

INJURY AND BLESSING

A CHALLENGE TO CURRENT READINGS
OF BIBLICAL DISCOURSE
CONCERNING IMPAIRMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

In the ancient world, impairment was common knowledge: archaeological and written material demonstrate that people with impairments were included in society. Impairment was well understood and, in the rhetorical dynamic between author and reader, it was imaginatively used. The Early Church, for instance, developed established impairment themes in order to articulate, explain, and demonstrate central conceptions and experiences of divine activity and human discipleship.

Peculiar to the modern era has been the disappearance of people living impairment from mainstream experience. As a result of this culturally-shaped process, modern presuppositions about impairment have emerged that are experienced by people living impairment as profoundly negative and disabling. Modern biblical interpretation both reflects and reinforces these presuppositions, overlooking the wide range of uses of impairment in ancient texts, and causing alienation and damage to people living impairment.

To read texts of the Bible informed by an investigation of the perspectives on impairment in the ancient world presents a challenge in two respects. It identifies the inadequacies and impoverishment of uncritical modern interpretation of the biblical impairment texts. It also stimulates new and fresh liberatory readings, which reclaim as the proper focus for the interpretation of these texts the experience of lived impairment.

To my wife Mel

You planted the seed,
you nourished and you gave space.
Without you, this would not have grown or come to fruit.
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PREFACE

I would like to mention here a number of preliminary points, as explanation or for information.

1. I have made extensive use of footnotes in the thesis. There are several reasons for doing this. Firstly, the results presented here are not the generally accepted view in current commentary, so I have attempted to supply sufficient evidence for each point in the argument. Secondly, the ancient writers whose works are investigated here were using well-known impairment themes and associations – this notion is central to the rhetorical dynamic between implied author and implied readers in the communication model of interpreting ancient texts that is adopted here. The breadth of evidence supplied in the thesis, largely through the footnotes, demonstrates that these impairment themes were indeed well-established. Thirdly, one of the stated purposes of the thesis is to be a resource, an accessible starting point for other people to pursue further and to question themes that are identified here, and to identify and explore other themes that have been overlooked. As for the means of footnoting, often a number of references are clustered together within a single footnote: due to the amount of footnote material, I have aimed not to interrupt the flow for the person reading by inserting a footnote for each reference made.

2. A central purpose of the thesis is to identify established impairment themes in the ancient world that contributed to the contexts in which the biblical texts were written and in which they were first read and heard. With the emphasis being on themes that were permeating across cultures, the references here are not presented in chronological order, nor by region, culture or language. Nor have I identified contributory factors specific to individual texts that are looked at, even the biblical impairment texts. I acknowledge that this identification is an important task, especially in order to sharpen the radical historico-critical analysis of impairment texts embarked on here. However, that task falls outside the scope of this thesis.

3. Primary and secondary material from several different academic disciplines are referred to here. For this reason abbreviations have been kept to a minimum. Sometimes, as with many of the Classical works, the full text title is given where designation by abbreviation is standard for the particular specialist.

4. In the quotations from ancient works that are given here, the English translation specified in the footnote and bibliography has been used, normally without alteration. Occasionally changes have been made for the sake of inclusivity, such as altering in an appropriate way words for impairment that cause offence. I have attempted to make use of the standard editions of ancient texts according to the resources that have been available to me.

5. On the emancipatory model of research, the researcher of a topic relating to impairment is required to make available information relating to their own life-context. I include at this point some personal details. In 1989, Mel and I married, and a week later we were teaching at an Anglican mission and secondary school in rural Zimbabwe: this three year

period was the chance for both of us to step outside for a while perceptions of impairment overwhelmingly influenced by modern presuppositions. Mel is a wheelchair user, a disability equality trainer, and is active in the disability movement. My standpoint with regard to the biblical texts is confessional, being a priest in the Church of England. My background prior to ordination was nursing, specialising in mental and physical disability: my experience is of both the medical and social models of disability! There is a Graeco-Roman bias in the ancient material investigated here as I was a classicist before taking up nursing and teaching. As a carer, I can say that I live impairment, in the sense that impairment is certainly mainstream to my life. I would not, however, say that I experience oppression, as people with impairments do. Rather, as a carer, I experience alienation.

