unprofitable,
 And their works are useless.

This is the true solution of the problem of disease and the suffering of the innocent. All is not finished with this life. Though man may suffer in this world, there is another world where the just man will enjoy for ever the reward of his virtuous life. It was this hope of a future recompense in heaven that gave strength to innumerable martyrs who suffered the most dreadful ordeals. It is this same hope of eternal happiness in heaven that sustains so many sick people amidst the most distressing pain of the death-bed. Viewed in this light disease and death itself cease to be a punishment of sin, but become a purification of past sins, a deliverance from a wicked world and the entrance into the eternal home in heaven.

The theological meaning of Christ's miraculous healings is quite different. Christ's miracles were a proof of his divine power, of his divine origin, of his divine mission and doctrine. That is why he always required faith in those whom he was about to heal. The centurion, whose servant was lying paralysed, believed that Christ could heal him from a distance, and Christ praised his faith: 'Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.' (Matt. 8, 10) To the woman suffering from a hemorrhage Christ said: 'Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well.' (Matt. 9, 22) To two blind men imploring his mercy he said: 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' And they replied:

'Yes Lord.' And immediately their eyes were opened. (Matt. 20, 30-34)

It must be strongly emphasised that the faith required by Christ in his patients was not merely trust in his extraordinary power, it was the belief in his divine power and origin. Christ could heal all sort of disease because he was God and had a divine power. The Canaanite woman, who was not one of the people of Israel, entreated Christ to heal her daughter who was possessed by a demon. Christ refused her request rather rudely, but she persisted in her request. At last Christ acceded to her petition as a reward to her faith. 'O woman,' he said to her, 'great is your faith. Be it done for you as you desire.' (Matt. 15, 22-28) Now what faith did the woman profess? The woman believed about the messianic mission of Christ, whom she addressed as the 'Son of David.' This was a messianic title. Therefore, the woman recognized Christ as the Messiah, and implored his help as God's envoy. It was this faith which Christ praised and rewarded. On another occasion Christ healed a blind man who had professed the same faith in Christ the Messiah. (Luke 18, 35-43) When the man blind from his birth received his sight, Christ asked him: 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' And he answered: 'And who is he Sir, that I may believe in him? Jesus said to him: You have seen him and it is he who speaks to you. He said: Lord, I believe; and he worshipped him.' (John 9, 35-38) The man healed from blindness not only believed in the messianic mission of Christ, but manifested externally his faith by an act of adoration. We find the same faith in Martha, the sister of Lazarus of Bethany. After the death of Lazarus, Christ consoling her said to her: 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him: Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.' (John 11, 25-27) This is the faith which Christ demanded of those whom he was about to heal, a firm belief in his divine origin and mission and not merely a confident reliance on his extraordinary powers.

Winding up this brief exposition we conclude by saying that disease and healing are the effect of natural causes, but in the Bible they are represented as the effects of God's intervention. Disease is the punishment of sin; sometimes, however, it serves to lead man to the belief of a retribution in the future life. In the NT disease is always the result of natural causes, but healing is the work of Christ-God and an irrefutable proof of Christ's divinity and messianic mission.

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