
**‘CHRISTUS PRAEDICATOR/MEDICATOR’
HOMILETICAL, PATRISTIC AND MODERN
ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGIA MEDICINALIS**

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Abstract

The Christology of the Church Fathers includes the title of physician (Greek *iatros*, Latin *medicus*) for the salvation of man, numerous medical images, and a rich range of medical metaphors. This study presents a part of the lesser known Greek and Latin homiletics on this rich theme, and the manner in which it was reflected in Western and Eastern iconography. It also highlights several changes in the line of this medical soteriology.

Keywords: *Christus medicus*, medical symbolism, Christological sermons, medical iconography

1. Introduction: The therapeutic dimension of faith

The Christian soteriological vision includes therapeutic dimensions expressed metaphorically and integrated by the Church into its liturgical and sacramental ethos. The Fathers of the Church regarded Christ as the celestial Physician, who came among people to heal the illnesses contracted through the consequences of sin. There exists a heritage of images and metaphors in ancient philosophy and medical culture, but for the Fathers of the Church, great exegetes of the vetero-testamentary texts, these images are considered older than those of Greek philosophy and represent the essential source of the image of Christ as the Physician of humanity in direct connection with the passages in the New Testament in which Christ presents Himself as a Physician (Greek *iatros*, Latin *medicus*). Medical discourse can be found in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologetes and the Alexandrine Fathers in the second and third centuries, as well as in the Latin and Cappadocian Fathers in the fourth century, but also in various the dimensions of Christian teaching: Anthropology, Christology, Sacramental theology, Liturgics and Pastoral theology.

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2. The Christology of the Fathers and medical metaphors

Medical terminology is used in the patristic literature of homiletic origin in a metaphoric, analogical manner. Selecting the multitude of medical metaphors [1] from the sermons of the early Christian writers is relevant for appreciating the relationship between medicine and faith, and to understand it as a dimension of the enculturation of the Gospel into different human backgrounds as a way of theologising. Comparing the ways in which God works with the world and man to a physician, and the description of Christ's coming into the world to the arrival of the great Physician has as an anthropological background the Pauline conception that man is ill because of sin and needs help (Romans 5-8) [2]. This biblical point of view was united by the Fathers of the Church with Platonic and stoic representations. The title of *iatros*, *medicus*, attached to Christ, is founded on the biblical understanding that the condescension of God, Who comes to His people, is healing and Jesus, through word and deed, embodies it in His Person. The name of *medicus* gained high importance in the early Church due to the popularity of medical metaphors in ancient philosophy and to an appreciation of medical activity in the Greek-Roman society in the first Christian centuries. In the presentation of their faith, Christian authors appealed to medical representations and notions from the ancient religious world, whose content they adjusted, thereby achieving a successful trans-symbolisation.

Naming Christ *iatros* represents a soteriological title. Although this title was popular, it was not among the most important Christological titles, as Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers demonstrate. The discourse on Christ the Physician characterises Christ's work for man, but it does not represent an essential Christological name and, therefore, it was not taken over in the formulas of faith (*credo*) of the early Church. Medical metaphors are present very early on in the theology of both the oriental and Latin Fathers, although they are more prominent in the former.

Medical metaphors are very prominent in Origen (e.g., *Homilies on Samuel (I and II Kings)*), as well as in other vetero-testamentary books (e.g., Numbers, Leviticus). These metaphors were taken over by the authors that followed, such as the Cappadocian Fathers, who, in turn, offered minor variations on such themes. The Orient and the West use the same images, even if there are, naturally, different accents. For example, Plato and Aristotle used elements of medical discourse from Epicurus, Seneca and Epictetus in their treatises. Philosophy regarded the healing of a man's soul through the practice of certain philosophical doctrines [2, p. 215-224]. Correspondingly, Christian theology, especially the Alexandrine and Cappadocian Fathers, understands man's healing most importantly as the healing of the soul, through the teaching of Christ and through the work of Christ the Physician. In early theology, medical discourse is not just a verbal mannerism, but an expression of theological reflection. In the case of Christ, there is a coincidence between the person and the work: the remedy, the medicine, is not only Christ's teachings, but also His Person.