6. Both the igniting spark and the fuel for this research project has come from the conjunction of the two apparently incompatible worlds that I inhabit: the Church and the disability movement. Mel's experience at the hands of uncritical Church people, such as faith healers, has been a strong dynamic in this project, as has the witness of faithful Christians who have impairments, or who are carers, or who are not uncritical of their preconceptions. I believe that the two worlds are not in principle incompatible, but the discomfort that I and others experience at our place of overlap makes it clear to me that the closer partnership that I long for will come at a high price: a mutual reassessment of presuppositions, and penitence.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	David Noel Freedman (ed.). <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>ACM</i>	Martin Meyer and Richard Smith (eds.). <i>Ancient Christian Magic</i> . San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994.
<i>Acta apost.</i>	<i>Acta apostolorum</i>
<i>Acut.</i>	<i>De diaeta in morbis acutis</i>
<i>ACW</i>	<i>Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation</i> . New York: Newman Press, 1946-.
<i>Ad loc.</i>	<i>ad locum</i> , at the place
<i>Adv.</i>	<i>Adversus</i>
<i>AEL</i>	Miriam Lichtheim. <i>Ancient Egyptian Literature</i> . 3 vols. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973-1980.
<i>Aer.</i>	<i>De aera, aquis, locis</i>
<i>Aet. Mund.</i>	<i>De aeternitate mundi</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>De agricultura</i>
<i>ANET</i>	James B. Pritchard. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.
<i>ANF</i>	A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.). <i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . 10 vols. Buffalo, New York: Christian Literature, 1885-1896. Reprint, Edinburgh: T&T Clark / Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951-1956.
<i>Aph.</i>	Ἄφορισμοί
<i>Art.</i>	<i>De articulis</i>
<i>Ath. pol.</i>	Ἀθηναίων πολιτεία
<i>BCE</i>	Before the Common Era
<i>BCE</i>	John W. Yolton, Roy Porter, Pat Rogers, B. M. Stafford (eds.). <i>Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment</i> . Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.
<i>Betz, GMP</i>	H. D. Betz. <i>The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation –Including the Demotic Spells</i> . Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
<i>BHS</i>	K. Elliger and W. Rudolph <i>et al.</i> (eds.). <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Rev. edn. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977.
<i>Bruta anim.</i>	<i>Bruta animalia ratione uti, sive Gryllus</i>
<i>BWL</i>	W. G. Lambert. <i>Babylonian Wisdom Literature</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.
<i>C.</i>	<i>Contra</i>
<i>CE</i>	Common Era
<i>CCL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</i> . Turnhout: Brepols, 1953-.
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De cherubim</i>
<i>Coloss.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Colossenses</i>
<i>Comm.</i>	<i>Commentarii</i>
<i>Confess.</i>	<i>Confessionum libri tredecim</i>

<i>Conf. Ling.</i>	<i>De confusione linguarum</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>
<i>Cor.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Corinthianos</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> . Vienna: Tempsky, 1866-.
<i>DACL</i>	Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (eds.). <i>Dictionnaire d'archeologie chretienne et de liturgie</i> . 15 vols. (in 30). Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1907-1953.
<i>Dec.</i>	<i>De decalogo</i>
<i>Det. Pot. Ins.</i>	<i>Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat</i>
<i>Digest</i>	<i>Digest of Justinian</i>
<i>Ebr.</i>	<i>De ebrietate</i>
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>Epistula / Epistulae</i>
<i>ed(s).</i>	Editor(s)
<i>edn.</i>	Edition
<i>EEC</i>	Angelo Di Berardino (ed.). <i>Encyclopedia of the Early Church</i> . ET by Adrian Walford. 2 vols. Cambridge: James Clarke, 1992.
<i>EJ</i>	Cecil Roth <i>et al.</i> (eds.). <i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> . 12 vols. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972.
<i>EMI</i>	Lynn LiDonnici. <i>The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions: Text, Translation and Commentary</i> . Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995.
<i>Eph.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Ephesios</i>
<i>Epid.</i>	<i>Epidemiae</i>
<i>ET</i>	English Translation
<i>FC</i>	<i>Fathers of the Church</i> . Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947-.
<i>Flat.</i>	Περὶ φύσων
<i>Fr.</i>	Fragment(s)
<i>Fract.</i>	Περὶ ἄγγων
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De fuga et inveniione</i>
<i>Gal.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Galatas</i>
<i>GCS</i>	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller</i> . Leipzig and Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1897-.
<i>HB</i>	Hebrew Bible
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia ecclesia</i>
<i>Heb.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Hebraeos</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	<i>Homiliae</i>
<i>HN</i>	<i>Historia Naturalis</i>
<i>Hum.</i>	Περὶ χυμῶν
<i>Hyp.</i>	<i>Hypothetica: Apologia pro Judaeis</i>
<i>Jo.</i>	<i>Joannem or evangelium Joannis</i>
<i>Jos.</i>	<i>De Josepho</i>
<i>LDF</i>	N. Russell. <i>Lives of the Desert Fathers</i> . Oxford / Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1981.
<i>Leg. All.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae</i>
<i>Leg. Gai.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>

