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To have life, and have it abundantly!

Health and wellbeing in biblical perspective

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A – Introduction: More than twenty years ago the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded their first epidemiological study researching the impact of participation in religious activities on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals.¹ Since that time numerous articles and monographs in the newly established discipline of the so called ‘Epidemiology of Religion’ appeared.² Funds from the Templeton Foundation enabled Harold G. Koenig and colleagues in 2001 to collect, survey, and publish findings of more than 1,600 such studies in their monumental *Handbook of Religion and Health*, the second edition of which published this year (2012) screens more than 3,000 such investigations.³ That is a clear indication of the broad interest in the quest. Having faith and practicing religion seems to be good since this provides non-medical coping mechanisms. Strong personal belief helps to manage stress and anxiety better which in turn has a positive impact on the overall state of health. Faith and religion, thus, can serve for a large number of people as potential reservoirs for cultivating wellbeing and maintaining health, thereby cutting health-care costs significantly. This is of special importance considering the ever growing number of seniors and people in our society suffering from chronic diseases.⁴ While respective findings along this line of thought make faith, belief, and religion become acceptable to secular economists, health-care planners, politicians, and even rational scientific critics of religion it begs the question in which way such instrumentalization does do justice to faith and religion. I would like to probe into this question by taking the Christian tradition as an example focusing only on the biblical tradition.

To go about this task meaningfully we will, first, have to find and identify the relevant texts speaking of ‘health’ and their equivalents in the different Bible versions (I) before we can attempt to sketch any related concept (II). Only thereafter can we assess somewhat accurately the extent to which biblical tradition supports the quest for health and wellbeing (III).

B – Some preliminary remarks when using the Bible as source,

Whenever working with what the Bible has to say about a topic one has to recall that this ‘Book’ actually consists of a collection of numerous documents of faith in the living God. Some of these documents like the Psalms are prayers, others, the Epistles for example, are theological reflections and communications about issues in the Early Church, while, again, others are chronicles, sermons, legal texts, and narratives spanning a timeframe of a couple of thousand years. Besides such range in time, genre, and contents there is also the diversity of languages. Hebrew is the language of the majority of the Old Testament texts. However, some Old Testament scriptures are in Aramaic (Daniel/Ezra) while the New Testament is in Hellenistic and Palestinian Greek. Yet, the language which became most influential in popularizing the Bible was Latin, especially St. Jerome’s (347-419/20) Vulgate, which also contains additional texts to the Old Testament known as ‘Apocrypha’ or ‘Deuterocanonical Books’ which are not part of the Jewish canon.⁵ Yet, these 14+ texts found in the Vulgate are of special interest when studying biblical perspectives on health. But are they “biblical” in the strict sense of the term?

To increase the complexity further we also have to decide on which version of text to base the argument in English. Is it the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989) of the National Council of Churches in the U. S. or the King James Version (KJV, 1611/1971), which is so widespread in the English speaking world? Shall we refer to the New International Version (NIV, 1984), the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB, 1985), or the New American Standard Bible (AS, 1995), just to name only a few? All of these versions show remarkable differences in the use of words and oftentimes render Hebrew or Greek terms differently.

B – I – Biblical terms for ‘health’ and their equivalents in different Bible versions

B – I – a – ‘Health’ in English Bible translations

Let us start with the English versions. A systematic screening of the text of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) reveals that the term ‘health’ occurs 32 times, most frequently—23 times—in the Apocrypha, comparatively late Hellenistic texts. In the sixty-six core scriptures of the Bible ‘health’ occurs only nine times in the NRSV while in the KJV we count 17 appearances⁶ only four of which are somewhat identical with those of the NRSV.⁷ This variety is due to the fact that the English term ‘health’ serves as translation for not less than five different Hebrew terms covering such broad meanings as healing, salvation, deliverance, soundness, and peace.⁸ Looking at related words like ‘healthy’ and ‘healthful’ we notice that in KJV

the term ‘healthy’ is completely absent whereas in NRSV four of its six occurrences are in texts of the core Bible while the two reminders are in the Apocrypha – and that is already all explicit biblical material on health!

