

**MIRACLE,
MAGIC,
and
MEDICINE**
Healing and Cure in the Bible

Test Case

Psalm 6

“O Lord, heal me...”
Psalm 6

- ¹ O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger,
or discipline me in your wrath.
² Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;
O LORD, heal [ἰασάι / אָפַרַי] me,
for my bones are shaking with terror.
³ My soul also is struck with terror,
while you, O LORD—**how long?**

PLEA and LAMENT

- *What kind of illness or suffering do you think the psalmist had?*
- *What is the relationship between human guilt, divine wrath, and physical suffering?*
- *How can some sickness be a helpful “discipline”?*

“O Lord, heal me...”
Psalm 6

- ⁴ Turn, O LORD, save [ῥῦσαι] my life;
deliver [σῶσόν / יַשׁוּ / *yasha*] me
for the sake of your steadfast love.
⁵ For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who can give you praise?

PLEA and PERSUASION

- *What is the relationship between being forgiven, being healed / cured, being saved / delivered?*

“O Lord, heal me...”
Psalm 6

- ⁶ I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
⁷ My eyes waste away because of grief;
they grow weak because of all my foes.

LAMENT

- *What is the purpose of weeping and crying? Can they be a healthy part of the recovery process?*
- *Who or what are the “foes”?*

“O Lord, heal me...”
Psalm 6

- ⁸ Depart from me, all you workers of evil,
for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.
⁹ The LORD has heard my supplication;
the LORD accepts my prayer.
¹⁰ All my enemies shall be ashamed
and struck with terror;
they shall turn back,
and in a moment be put to shame.

PRAISE

What do you think has helped the psalmist the most?

- *That his foes are rebuked?*
- *That he is reconciled with God?*
- *That he recovers from his suffering?*

“O Lord, heal me...”

Psalm 6

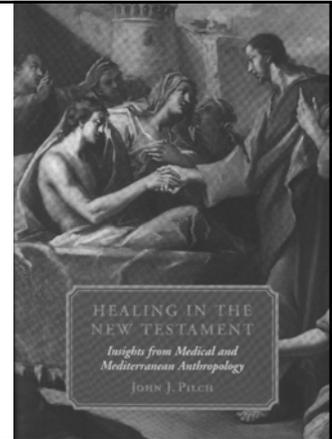
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PRAISE

- *Is the psalmist completely recovered from his suffering?*
- *If not, why can he be so jubilant?*
- *Has the psalmist been cured or healed?*

Healing in the New Testament

John Pilch



Terminology

Pilch, pages 24-25

- **HEALTH:** “State of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity” (World Health Organization)
- **SICKNESS:**
 - general term including both disease and illness
 - the *process* for socializing disease and illness (Alan Young)

Terminology

- **DISEASE:** “Not a reality but rather an explanatory concept that describes abnormalities in the structure and/or function of human organs and organ systems”
- **ILLNESS:** “Not a reality but an explanatory concept that describes the human perception, experience, and interpretation of certain socially disvalued states including but not limited to disease” (**DIS-EASE**)

Terminology

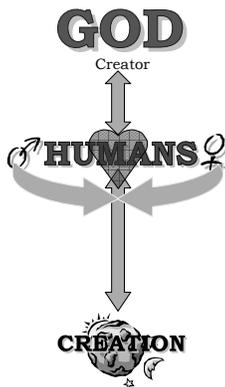
- **CURING:** “The anticipated outcome relative to *disease*, that is, the attempt to take effective control of disordered biological and/or psychological processes”
- **HEALING:** “The anticipated outcome relative to *illness*, that is the attempt to provide personal and social meaning for the life problems created by sickness”

What does it mean to be human?

To be healthy?

To be whole?

A wholistic understanding of health includes a spiritual, communal, and personal as well as physical dimension.



Miracles, Magic, Medicine

There is a difference between

CURING DISEASE	HEALING DIS-EASE
Biomedical Model	Hermeneutic Model

Miracles, Magic, Medicine

There is a difference between

CURING DISEASE	HEALING DIS-EASE
physical	<i>attention to:</i> spiritual, physical, social, personal

Miracles, Magic, Medicine

There is a difference between

CURING DISEASE	HEALING DIS-EASE
physical	<i>attention to:</i> spiritual, physical, social, personal
<i>diagnosis and treatment:</i> technology is key	relationship is key

Miracles, Magic, Medicine

There is a difference between

CURING DISEASE	HEALING DIS-EASE
physical	<i>attention to:</i> spiritual, physical, social, personal
<i>diagnosis and treatment:</i> technology is key	relationship is key
<i>success if:</i> patient survives and regains functioning	patient feels better, experiences peace, has restored meaning

Accomplishing Healing

Miracle

Magic

Medicine

How would these be differentiated in the ancient world?

Accomplishing Healing

Miracle

Intervention attributed to divinity

Magic

Manipulation of powers (good/evil)

Medicine

Reproducible application of technique

Accomplishing Healing

Miracle

Prayer of R. Hanina b. Dosa

Mark 9 Healing of boy

cf. Kee, *The Origins of Christianity*, p228

Accomplishing Healing

Magic

Magical Incantations

Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons."

cf. Barrett, *The New Testament Background*, pp31f

Accomplishing Healing

Medicine

Cult of Asclepius

Salves

Jesus' spit (Mark 8.22f)

Jesus and mud (John 9)

cf. Kee, *The Origins of Christianity*, p89

Test Case: Mark 9.14-29



Test Case: Mark 9.14-29

¹⁴When they [Jesus, Peter, James, John] came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. ¹⁶He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?"

Test Case: Mark 9.14-29

¹⁷Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; ¹⁸and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." ¹⁹He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me." ²⁰And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²²It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him..."

Test Case: Mark 9.14-29

- The boy's illness in Mark 9.14-29 is described as being possessed by an unclean spirit. (The "Hermeneutic" diagnosis)
- How would it be diagnosed today using a "Biomedical" approach?
- What would be the therapeutic goal with respect to each diagnosis?

Test Case: Mark 9.14-29

... but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us." ²³Jesus said to him, "If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes." ²⁴Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" ²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" ²⁶After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand.

Test Case: Mark 9.14-29

- What is the prayer?
- What kind of healing is offered?

Test Case: Mark 9.14-29

²⁸ When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"
²⁹ He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."