Loeb	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i> . London: Heinemann / Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1912-.
LOTJ	Louis Ginzberg. <i>Legends of the Jews</i> . 7 vols. ET by H. Szokd. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968.
LSJ	Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, with revision by Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9 th edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
LXX	Alfred Rahlfs (ed.). <i>Septuaginta</i> . Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt / Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935.
Martinez	Florentino Garcia Martinez. <i>The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran texts in English</i> . 2 nd edn. ET by Wilfred G. E. Watson. Leiden: Brill / Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.
Matt.	<i>Matthaeum</i> or <i>evangelium Matthaei</i>
Migr. Abr.	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
MM	James Hope Moulton and George Milligan. <i>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources</i> . London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949.
Mor.	<i>Moralia</i>
Morb.	Περὶ νόσων
Morb. Sacr.	<i>De morbo sacro</i>
Mut. Nom.	<i>De mutatione nominum</i>
Nat. Hom.	Περὶ φύσιος ἀνθρώπου
Nestle-Aland	Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Aland <i>et al.</i> (eds.). <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> . 26 th edn. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979.
nf	neue folge
NPNF i / ii	P. Schaff <i>et al.</i> (eds.). <i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> . 1 st / 2 nd Series. 14 vols. each series. New York: Christian Literature / London: Parker, 1887-1894. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952-1956.
NRSV	Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy (eds.). <i>The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books. New Revised Standard Version</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
NT	New Testament
NTA	Wilhelm Schneemelcher, (ed.). <i>New Testament Apocrypha</i> . 2 vols. Rev. edn. ET by R. McL. Wilson. Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991, 1992.
OCD ³	S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.). <i>The Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> . 3 rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
ODCC ³	F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds.). <i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church</i> . 3 rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
Omn. Prob. Lib.	<i>Quod omnis probus liber sit</i>
Op. Mund.	<i>De opificio mundi</i>
OTPs	James H. Charlesworth (ed.). <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 vols. London: Darton, Longman and Todd / New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985.
paralyt.	<i>paralyticum demissum per tectum</i>