3. Greek homiletic elements of Iatro-Theology

The coryphaei of the Alexandrine school, **Clement** (140-150-220) and **Origen** (185-253), frequently utilised medical vocabulary in their exegetical treatises and homilies, including the title of physician for God and for Christ. Clement seems to be one of the main sources for the medical metaphors in Origen's writings. His main works, *Protreptic*, *Pedagogue* and *Stromateis*, as well as his homiletic treatise *Quis dives salvetur*, contain many Christological passages of medical expressions. The diversity and abundance of the comparisons and medical metaphors in Origen's work indicates his level of medical erudition and culture. He considers medical art to be a science and a gift from God and that, through the physician, God works for the good of patients: "Omnis sapientia a Deo ist. Iam vero de medicinae scientia nec dubitari puto. Si enim est ulla scientia a Deo, quae magis ab eo erit quam scientia sanitatis, in qua etiam herbarum vires, et succorum qualitates, ac differentiae dignoscuntur." [*Hom. in Num. XVIII, 3; GCS Or., VII 2, 171, Baehrens*] Origen's Latin homilies, translated by Ruffin, preserve several reflections on the liberal arts, including medicine used in an allegorical sense, in spiritual interpretations of the vetero-testamentary books. For example, in *Homily VIII on Leviticus*, when he explains the laws of leprosy, Origen uses the image of God the physician and of divine medicine: "Let us add that the same Jeremiah, in another place, reminds of the wounds and the treatment of the soul in which persisted the marks of the wounds, after the scar was closed: "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them and I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth, and I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return and will build them, as at the first' (Jeremiah 33.6-7). Therefore, if we learnt enough from the prophet about the wounds and scars of the soul and about their attendance and treatment, which is provided by God, he says: 'I will bring cure'. Undoubtedly, after the wounds, he *brings scars and treatment. And he treated them and showed them peace and faith.* Therefore, if after receiving *God's knowledge and medicine*, if after *showing peace and faith*, which Christ offered us, in this scar a mark of the previous sin or a sign of the old transgression appears, then *the skin of our body becomes infected with leprosy*, which must be examined by the high priest, according to the laws." (Addemus tamen adhuc quae et in alio loco idem Hieremias ad animae uulnera et curas, in quibus tamen uestigia uulnerum resederint post obducatam cicatricem, hic serminibus memorat: *Ecce, ego adducam cicatricem eius, et simul curabo et manifestabo iis pacem et fidem; et conuertam captiuitatem Iuda et captiuitatem Hierusalem. Si ergo sufficienter a propheta didicimus de uulneribus et cicatricibus animarum et curis ac sanitatibus, quae Deo medicante inferentur, intueri nunc illam animam, de qua dicit Deus quia ego adduxi cicatricem eius. Post uulnera sine dubio cicatricem adducit et sanitatem. Et curaui eos, et manifestabo iis pacem et fidem. Si ergo post cognitionem et medicinam Dei, si post manifestationem pacis et fidei, quam per Christum suscepimus, rursum in ista cicatrice adscendat aliquod peccati prioris indicium aut signum aliquod erroris ueteris innouetur,*

tunc fit in cute corporis nostri contagio leprae inspicienda per pontificem, secundum ea quae legislator exposuit). [3]