However, to ground our investigation more profoundly we should also consider the apocryphal texts. Most of the 23 times ‘health’ occurs here it is in the greeting “Good health!” Only the book of Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) shows a pointed use of the term ‘health’ in chapter 30:14-16 which read, “Better off poor, healthy, and fit than rich and afflicted in body. Health and fitness are better than any gold, and a robust body than countless riches. There is no wealth better than health of body, and no gladness above [the] joy of heart.”⁹ This praise of health does sound quite modern, doesn’t it?

B – I – b – Greek and Hebrew equivalents for ‘health’

How does it look in the Greek and Hebrew texts? Most Greek equivalents for ‘health’ belong to two semantic fields, one centering around the concept of ‘getting well’ (**iva,omai**) as the intended result of a physician’s work (**ivatro,j**), especially a surgeon’s activity of ‘mending’ wounds inflicted in battle or ‘restoring’ people suffering from diseases to what they have been before, that is, to their ‘health.’¹⁰ The other semantic field centers around the terms **u`gih,j / u`giai,nw**—from which the term ‘hygiene’ is derived—signifying the state of ‘being strong’, ‘being sound in body and mind’, ‘being healthy.’¹¹ Occasionally **swthri,a** meaning ‘salvation’, ‘deliverance’, ‘preservation’ or ‘release’ is also used.¹²

The adjective **u`gih,j** appears only 10 times in the New Testament, and rarely in the sense we are using it¹³, because the respective texts speak of a ‘healthy teaching’, a ‘sound doctrine’, a ‘sound speech’ and of a ‘healthy’, a ‘sound’, ‘reliable faith.’¹⁴ Only once reference is made to ‘completeness’ in the sense of ‘full health’ (**o`loklhri,a**; Acts 3:16), which KJV translates as ‘perfect soundness’ while NRSV speaks of ‘perfect health.’ And in Acts 27:34 we find the technical term for ‘salvation,’ ‘deliverance,’ and ‘preservation’ (**swthri,a**) used in the sense of ‘keeping health’, ‘staying alive.’ Other equivalents for ‘health’ are absent in the Greek NT.¹⁵

The Hebrew terms rendered as ‘health’ in English are according to frequency aPer>m; a noun denoting ‘health’, ‘healing’, ‘cure’ (5x), hk'rua], meaning ‘health’ as the result of healing or restoration (3x), h['Wvy> meaning ‘health’ in the sense of ‘salvation’, ‘deliverance’, (resounding in the name ‘Jesus’; 3x), ~Alv', usually translated as ‘peace’ but used two times with the con-

notation 'health' in the sense of 'completeness', 'soundness', 'welfare', and, finally, 'well-being', used only once for describing 'health' as the outcome of the process of 'healing.'¹⁶

These findings are not very impressive. They indicate that 'health' as a topic in its own right is only marginally present in biblical literature if it is a biblical topic at all save the apocryphal book of Sirach. Yet, before jumping to a conclusion prematurely we should shift focus from terminology to concepts of health detectable in the Bible.

B – II - Concepts of 'health' in the Bible

Having firmly established the material base of references to 'health' we can now proceed to look at more implicit concepts of 'health' in the Bible. The first thing we notice is that ancient texts like the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the older Prophets do not make reference to any abstract idea or concept of wellbeing at all. Instead, 'health' or 'wellbeing' is always the end result of 'healing', namely 'restoration' of a wounded or diseased individual to normal life, which, for instance, can "walk again", can "enjoy life again." All words used in this connection refer to the concrete experience (or expectation) of a successful restoration to the *status quo ante*. A special term for this process does not exist. The name for a 'physician' is *apero*, designating someone who 'stitches together,' who 'mends', who 'restores.'¹⁷

What mattered to the ancient Hebrews was not so much pain-relief or bodily fitness; neither was it the unimpaired function of the skeleton or the metabolism. What mattered most when sick was the threat of severance from communicating with kinfolk and with God. Disease foreshadowed the definite disruption of this lifeline. Health, thus, simply meant 'staying alive' as so powerfully expressed in the episode of King Hezekiah as told in Isaiah 38:1-20,

"Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah ... came to him, and said ..."Thus says the LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover." Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the LORD ... and wept bitterly. Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD ... I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. ..." ... King Hezekiah ... after he had ... recovered from his sickness ... said: In the noontide of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol [i.e. the *underworld*] for the rest of my years. ... I shall not see the LORD in the land of the living; I shall look upon mortals no more among the inhabitants of the world ... [O my LORD] Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you; those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living, they thank you, as I do this day."¹⁸