<i>Phillip.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Philippenses</i>
<i>PDM</i>	<i>Papyri Demoticae Magicae</i> . Designation of Demotic spells in Betz, <i>GMP</i> .
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyrae Graecae Magicae</i> . Designation of Greek spells in Betz, <i>GMP</i> .
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca</i> . Ed. J-P Migne. 166 vols. Paris, 1857-1866.
<i>Phil.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Philomenum</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia cursus completus. Series Latina</i> . Ed. J-P Migne. 221 vols. Paris, 1841-1864.
<i>Poster. C.,</i>	<i>De posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Praem. Poen.</i>	<i>De praemiis et poenis</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De providentia</i>
<i>PTS</i>	<i>Patristiche Texte und Studien</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964-.
<i>Pyr.</i>	Πυρρώμενοι ὑποτυπώσεις
<i>Quaest. in Gen.</i>	<i>Quaestiones in Genesin</i>
<i>Quaest. in Exod.</i>	<i>Quaestiones in Exodum</i>
<i>Quomodo adul.</i>	<i>Quomodo adulescens poetas audire debeat</i>
<i>R.</i>	<i>Rabbah</i>
<i>Rer. Div. Her.</i>	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
<i>Rev.</i>	Revised
<i>Rom.</i>	<i>epistulam in Romanos</i>
<i>Sacr.</i>	<i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources Chretiennes</i> . Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1941-.
<i>SHA</i>	<i>Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i>
<i>Sobr.</i>	<i>De sobrietate</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis</i>
<i>Spec. Leg.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Subl.</i>	Περὶ ὕψους
<i>Talmud</i>	I. Epstein (ed.). <i>The Babylonian Talmud</i> . 18 vols. Brooklyn, New York: Soncino Press / Judaica Press, 1973 [on CD-ROM: Institute for Computers in Jewish Life & Davka Corporation and Judaica Press, Inc, 1991-1995].
<i>Tanakh</i>	Harry M. Orlinsky, H. L. Ginsberg, Ephraim A. Speiser <i>et al.</i> (eds. and translators). <i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures</i> . Rev. edn. Philadelphia / New York / Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1985.
<i>TDNT</i>	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.). <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . 10 vols. ET by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1974.
<i>TDOT</i>	G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H.-J. Fabry (eds.). <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . 8 vols. ET by J. T. Willis, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and D. E. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-.
<i>Terrestr. aquat.</i>	<i>Terrestriane an aquatilia sint callidiora</i>
<i>Thess.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Thessalonicenses</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Timotheum</i>
<i>Tit.</i>	<i>epistulam ad Titum</i>
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>De virtutibus</i>

Vit., *Vitae parallelae*,
Vit. Cont. *De vita contemplativa*
Vit. Mos. *De vita Mosis*
Vulgate R. Weber, B. Fischer, *et al.* (eds.). *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam
Versionem*. 2nd edn. Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975.

Sources for abbreviations used: OCD³; LSJ; ODCC³; Clines, *The Sheffield Manual*, 106f, 111f. For the designation of Qumranic material, I have adopted the reference system used by Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*.

INTRODUCTION

1.0 *Summary of Thesis Aims*

The Christian faith provides one of the strongest negative responses to acceptance of persons with handicaps.¹

One of the challenges faced...is overcoming the burden of this [biblical] characterization. It is no wonder that churches respond so slowly and ineptly to the special needs of this community, for they are themselves handicapped by their theological legacy. Nowhere is this more potently visible than in the Bible's view of those who are other than physically whole.²

There are two objectives to this thesis. The first is to identify and to question this biblical burden and handicapping legacy. The second is to resource and to stimulate new readings of the biblical impairment texts which reclaim their proper focus and appropriate them afresh.

In order to achieve the first objective, the thesis aims to establish the following points.

In the ancient world impairment was a mainstream experience – people with impairments were commonly known and part of everyday life at all levels of society. In

¹ Wilke, *Creating the Caring Congregation*, 22.

² The Church burdened by its theological legacy: Fontaine, "Roundtable Discussion," 112; see also: Fontaine, "Disabilities and Illness," 295.

In summary: "These are the theological sticking points for Christians with disabilities pursuing a full life of faith: the purity code of Leviticus, the Gospels' healing stories, the assumption that disability is the result of sin" – Ginny Thornburgh, in a review of Eiesland and Saliers, *Human Disability and the Service of God*, quoted on the back cover of that publication. See also, Lay, *Seeking Signs*, passim; Black, 43-56; *Disability Now* February (1998), 12; Magik, 24f; C. C. Grant, 75-79. Of the Gospel impairment healings: "Within church communities these stories have often fuelled destructive attitudes towards people with disabilities rather than foster visions of inclusion and participation" – C. C. Grant, 73.

Western societies of the modern era, however, people with impairments have disappeared from the mainstream. Modern presuppositions and attitudes towards impairment have both contributed to and resulted from this disappearance of impairment from mainstream experience. Once people with impairments became no longer widely seen or commonly known, distorted perceptions of impairment could and did flourish.