The medical theology of cicatrisation has to do with the spiritual care of the gifted shepherds to anoint the wounds of the people with the medicine of unction: “In the case of the bodily wounds, after the healing sometimes what remains is the sign of the wound, which is called a scar. Because it is difficult for someone to be healed so that there remains no visible sign of the former wound. Pass now from this *shadow of the Law* towards its truth and observe how the soul, which received the wound of sin, even if it is healed, it still has a *scar on the spot of the wound*. This *scar* is not seen only by God, but also by the ones who received the grace through which they can see the sufferings of the soul and can distinguish the soul which is so healed that it rejected any sign of the wound, from the soul which is healed, but still carries the marks of the old illness even after the scar. And Isaiah teaches us what the wounds of the soul are: *From head to toes there is no wound, or bruise, or injury, or fever*: he speaks, undoubtedly about the wounds of the people, because there are some who can still be administered *the medicine of the unction (medicamentum malagmae)*. However, others are so sinful that one cannot take care of them in any way. The prophet indicates: One cannot put unction, or oil, or fascia.” [3, p. 320-321].

In his turn, **Cyril of Alexandria** (412-444), in good Alexandrine tradition, utilises the rich Hellenistic medical imagery in his famous *Paschal Homilies*: “Because the devil, rushing, to say so, as a storm upon the whole nature of man, subdued it and because no one remained untouched by its incontrollable tyranny of desire, so that the ones who were slaves of sins competed between them in all evils, as if there were great deeds of honour, forgetting about shame and respect (because the purpose of each of these was to exceed in wickedness the ones who were before, as well as the ones who would follow, and our pride was only in shame – Philip 3.19), as Paul says, it was necessary for the Creator of all, by examining carefully numberless *ways of healing*, (*ανγκαιως ο παντων Δημιουργος θεραπειας*), to attempt in all ways to save mankind. From time to time the prophets appeared, teaching the ways of salvation. And because there was no one to obey them, they called the Word of God Himself from heaven, the King of All, to come down on earth; and sometimes they said: ‘Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down’ (Psalm 144. 5); at other times: ‘O send out thy light and thy truth’ (Psalm 43.3).” [4] Cyril, who, on other occasions likes to use analogies from athletic competitions, architecture, sailing, agriculture and gardening, also presents analogies with medical work: “the medicine or remedy of fasting” [4, Ep. 7]. “Indeed, gifted physicians (*Παιδες ιατρων*) prepare, with the help of various recipes, remedies necessary for the body (*τας των σωμάτων εξαπτουσι θεραπειας*); and to the ones who are affected by those which usually harm through their nature the balance of the elements inside us, they prescribe an *annual purge* (*τους ετησιους καθαρισμους*)” [4, p. 222-223].

In antiquity, health was understood, in both a medical and a religious sense [5], as a state of equilibrium between the four elements that form man in his material, physical dimension [Vasile de Ancyra, *De virginis [Despre*

feciorie], 10, PG 30, 688C-689A]. The Holy Fathers also warn about the spiritual illnesses that can affect man through hypocritical faith; that is, through false devotion. Thus, medical metaphors are taken over into spiritual art; the image of the bishop and of the confessor become equivalent to the image of a physician of souls: someone who prescribes medical treatment through spiritual advice and epitimia. Fasting, prayer, commandments and epitimia are a spiritual panoply, functioning as a kind of spiritual pharmacy.

Saint John Chrysostom (347-407) approaches this healing dimension in its sacramental aspects and in its concrete pastoral application. He presents the therapeutic role of the Eucharist [*Hom. in Mt.*, L, 2] and of the church as a place of healing, including anointing with oil for the sick [*Hom. in Mt.* XXXII, 6]. He acknowledges the importance of such spiritual care for the sick, materialised in the Church as hospital [*Hom. in Mt.*, LXI, 3]. The role of every Christian is to be "a physician for the soul" of his neighbour [*Hom. in Mt.*, XXIX, 3; *Hom. in Mt.*, LX, 1] in order to bring him back from where he is, astray from the truth, just as the physician uses various remedies. Enduring the illnesses of the body serves to educate one in the ways through which one will acquire future spiritual goods [*Comm. in Rom.* XI, 3]. Through His Incarnation, Christ does not come as a judge, but as a physician. Only at the end of time will He be revealed as a judge. Consequently, the shepherd of souls, the confessor, must not be a judge, but a physician, distributing healing remedies to penitents [*Hom. in Mt.*, XXIII, 2]. They must give such healing remedies with artifices and astuteness when they are refused, just as physicians do with their patients [*De sacerdotio*, I, 9]. The priest must convince people who are spiritually ill to follow therapy suitable to the illness [*De sacerdotio* II, 3-4; III, 6]. The image of the physician that at times prescribes gentle remedies and other times has to make deep cuts and cauterise wounds [*De sacerdotio* II, 4; *Comm. in Rom.* X, 4] is used in the description of the pastoral art as spiritual surgery. The responsibility of the priest towards the souls of the faithful for which he will answer at the judgment throne is compared to that of the physician [*De sacerdotio* III, 17; IV, 1].