This text explains itself. Hezekiah did not just fear for his own life, which, of course was foremost. The threat of death actualized by disease makes him call for ‘deliverance’ and ‘relief’ (h[’Wvy>) from this situation. But there is more to it since Hezekiah also feared the extinction of kin and kind, too, because this would leave in the end no one to give praise to God any longer.¹⁹ Thus he cried out to God, "Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you; ... The living, the living, they thank you, as I do this day!"²⁰ ‘Staying alive’ is actually what ‘health’ does mean; ‘health’ does not have a quality of its own.

However, in the course of time ‘health’ became more and more an entity in its own right as can be seen in texts written centuries later. The so called Wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) speaks of “health to the bones”²¹ (with ‘life’ still as the dominant connotation of ‘health’)²² while ‘health’ as such gets addressed explicitly in apocryphal literature. It is the book of Sirach again which contains the respective cardinal texts.²³ Sirach alerts in chapter 37 to the impact of lifestyle on the wellbeing of individuals, thereby making health an accomplishable task for the sake of prolonging life by recommending proper diet as one of the most prominent means to achieve longevity. In chapter 38 Sirach advises the readers,

"Honor physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; ... their gift of healing comes from the Most High ... The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and the sensible will not despise them. ... By them [the herbs] the physician heals and takes away pain; the pharmacist makes a mixture from them ... [so that by this way] God's works will never be finished; and from him [God] health spreads over all the earth.

My child, when you are ill, do not delay, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you. ... Then give the physician his place ... do not let him leave you, for you need him. There may come a time when recovery lies in the hands of physicians ... "²⁴

This text displays a mature pragmatism towards health and health-care. While it pleads for the due respect to be given to medical experts, physicians, and pharmacists it leaves no doubt about where all healing comes from while at the same time warning against any naive faith-healing attitude. This rational pragmatism clearly reflects the influence of the high regard for Greek medicine of Hippocratic origin during the Hellenistic period. Medicine had grown into an art in its own standing and became recognizable as a separate discipline independent of religion

yet not estranged from it, something also detectable in the terminology which still accommodates aspects of ‘salvation’ and ‘redemption’ when speaking of ‘health.’²⁵

It is in this context, too, that the designation of ‘Jesus’ (h[’Wvy]>) as ‘*the savior*’ gains its proper profile.²⁶ Such naming of him happened over against the background of the then very popular Hellenistic healing-cult of Asclepius which acknowledged Asclepius as ‘savior’, too.²⁷ But while Asclepius had power only to heal by postponing death, the Gospels show Jesus as the savior from *all* kinds of human misery, including dying and death, thereby bringing about a qualitatively new dimension to life for everyone, namely ‘life eternal’, that is, life free from any form of annihilating death.²⁸ As is well known, Jesus did not work therapies, Jesus did exercise a healing ministry bringing about sound health—not just partial healing—to every person asking for it.²⁹ He thereby witnessed to the power of the living God over death as became most obvious in his raising people from death namely a widow’s only son at Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus of Bethany who was buried for three days already.³⁰

Such workings of Jesus were not miraculous signs of power to befriend skeptics. Rather, they were astonishing revelations of the “works of God” granted those who believed³¹ while those who did not have “faith,” that is those, who did not realize and acknowledge their ultimate dependability upon God as the creator and preserver of their own life, missed the full potential of what healing intends to bring about.³² Further, Jesus’ healings not only perplexed the bystanders and eye-witnesses. They caused much trouble for Jesus himself; it was a healing on a Sabbath day which made the authorities seek his death.³³ Thus, the passion and death of Jesus hinge around his healing ministry. Cross and resurrection reinforce the Good News that Jesus Christ came “that [all] may have life, and have it abundantly” as succinctly stated in John’s Gospel.³⁴ (Notice the careful phrasing—“that all *may* have life”—which reflects the actual fact that not everyone takes and honors what God does offer.) This, however, is not a plea for “perfect health” or for an immaculate, well “sculptured body.”³⁵ Jesus’ healing ministry, rather, was a graceful response to people in existential need. Jesus is also reported as saying

“If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.”³⁶

The primary concern of the Gospel is not to make people keep perfect health and care for their body. The primary concern of the Gospel, rather, is that humans further and care for life by sharing it with others, especially those threatened to be deprived thereof like the sick, the poor, the prisoners, those suffering from injustice and those wasting their life in futile pursuits.