Modern readings of biblical impairment texts reflect and reinforce these presuppositions. Consequently, modern interpretation of these texts is inadequate, in two key respects. Firstly, modern interpretation is impoverished: commentators overlook many uses of impairment. People without mainstream experience of impairment are to a large extent not aware of aspects of impairment being used by ancient writers for whom impairment was familiar and everyday. Secondly, people living impairment experience the presuppositions relating to impairment reflected in these modern understandings as profoundly negative: they are alienating and damaging.³

³ “If only your faith were strong enough...”: Wilke, *Creating the Caring Congregation*, 21; cf., *ibid.*, 19-30.

Unhealed as ‘failures’: *Disability Now* March (1998), 12 – with other testimonies *ad loc.*; cf., *Disability Now* February (1998), 12.

Further examples of these themes from people with impairments and their families:

“God did this to me because I’m a bad person”: Lenny, 235; “If you were right with God...,” I heard him proclaim, “You will walk out of here in two weeks”: Magik, 25; “When I stepped off the curb, some people gathered around me. They chanted, ‘Jesus heals! Let him lay his hands on you!... Your eyes are bad because you’ve sinned. If you pray hard enough, Jesus will forgive your sins and restore your sight. Then he’ll love you.’... The Bible generally portrays disabled people as helpless”: Wolfe, 17.

Compare: Eiesland, *The Disabled God*, 70-75, 117; Stiteler, “Embracing Those Unwelcomed,” 46; Wink, 14-16; Fontaine, “Disabilities and Illness,” 286-300; Lane, 11-13; Stiteler, “Roundtable Discussion,” 118f; Webb-Mitchell, 50-75; Potter, 76-94; T. Harrison, 20-23; Pierce, 47-50; Davies-Johns, 33-38; Young, *Encounter With Mystery*, 121; Horne, “Making the Body Whole,” 122f; Editorial in *Contact*, 113 (1994), 2. See also: Young, *Face to Face*, 51-93; Humphries and Gordon, 12; Magik, 24f.

Persons with disabilities carry the double burden of those who preach these Gospel healing narratives from the perspective that if only their faith were strong enough, they would be cured, which implies that disability is a punishment for sin or for lack of faith; and those who preach these texts metaphorically, using blindness, deafness and paralysis as analogies of sin. Either way, the liberating word of “healing” is fundamentally missing for persons with disabilities.⁴

Although people living impairment are dealt this abuse as being ‘what the Bible says’, in fact biblical impairment texts are in many respects resourceful and encouraging for people living impairment. To the Early Church, for instance, people with impairments were not to be segregated or kept at a distance; rather, their experience was drawn on in order to demonstrate, amongst other things, central discipleship qualities and processes. The abuse that people living impairment experience in the modern era comes not from biblical impairment texts, but from uncritical modern interpretation of these texts.

In order to achieve the second objective, to identify a means of reclaiming the proper focus in the biblical impairment texts and of appropriating them, a socio-critical disability hermeneutic is proposed that uses a communication model of understanding ancient texts. This methodology is discussed in detail in the following sections of the

Compare from a Catholic perspective, an emphasis on suffering that can distance people with impairments onto saintly pedestals: Orsi, 547-590; M. Green, *passim*; MacNutt, 75-88; see also: L. Jackson, 31-37.

The view is expressed by those in the disability movement that there is “consistent cultural bias [in the Bible] against people with accredited impairments,” “impairments [perceived] as un-Godly and the consequence of wrongdoing...Biblical text is replete with references to impairment as the consequences of wrongdoing” – Barnes, “Legacy of Oppression,” 13, 15f; cf., Oliver, *Politics of Disablement*, 16, 19f, 22f, 29-31, 40; Shakespeare, “Cultural Representation,” 231.

There is also the damage in corporate terms done to non-disabled people:

“The non-disabled Church has disabled itself by cutting itself off from the insights that disabled people have as a result of their experience of disability”: Pierce, 49.

A collection of traditional interpretations of biblical impairment texts – “Hermeneutical Hazards”: Black, 19-56, 75-77, 85f, 99-102, 118-120, 137-139, 145, 147, 156f, 175f.

“The agenda is to get everyone to see that what has passed as ‘universal’ ...has been partial in its exclusion of women and their insights”: Loades, “Feminist Theology,” 250. This summary of the feminist agenda can be adapted to state the agenda here.