In a homiletic meditation dedicated to the Incarnation, Severian of Gabala (380-408), a bishop and contemporary of Saint John Chrysostom, discusses human corruption and sin, as well as restoration, renewal and soteriology as a restoration plan: a wonderful pedagogical divine design in the progression from the Law and prophets to the Gospel [6]. In the divine pedagogical plan, the remedy precedes the wound; the therapeutic solution precedes the illness. Severian introduces this soteriological theme through the image of Christ as *iatros*, physician of mankind. In God's thinking the remedy of the resurrection is deeper than the foreknowledge of death. We have a typological reading of the episode of Egyptian slavery in which abundance precedes drought: "We, the people, think of medicines (Gr. *pharmaka*), only when we see illnesses, but God knew, before the wounds of our created nature appeared, the remedy of salvation (Gr. *pharmakon sotirias*). Many say: 'Did not God know beforehand that Adam would commit sin?' I say 'Not only did He know this beforehand, but even before the transgression He knew that Christ would restore him through the

economy of Incarnation'. He did not see the fall before conceiving resurrection; firstly, He disposed the remedy of resurrection and then allowed man to experience death, so as to distinguish what he gains through himself and what he acquires from God. And in the same way as in Egypt, He allowed the abundant years first in order to handle the remedy of hunger and then send (in the end) the years of hunger; the help of the remedy preceded the appearance of the wound, even before Adam was modelled, before the appearance of his unjust successors, before the birth of his righteous successors, especially the prophets, God knew beforehand that His image could not be right without being renewed in Christ. In Adam, God saw Paul and Peter. He did not see Adam living in paradise waiting for his expulsion, but in him he saw Peter, who was entrusted the keys of heaven; He saw all things in the first man, because in the root there is the fruit.” [6]

Saint Proclus, patriarch of Constantinople (434-446), uses the parallelism of physicians, prophets and Christ, the heavenly Physician, in one of the most famous sermons dedicated to the mystery of the Incarnation, spoken in front of Nestorius, at the beginning of the dispute about the Virgin Mary's character as Theotokos: “Thus salvation did not have to do only with one man. For a simple man needs himself a saviour, according to Paul, who says: ‘For all have sinned’ (Romans 3.23). The sin approaches man to the devil, and the devil sends to death, leading everything we have into the greatest danger. Salvation was impossible; the physicians sent to us said we were doomed. Then what happened? When the prophets saw that the *wound* exceeded human capability, they cried to the Physician in heaven and one said: ‘Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down’ (Psalm 144. 5); another said: ‘Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed!’ (Jeremiah 17, 14)” [7]