Yet, this is not all what the New Testament has to say about health and healing. There is one further chapter to it, a last chapter, so to speak, which interprets health, healing, and wellbeing not just as experiences of special blessings but as potential signs of salvation by viewing these as anticipations of the Eschaton, that is of a reality beyond human experience, yet a reality which anyone enjoying health, wellbeing, and healing is granted a limited foretaste of. The last book of the Bible, The Revelation to John, (or: Apocalypse) addresses this aspect in detail. The seer relates,

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem ... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will ... wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new.”³⁷

The seer is also granted a view of “the river of the water of life” which he describes as

“bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God ... through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”³⁸

This actually is a vision of what it might look like when all “may have life, and have it abundantly.” There will always be sufficient supply of food and of vital remedies: the trees bear a variety of fruit all year long while their leaves serve as ready medicines for everyone in need—all the nations of the world—and for every ailment, bodily, spiritually, socially, and politically. In this way God finally will “wipe every tear from the eyes” because “mourning and crying” will not be there any longer because God will have done away with pain and death threatening the annihilation of life; that is abundant life indeed.

B – III – Biblical tradition and the quest for health and wellbeing

Summing up this sketchy analysis we conclude that the biblical perception of ‘health’ is multifaceted, to say the least. There is no one single concept of health and wellbeing detectable

in the Bible. Instead, we noticed a growing development from older texts stating concrete experiences of healing and regaining strength after times of disease towards a more abstract awareness of being healthy in apocryphal scriptures, notably Sirach. We further saw in the New Testament that health is not a topic of concern despite the healing ministry of Jesus. While Jesus' healings anticipated the Eschaton in bearing witness to the power of the living God overcoming death, Jesus also critically relativized health when admonishing that "it is better ... to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet ... or two eyes and ... be thrown into the hell of fire", which means to suffer complete annihilation. With this strange sounding admonition Jesus did not, however, advocate a masochistic disregard for the body or for health and wellbeing. Instead, Jesus wanted to alert those "who have ears to hear and eyes to see"³⁹ to set their priorities right, namely *not* to make health become an end in itself and worship it as an idol. Health has to serve the purpose of life, which is, to "glorify God"⁴⁰, as the biblical shorthand is for living a meaningful life as a human by, for instance, listening to God's word⁴¹, keeping peace with one another, doing justice, exercising loving kindness and showing unconditional compassion to all of creation.⁴² While the concern for health, beauty, and wellbeing tends to be utterly egocentric and thus in constant danger to miss the human vocation the Gospel points to a different way of finding human fulfillment, namely by working toward the goal that all may have life abundantly.

Christians are not called to proclaim the 'Gospel of Health' as health advocates do⁴³; Christians are called, rather, to witness to the 'Gospel of true life', that is, to spread the good news that notwithstanding its frailty and finality human life is destined to thrive and turn out well thanks to the unconditional love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. This is to say that the biblical perception of life and salvation does not turn a blind eye to the reality of disease and suffering or to disability, aging, and weakness as done by health, beauty, and wellness lobbyists. Maintaining that neither health nor wellbeing or fitness will last forever shielding one from dying and death draws attention to a frame of reference which puts all respective efforts into proper perspective. When placed in the biblical frame of reference health and wellbeing not only become signs of God's ongoing creation and potential indications of salvation gracefully offered to all who experience these for the time being as tokens of what is promised to be granted to everyone for good in the Eschaton, finally. But until then humans have to toil on and endure the ups and downs of being well and diseased trusting that God will not forsake them even in their most painful experiences since—according to the Gospel—God, too, became fully human suffering

death, yet, did vanquish death once and for all.⁴⁴ It is this perspective of hope beyond death which liberates to live a truly human life and not under the tyranny of inhuman ideals of fitness and wellbeing posing as health. Health and wellbeing, thus, become in biblical perspective vivid expressions of the ability to face the multifarious challenges of life in a truly life affirming and life furthering manner.