⁴ Black, 56.

Introduction. Using this methodology with a range of ancient material relating to impairment, many themes of impairment are identified within the rhetorical dynamic of author and reader. These ancient uses of impairment are presented with two objectives: they are used to critique modern uncritical interpretation of the texts, and they are offered as a basis and resource for fresh readings of the texts that will be liberatory for both disabled people and non-disabled people.

2.0 *Methodology*

The hermeneutic proposed here as a means of reclaiming the proper focus makes use of techniques traditionally associated with both historical-critical methods (such as analysis of social context and literary techniques), and also with reader response methods (such as application of the interpreter's experience and life-context). As some of the present currents in hermeneutics show, the distinction between the two is not a sharp one. An interpreter's own experience, for example, is engaged in the hermeneutical process even within explicit historical-criticism: there are gaps in the meaning of a text which an interpreter bridges by using their imaginative creativity: "The past is, as it were, a foreign country. The researcher...by empathy seeks to enter it."⁵ An interpreter's imaginative creativity and empathy are informed to a great extent by their experience and life-context.⁶

⁵ Young, "From Suspicion and Sociology," 423.

⁶ On the use of imagination, empathy and critical abilities: Young, "From Suspicion and Sociology," 422; Young, "Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading," 109; Schokel, 78-93.

Similarly, an interpreter who focuses on their own experience as a basis for how they interpret a text also engages their critical-analytical abilities: they assess the interpretations made by other people with different experience and life-context, and the data presented by them, and, to whatever extent, they incorporate or discard their data. Also, by drawing on both critical assessment and personal experience, decisions are made about whether to recognise authority in particular texts. The confessional standpoint of an interpreter will influence, and be influenced by, how they apply their experience and critical abilities.

The methodology proposed in this thesis, with the double facet of analysis and experience, is outlined here by using three perspectives from “overlapping communities.” Firstly, on criteria similar to feminist readings, the hermeneutic is liberatory and socio-critical. Secondly, the methodology has a disability weight: it uses principles from the emancipatory model of research as identified by the disability movement. Thirdly, on the analysis of the communication model of understanding ancient texts, a key focus is the rhetorical dynamic of speaker, hearer and subject matter inherent in the hermeneutic of ancient texts.⁷ How each of these models applies to the methodology is discussed in this section of the Introduction. Some of the questions

⁷ The phrase “overlapping communities” is taken from Pui-Lan, 203-217.

I have primarily used these sources for the 3 perspectives outlined here:

- a) Liberatory socio-critical model – Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, passim.
- b) Emancipatory model – Oliver, “Defining Impairment and Disability,” 39-54; Barnes and Mercer, “Breaking the Mould?” 1-14.
- c) Communication model – Young, “Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading,” 105-120; Young, “From Suspicion and Sociology,” 421-435.

raised by the application of these models are discussed in the next section of the Introduction.

2.1 A Liberatory Socio-Critical Hermeneutic

The methodology proposed here can be analysed using a scheme from feminist readings of biblical texts. It can be understood, using the criteria of Thiselton in *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, as a liberatory socio-critical hermeneutic. Firstly, I identify a hermeneutic of suspicion that can be used to critique, in Thiselton's terms, "the frameworks of interpretation" which, in the dominant modern tradition, "transmit pre-understandings and symbolic systems" of disability which perpetuate injustice for people living impairment.⁸ This hermeneutic of suspicion relates not to the biblical impairment texts themselves, but to modern uncritical interpretation of these texts.⁹ The dominant modern understandings of biblical impairment texts transmit uncritical pre-understandings of disability that perpetuate the alienation of people living impairment. These modern pre-understandings are seen in three key assertions: that impairment was seen predominantly in the ancient world as punishment for sin; that biblical characters with impairments are types of incapability and impairment imagery is universally negative; that the key emphasis in biblical impairment texts is the healing and removal

⁸ Thiselton, 410. Using Thiselton's analysis, there are used here four central parallels with liberation theology: hermeneutics begins with experience; experience becomes a critical principal; biblical texts may now speak in new ways; perspective is eschatological / God's intention for the mending of all creation: Thiselton, 438f.