The concrete historical moment of the Incarnation is presented by **St. Gregory of Nyssa** (335-395) as a strategic one, chosen by God, connected to the mystery of the perpetuation of evil and its terror in history. It is also the complete therapy against the infection of evil, planned by God as physician of mankind. The mystery of evil and the time of the Lord's coming were presented in the *Homily on the Nativity* in terms of a theology of history: “One might perhaps reasonably suppose that the reason why the Lord did not manifest Himself at the outset of creation, but bestowed the revelation of His Divinity upon human life in the latter times, is that He Who was going to unite Himself to human life in order to cleanse it of evil was bound to await the blossoming of all the sin planted by the enemy. Thus, it was then that He laid the axe to the root, as the Gospel says. For those physicians who are eminent in their art, while the fever is still consuming the body from within and gradually being aggravated by those factors that cause the disease, yield to the malady, until the suffering has reached its acme, giving no relief to the sufferer by way of food. But when the evil comes to a halt, when the entire disease has been exposed, then they bring their skill to bear. Thus, He Who heals those who are ill in soul waited for the evil from the disease which held the human race in its grip to become manifest in its entirety, lest any hidden evil remain unhealed, which would be the case if

the physician cured only what was visible. For this reason, neither in the times of Noah, when all flesh had become corrupted by unrighteousness, did He apply the remedy of His own appearing.” [8]

The mystery of the Lord's humbleness is presented through various biblical or cultural images, among which is that of the humble ministration of the physician, bent over the suffering in order to heal the sick. **Saint Gregory of Nazianzus** (330-390) presents in his *Homily 39* the Word's coming into the world as the great remedy offered by God in His pedagogy of restoration and healing of the evils caused by man's fall, materialised in polymorphous idolatry and terrible moral corruption: “And having been first chastened by many means (because his sins were many, whose root of evil sprang up through various causes and at sundry times), by word, by law, by prophets, by benefits, by threats, by plagues, by waters, by fires, by wars, by victories, by defeats, by signs in heaven and signs in the air and in the earth and in the sea, by unexpected changes of men, of cities, of nations (the object of which was the destruction of wickedness), at last he needed a stronger remedy (*pharmakon*), for his diseases were growing worse; mutual slaughters, adulteries, perjuries, unnatural crimes, and that first and last of all evils, idolatry and the transfer of worship from the Creator to the Creatures.” [Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, *Omilii* (39), 184-185]

4. Christus praedicator/medicator: homiletic elements of *theologia medicinalis*

In *Adversus Marcionem* (207-208), **Tertullian** (150 - cca. 230) calls Jesus a physician and mentions the double meaning of His activity for mankind. He uses a game of words, showing power and linguistic creativity, eloquently illustrating two Christological ways: the preacher (*praedicator*) and the healer, i.e., the physician (*medicator*, and elsewhere *remediator*). This language was taken over afterwards by **Peter Chrysologus** (cca. 380- cca.450): “...*docentes praedicatorem* interim adnuntiari Christum per Esaiam Quis enim, inquit in vobis, qui deum metuit, (et) Exaudiat vocem filii eius – *item medicatorem* – Ipse enim, inquit, imbecilitates nostras abstulit, et languores portavit” [9]. One can observe in Tertullian's Christology a polemic key giving emphasis to the concrete, corporeal meaning of the healing brought about by Christ. As *praedicator* [9, III 17, 5] Christ announces His teachings to attract people from sin towards God, and as *medicator* [9, III 17, 5] He heals people from the illness of sin.

The great Latin Fathers: Hieronymus, Ambrosius, Gregory the Great and Augustine are in the tradition of Origen and the Cappadocians, their Greek models. They often mention Christ as physician and present the Gospel as a message of healing [10-12]. In the writings of these Latin Fathers certain medical metaphors predominate. In particular, the image of Christ the physician is used in *natal* Christological contexts; that is, especially in sermons on the Nativity. The necessity of the Incarnation of the Son of God is explained through the use of therapeutic terms. Augustine regards Christ's passions as a remedy (Sermon 329, 1-2), writing about the Crucified Christ as *medicus* and