C – Conclusion: Therefore, to equate health with the Gospel does not do justice to either. It is the change in emphasis which matters. While the perfectly understandable concern for health focuses on wellbeing and fitness the Gospel maintains that life is only to be found when shared with others irrespective of the state of health people are in and enjoy. To make the quest for health and wellbeing subservient to the overarching quest for life concerned with the thriving of everyone and of all of creation as once became visible in the ministry and life of Jesus Christ whom Christians acknowledge as God incarnate, that is what Christians are called to stand for.

NOTES:

¹ J. Levin, *God, Faith, and Health*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 2001, p. 3.

² As to the nomenclature see *ibid.* p.5.

³ H. G. Koenig, M. E. McCulloch, D. B. Larson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press 2001; H. G. Koenig, Dana E. King, Verna B. Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 2nd ed., 2012.

⁴ See Harlod G. Koenig, *Medicine, Religion, and Health*, West Conshohocken, Templeton Foundation Press 2008, pp. 28-33.

⁵ Books of Judith, Tobit, 1-4 Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, Odes and Wisdom of Solomon etc.

⁶ This accounts for about 0.0018% of the number of overall words used in the Bible (not including the Apocrypha), which total about 774.500+ depending on the translation.

⁷ These are Prov. 16:24; Jer. 8:22, 30:17, and 3 John 1:2.

⁸ These are according to frequency aPer>m; a noun denoting 'health', 'healing', 'cure' (5 times found in Proverbs (4:22; 12:18; 13:17; 16:24) and once in Jeremiah (8:15), hk'rua], a noun meaning 'health' as the result of healing or restoration (occurring four times - namely in Isaiah 58:8 and Jeremiah 8:22; 30:17 & 33:6), h['Wvy> a noun meaning 'health' in the sense of 'salvation', 'deliverance', (resounding in the name 'Jesus'; found in three places in the Psalms only - 42:11[12]; 43:5 & 67:2), ~Alv', a noun frequently used (135 x) and usually translated as 'peace', connoting 'health' with the sense of 'completeness', 'soundness', 'welfare' and 'peace', (As such it is found two times only, namely in Genesis 43:28 and 2 Samuel 20:9), and tWap.rI, a noun indicating 'health' as the result of 'healing' similar to hk'rua] as found in prophetic literature. (Once only in KJV only Proverbs 3:8) - Within the NRSV version of the OT the term 'health' occurs five times only but as translation of four different Hebrew terms.

⁹ Quoted according to the New Revised Standard Version.

¹⁰ As Greek nouns one finds **i;asij** as in Proverbs 3:8, 4:22; 16:24, Jeremiah 8:15, 8:22, and Psalm 37:4, or **i;ama** as in Jeremiah 30:17 and 40:6 (of which one finds the plural form **ta. iva,mata** in Isaiah 58:8 as well, which implies that health is not of an abstract nature but a recurring event taking place whenever injuries or diseases have been overcome), both terms meaning 'health' as the successful result of 'healing', making 'health' and 'healing' equivocal. They translate hk';rua] five times (Isaiah 58:8; Jeremiah 8:22; 33:6; 37:17; 40:6), as they do replace aPer>m; the same number (Proverbs [3:8]; 4:22; 12:18; 16:24; Jeremiah 8:15), and ~Alv' once as in Psalm 38:3. (LXX: Psalm 37:4: ouvk e;stin i;asij evn th/ sarki, mou, meaning: 'No health is in my flesh'.)

¹¹ Forms thereof occur in Genesis 43:38 and 2 Samuel 20:9 in place of the Hebrew term ~Alv', which commonly gets translated as 'peace' or 'the state of peace', 'wellbeing' and / or 'soundness'. This becomes obvious when one notices the compound formula 'healthy and strong/fit', namely u`gih.j kai. ivscu,wn as in Sirach 30:14. And it is mainly in the Apocrypha where these terms appear most frequently (Tobit 5:16, 21, 22; 7:5, 10; Sirach 1:18; 30:15, 16; 2 Maccabees 1:10; 9:19; 11:28). Commonly used in phrases of greeting and always in the singular the semantic field of u`gih.j / u`giai,nw indicates a tendency toward a certain abstract perception of 'wellbeing' coming somewhat close to a genuine concept of 'health'.