medicamentum. According to M. Honeker, the appearance of the motif *Christ medicus* and the disappearance of the motif *God medicus* in Ambrosius and Augustine have to do with their Christocentrism. The death of Jesus on the Cross is called *medicamentum* by Blessed Hieronymus [*Comm. Eccl.* VII, 20] and Augustine [*Sermo* 175, 3]. In the discourse on Christ as physician and remedy, Augustine makes the connection with Gregory of Nazianzus. He offers for his people, his patients, to drink the cup of the bitter remedy of suffering [*Sermo* 329, 2]. The medical images in the Augustinian writings must be analysed in the context of his teaching on grace. The polymorphy of the motif *Christ medicus* in Augustine has its cause not in the motif itself, but as a consequence of the development of his teaching on grace. The use of a ‘*theologia medicinalis*’ in Augustine is based on his anthropology [13], as well as on his Greek models. The therapeutic dimension of the Incarnation in the writings of Blessed Augustine is expressed in a most concrete way in his sermons, especially those on the Nativity [14] and the Epiphany [15], where Christ is named *medicus humilis* [12,16-22].

One of the most profound images of the Incarnation with reference to its general soteriology depicts Christ, the good Samaritan, descending as a humble physician to the sick giant, which represents the whole of humanity from the west to the east: “*Venit humilis creator noster, creatus inter nos: qui fecit nos, qui factus est propter nos: deus ante tempora, homo in tempore, ut hominem liberaret a tempore. Venit sanare tumorem nostrum magnus medicus. Ab oriente usque in occidentem genus humanum tamquam magnus iacebat aegrotus, et magnum medicum requirebat: misit primo pueros suos medicus iste, et venit ipse postea, cum a nonnullis desperaretur.*” (Our Maker came to us in a humble way as a creature: the One who created us, became a man for us: God before the ages, man in time, to free people from time. Come, gifted physician, to heal our tumour. From East to West mankind lay like a sick giant longing for a good physician: (He) sent His servants and then He came Himself, when all were desperate) (S. Guelferbytanus 32, 5).

In the Augustinian writings, healing refers not only to physical wounds, but also focuses on the whole man, body and soul. The metaphor of Christ as the physician of the soul comes from Mark 9.12-13 and is generally found in the writings of the Church Fathers. Man’s illness that the Saviour has to heal is the tumour of pride (*tumor superbiae*). The remedy (*medicamentum*) is Christ’s death on the Cross and the Eucharist that makes Christ’s sacrifice present in an unbloody manner. Augustine often uses the metaphor *tumor superbiae*. This is extended, but only swollen and empty inside, lacking substance. At the same time, it is an illness, an excrescence caused by the original sin of disobedience to God, because people, instead of being satisfied with the plenitude of their humanity, wished to be like God. Therefore, pride is the origin and the root of all sins and salvation occurs through the absolute humbleness of the divine physician (*Christus medicus*). For the preacher, the word *tumour* does not mean an infirmity of the body, but instead is closer to the meaning of the verb ‘*tumescere*’; that is, a swelling of vanity and pride, which in a certain sense is

the original sin. Christ came as *medicus humilis* to heal this tumour.

Saint Leo the Great (400-461) illustrates in his Nativity sermons the Christological aphorism enounced by Gregory of Nazianzus (Ep. 101 ad Cledonium), which was already valid at the time of Tertullian and Origen: *Quod non est assumptam, non est sanatum*.

Saint Fulgentius of Ruspe (462-533) was one of the most important and outstanding personalities of African Christianity in the fifth and sixth century, disciple of Augustinian theology and confessor of Chalcedonian Christology. In his homilies [23] dedicated to the Incarnation (Sermo 2) and focused on its Eucharistic finality, uses the sacramental image of Christ as *medicamentum*. Christ is presented as a paradox, being both sovereign and slave, rich and poor, God from God and God-Man, the Word from the Father's heart and the incarnated Word in the womb of the Virgin, True God of True God and Bridegroom coming out of the chamber, the Creator of Angels and the Saviour of people, the Shepherd of angels and the Restorer of people. The purpose of the Incarnation is presented in a paschal-Eucharistic key; a communion through sight for the holy angels and another through faith to people for their healing. The Eucharist is also called the bread of angels and a remedy (*medicamentum*): "So that man should eat the bread of the angels, the Creator of angels became a man, nurturing and attracting both and remained untouched. Wonderful bread, which nurtures angels face to face, so that they take delight in Him in His kingdom, and He nurtures us with faith so that we do not go adrift on the way! He is the bread that is offered to the angels in the joy of steadfastness (Psalm 78.24), is offered to people to regain health, and the One who made Himself angels' food became our remedy (*medicamentum*)." [23] The divine plan is presented in a simple structure as 'the line of the healing grace' (*gratia medicinalis*) shown to people through divine kindness, and as illustrating in a homiletical way the inherited Augustinian soteriology.

In his turn, Blessed Hieronymus (cca.347-420) names Christ the new Asklepios, an expression of an intelligent enculturalisation, which occurred after a long symbolical dispute in the patristic period. In his exegesis on the Gospel of Mark, we find the enumeration of Moses, Isaiah and of all saints as physicians and of Christ as the primary physician; it is the paradox of the coincidence between the physician and the remedy [24]: "Egregius medicus, et verus et archiater. Medicus Moyses, medicus Esaias, medicis omnes sancti: sed iste archiater est ... ipse est medicus et medicamentum" [25].

Through Augustine and the other Fathers others took up the patristic medical metaphors into medieval Christology and soteriology [26], including Peter Lombard (†1160), Thomas of Aquinas (1225-1274), Bonaventure (1218-1274) and so forth. One cannot underestimate the importance of the motif *Christus medicus* in the case of Martin Luther (1483-1546). Both his discourse on man as *simul iustus et peccator* and his teaching on justification (*Rechtfertigungslehre*) depend on it [1, p. 345]. Luther accepted the Augustinian teaching on *gratia medicinalis* and used it in thinking about the reformation. He also utilised a series of medical metaphors from the Greek

Fathers. This is obvious in the catechetical elements of his sacramental thinking. Some have also expressed the opinion that the image of Christ *apothecarius* with the pharmaceutical balance of justice in His hand would be an excellent representation of the Lutheran teaching on justification (*Rechtsfertigungslehre*) [27].

The Silesian reformer Kaspar von Schwenckfeld (1489-1561) presented in a work entitled *Von der himmlischen artzney des waren Arztes Christi / zur gesundwerdung und zum ewigen heil desellenden krancken verdorbenen menschen* the spiritual medicine of the physician Jesus Christ, a series of themes of theological anthropology, Christology and pneumatology, in an allegorical medical and pharmaceutical style. In this context, the Holy Spirit is presented in the divine office as the heavenly pharmacist or the one who anoints (*seplasarius*), who collaborates with Christ for spiritual medicine. In the spirit of this Protestant theological mysticism, the human patient consumes the heavenly medicine through faith in the divine word and grace to the extent in which he opens his heart to the call of the Lord.

The image of Christ the physician, but also that of the Church as ‘sacramental pharmacy’ is very present in today’s Catholicism in celebration homilies. For example, in a sermon on the consecration of the myrrh, delivered by the Catholic bishop Kurt Koch in 2003, entitled “The sacramental pharmacy of the priesthood of Jesus Christ” [28], the whole homiletic undertaking starts from the famous baroque image of the heavenly physician: of the Eucharist as the medicine of immortality and the centre of the heavenly pharmacy of the Church.

In contemporary Orthodox homiletics, the emphasis on the therapeutic dimension of Christ’s work, extended through the sacramental activity of the Church occurred in Romania when hospital missions started again after 1989. That was the moment when the priests of charity developed adequate cycles of catecheses and homilies. Many pastoral letters sent to the faithful in 2012 by the bishops of the Orthodox Church, such as the paschal epistle of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, *Christ the Resurrected, our Healer*, have had the theme of the therapeutic dimension of faith.