¹² Namely as translation of h['Wvy>. As such it is found in Psalm 42:11 (LXX - Psalm 41:12); 43:5 (LXX - 42:5) and 67:2 (LXX 66:3). In Proverbs 13:17 aPer>m; gets rendered by the LXX with the verb r'u,omai., which means 'to rescue', 'save' or 'deliver'. The ynImeylix]t; of Isaiah 38:16 is translated by LXX with the verb parakale,w, meaning 'beg', 'urge', 'encourage', 'speak words of encouragement' and thus also: 'console', 'comfort' or 'cheer up'. That's why KJV has it as 'so wilt thou recover me'. But it could also be read as 'so wilt thou comfort me' or the like. In the end the meaning converges somehow in this case with that of 'restoring to health' (see above to iva,omai).

¹³ Besides the adjective the following other forms of the same semantic field are found: the infinitive **u`giai,nein** (1x) as in 3 John 1:2: VAgaphte,(peri. pa,ntwn eu;comai, se euvodou/sqai kai. **u`giai,nein**(kaqw.j euvodou/taí, sou h` yuch,, which is translated by KJV and NRSV as 'be in health'; the present participle **u`giai,nonta** (2x) as in Luke

7:10: Kai. u`postre,yantej eivj to.n oi=kon oi` pemfqe,ntej eu-ron to.n dou/lon u`giai,nonta meaning: they found the slave/servant 'in good health' or 'restored to health' and in Luke 15:27, where the father receives his younger son thought lost back in 'good health', u`giai,nonta. In Luke 5:31 oi` u`giai,nontej designates the 'healthy ones', which in both the synoptic parallel texts of Mark 2:17 & Matthew 9:12 are called the 'strong ones' oi` ivscu,ontej.

¹⁴ h` u`giainou,sh didaskali,a (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1); u`giaino,ntoi lo,goi (1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13 & Titus 2:8), u`giai,nontaj th/ pi,stei(th/ avga,ph|(th/ u`pomnh/\ (Titus 2:2; see also Titus 1:13).

¹⁵ There are 10 further occurrences of words of the semantic field **iva,omai/ ivatro,j**. But these are used in the sense of 'restoring to health', 'healing' (Matthew 8:8; 8:13; 15:28; Luke 6:18; 7:7; 8:47; 17:15; John 5:13; James 5:16; Hebrews 12:13) only.

¹⁶ aPer>m; found 4 times in Proverbs 4:22; 12:18; 13:17; 16:24 and once in Jeremiah (8:15); hk'rua], occurring four times, namely in Isaiah 58:8 and Jeremiah 8:22; 30:17 & 33:6; h[^Wvy> is found in three places in the Psalms only - 42:11[12]; 43:5 & 67:2; ~Alv' two times in the sense of 'health', namely in Genesis 43:28 and 2 Samuel 20:9; tWap.rI used only once in Proverbs 3:8

¹⁷ See: Numbers 12:13; 2 Kings 20:5; 1 Chronicles 4:12; 20:4; Jeremiah 8:22; Exodus 15:26.

¹⁸ Quoted according to NRSV.

¹⁹ See for instance Psalms 74; 79; 80.

²⁰ See also Psalms 2:7; 22,16; 30:4; 56:14; 86:13.

²¹ See Proverbs 16:24 ~c,[^I aPer>m;

²² Proverbs 3:8, 4:22, 12:18 and 13:17.

²³ "My child, test yourself while you live; see what is bad for you and do not give in to it. For not everything is good for everyone, and no one enjoys everything. Do not be greedy for every delicacy, and do not eat without restraint; for overeating brings sickness (no,soj), and gluttony leads to nausea (h` avphsti,a evggiei/ e[wj cole,raj). Many have died of gluttony (diV avphsti,an polloi. evtelev,thsan), but the one who guards against it prolongs his life (o` de. prose,cwn prosqh,sei zwh,n)." (37:27-31)

²⁴ Sirach 38:1-15.

²⁵ See Mk 5:34: h` pi,stij sou se,swke,n se\ u[page eivj eivrh,nhn kai. i;sqi u`gih.j avpo. th/j ma,stigo,j souÅ (Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.) The verb se,swken (from **sw,|zw**, meaning: 'save', 'rescue', 'deliver' and: 'keep safe', 'preserve' but also, as in a context of Mark 5: 'cure', 'make well') actually denotes and refers to what in the course of time became the Christian specific as such, namely the 'salvation' by/in Christ.