In a paradoxical metaphorical consensus with the data of the above-mentioned western homiletics, I had the chance of listening to a sermon of the famous hieromonk Ioan Iovan (1922-2008), presented in the 1990s, in which he encouraged the faithful to use with complete trust ‘the remedies of the Church’, which he called in a metaphorical key ‘potiromicină and miromicină’ (chalicemicin and myrrhomicin), remedies through which he had seen many people healed in his experience as a priest.

The Christian heritage includes images of the therapy of faith and healing, which have played a huge catechetical role along the years. There have been brave attempts to protect images that illustrate the relationship between faith and medicine. It is worth mentioning, for example, Jörgen Schmidt-Voigt, a German physician, who set up a foundation and a museum of icons oriented on this theme [29]. If the sepulchral art in the fourth century valorised evangelical

images of healing [30], the image of Christ as the good Samaritan remained a constant reminder, through miniatures (*Codex purpureus*, sec. VI) and frescoes (Hurezi), of the "medical" representation of divine mercifulness, especially as materialised in "the first aid" offered by the divine Physician to the wounded man through oil and wine. Patristic and medieval spiritual exegesis saw in the two medicines, the oil and the wine, the anaesthetics of those times, just as Augustine saw the coincidence between physician and physicianie, between priest and sacrifice, anointing humanity with the oil of divinity through the Incarnation and the overflow of divine power through the blood on the Cross.

The comparison of the Christian mysteries to medicines and of the Church to a pharmacy became commonplace in the medieval period. The systematic study of this kind of medical and pharmaceutical soteriology began in the West with the project of Livinus de Muynck, working with the Augustinian eremite Jean Liebens (1675-1747), a theology professor at the Löwen University. He did not start from Christ's image as physician or pharmacist, but from the hypostasis of the Good Samaritan and he called the sacraments medicines of the heavenly Samaritan: *Coelestis samaritani medicamentum* [31]. Thus, this image of Christ as someone who takes care of wounded people, as the one who gives the first sacramental aid, became very popular in the West, where an authentic Samaritan spirituality developed.

As the Latin West witnessed the development and generalisation of the medical and pharmaceutical professions, it valorised iconographically this Christological theme of *Christus als Arzt und Apotheker* [30, p. 39-44], in the spirit of the Augustinian exegesis of *Christus medicus*. Especially in the Germanic cultural space, of the Baroque period, the image became very much appreciated and was present in many pharmacies.

The oldest known representation of *Christus apothekarius* (*Christ dans l'officine – Christ in the pharmacy*) is the Rouen miniature, made around 1520, in which Christ, sitting at a table in a pharmacy, writes a medical prescription for Adam and Eve. The image presents Christ as 'medicus universalissimus' and 'coelestis medicus', the celestial physician of the proto-parents of mankind, as he was called in 1691 by the famous German preacher Johann Jacob Schmidt of Hinterpommern. The theme of Christ offering spiritual remedies to humanity, which is ill because of sin, is more or less implicit in biblical passages. Augustine and other ecclesiastical writers utilise these scriptural passages. Such themes seem to have acquired a concrete form in sixteenth century France, through the miniature in Rouen. They are further developed in the Germanophone countries (Germany, Austria, the north of Switzerland), extending marginally to Russia, Greece and Serbia and the Scandinavian countries. In each case, there is an illustration of the medical and pharmaceutical Christology.

5. Conclusions

Patristic, medieval and modern homiletics conserved a rich and varied set of medical metaphors of the Incarnation, of the Mysteries of the Church and of the spiritual life, which was developed into Christian iconography in very suggestive images. The words of the Church Fathers ought to be revisited as utterances essential for restoring the freshness of the dialogue between medicine and faith.

The relation between medicine and faith today implies not only the need to recapture this common heritage of words and images, but also to engage in interdisciplinary research projects [32] and to revitalise an ethics of the medical and spiritual responsibility as well as a global Christian bioethics. Each of these projects should function primarily as powerful impulses towards a deeper meditation dedicated to the One who called Himself Physician [33].

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