²⁶ Mat. 1:21: "You are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (NRSV; kale,seij to. o;noma avvtou/ VIhsou/n\ avvtou.j ga.r sw,sei to.n lao.n avvtou/ avpo. tw/n a` martiwn avvtw/nÅ See also Luke 1:31 where it is Mary who receives the order.) Thus Jesus is acclaimed being the o` swth.r tou/ ko,smou, 'the saviour of the world' (John 4:42) or swth.r pa,ntwn avnqrw,pwn, 'saviour of all people' (1 Timothy 4:10).

²⁷ See Hart, Gerald D. *Asclepius: The God of Medicine*. Royal Society of Medicine Press, 2000; Mitchell-Boyask, R. *Plague and the Athenian Imagination: Drama, History and the Cult of Asclepius*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

²⁸ Liberation from death is believed to have been achieved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ not just for humans but for all creation, see Ro. 8:21: "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God."

²⁹ The Gospels sum up Jesus' ministry with phrases like this: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people." (Matthew 4:23, NRSV - Kai. perih/gen [Ihsou/j] evn o[^lh] th/ Galilai,a| dida,skwn evn tai/j sunagwgai/j avvtw/n kai. khru,sswn to. euvagge,lion th/j basilei,aj kai. qerapeu,wn pa/san no,son kai. pa/san malaki,an evn tw/ law/; see also 9:35; 12:15; 14:14; 15:30; Mark 3:10; Luke 5:17; 1:18; 10:9 etc.) The term predominately availed of in contexts like these is **qerapeu,w**, which means: to 'heal', 'cure'. While the noun **qerapei,a**, 'therapy', has

become the technical term for any medical treatment in English and other Indo-German languages it should not be overlooked that Jesus did not just treat sick people, hoping that it will do some good in furthering their wellbeing.

³⁰ See Luke 7:11-15, Mark 5:22-43, and John 11:1-45.

³¹ See John 5:1-3: ‘As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him." -

³² See Mark 6:5-6: "He [Jesus] could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief." See also the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19.

³³ See Mark 3:1-6: “Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.” (See also Matthew 12:9-14 according to NRSV; see also: Luke 6:6-11). - It is the raising of Lazarus from the death which, according to the Gospel of John, leads to the fatal decision by the authorities to kill Jesus (John 11:45-53: “Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." ... Being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to put him to death.”)

³⁴ John 10:10.

³⁵ James Villepigue and Hugo Rivera published a series of so called “Body Sculpting Bibles”, some of which are: *The Body Sculpting Bible for Women*, revised ed. 2001; *Body Sculpting Bible Swimsuit for Women: The way to the perfect beach body*, 2004; *The Body Sculpting Bible for Women: The way to physical perfection*, 2006; *The Body Sculpting Bible for Men: The way to physical perfection*, 2006; *The Body Sculpting Bible for Abs: For women only*, 2007; all: Long Island City, NY, Hatherleigh Press.

³⁶ Matt. 18:8-9.

³⁷ Revelation 21:1-5.

³⁸ Revelation 22:1-2.

³⁹ See Matt. 13:13; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; but see also Matt. 11:15; 13:9; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8; Rev. 2:7, 11 etc.

⁴⁰ See Romans 6:10: "The life he [the baptized one] lives, he lives to God" / o] de. zh/(zh/| tw/| qew/|.

⁴¹ See Exodus 15:26, „If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.” (^a.p.roo))

⁴² See Micah 6:8; Mt. 25:31-46.

⁴³ This phrase was first coined in the wake of the hygiene movement at the end of the nineteenth century with John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943) as one of its most articulate representatives. For contemporary sources on the topic see R. W. Dworkin, *The New Gospel of Health*, in: *The Public Interest*, 141, Fall 2000, 77-90; V. Saxion, *The Gospel of Health*, Minneapolis, MN, Bronze Bow Publishing, 2004, and the URL <http://www.gospelofhealth.org>.

⁴⁴ 2 Timothy 1:10 „Jesus Christ ... abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. “ See also I Cor. 15:55.