See also the liberatory schemes in Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*, 31-79; cf., Leech, 642-664; Croatto, *passim*; Vincent, 15-39; Rowland, 1-16; Gutierrez, 19-38.

of impairment – the event and historicity of impairment healing is everything. In Chapters 2-4, each of these assertions is examined, and rejected.

Secondly, critical tools and resources are sought “to unmask those uses of biblical texts which serve social interests of domination, manipulation or oppression”¹⁰ of people living impairment. In Chapter 1, an analysis is made of the origins of the impairment ideologies that are dominant in the modern era. Central to these ideologies is the modern response to impairment of medicalization and segregation. The unprecedented achievements of medical science led to expectations of even greater results: even the incurable would soon be cured. Large institutions were seen as a means of creating an ideal environment for the achievement of full potential. Reactions against medicine’s dominance, such as faith healing, emerged and asserted their superiority to the ‘secular menace’. Similarly, when the institutions did not deliver their promise, policy was adapted on the influence of ‘scientific moralities’ such as the eugenics movement. Doubts may have crept in about the means, but not about the end: perfectibility was no longer a matter for some future, eschatological time – the removal of society’s imperfections could at last take place. In Chapters 2-4, we trace something of the influence of these ideologies in modern biblical interpretation.

Thirdly, the analysis of the range of impairment themes used by ancient authors that forms the bulk of Chapters 2-4 is offered as a resources for “alternative re-interpretations of biblical texts from the standpoint of a particular context of experience

⁹ Applying the hermeneutic of suspicion to the biblical impairment texts themselves is an important and pressing task – but it falls outside the scope of this thesis.

¹⁰ Thiselton, 410.

and action”¹¹, that is, the specific context of people living impairment. Themes of impairment are identified from a breadth of ancient impairment material in order to trace out a wider arena for the alternative experientially-focused readings of people currently living impairment.¹² These themes include overlooked uses of impairment in the ancient texts that are both positive and negative about impairment.

Using a scheme developed by Thiselton within feminist hermeneutics, the hermeneutic proposed here is socio-critical, as opposed to socio-pragmatic. For Thiselton, this distinction is key in liberatory feminist hermeneutics:

Do the systems function as *socio-critical ones in the sense that they embody some trans-contextual, metacritical, or transcendental principle of critique*, or do they collapse into socio-pragmatic hermeneutics which, on the basis only of narrative-experience *within a given context, exclude all interpretive options in advance which would give any other signals than positive ones for the journey already undertaken?*¹³

In several respects, attempts have been made in this thesis to ensure that the hermeneutical systems do embody a trans-contextual principle of critique. In the process of critique and re-interpretation, in a way similar to some feminist readings, social-scientific and literary-critical principles are applied to assist with “the historical

¹¹ Thiselton, 410.

¹² Please note the remarks about the range and scope of ancient material analysed here, without explicit reference to chronology, region or culture, nor identification of specific contributory factors, made above in the Preface, paragraph 2.

¹³ Thiselton, 439f (Thiselton’s italics); cf., *ibid.*, 430-470. The subjective / objective divide not the important distinction in hermeneutics: Thiselton, 440, 450; cf., *ibid.*, 379. Feminist writers whose discussion of historical-critical and reader response resources applied together I have found helpful: Loades, “Feminist Theology” 235-252; Tribble, “Feminist Hermeneutics,” 23-29; Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric*, 1-30; Fander, 205-224; Raphael, 99-102; Castelli, 189-204; Kahl, 225-240; Malbon and Anderson, 241-254; Tolbert, 255-271; Nathanson, 272-289; Torjesen, 290-310; Isherwood, 138-141; Milne, 39-60; Ringe, 156-163; Ostriker, 164-189; Pui-Lan, 203-215; Meyers, 270-284; Coggins and Houlden, 232-234.

reconstruction of the life-worlds which lie behind some New Testament texts and texts of the Patristic era.”¹⁴ Of such a technique Thiselton writes,

To place...biblical interpretation at the bar of accepted norms of evaluation common to various strands in biblical scholarship is at once to move out of the socio-pragmatic ghetto.¹⁵

A particular danger identified by Thiselton in a liberatory hermeneutic is the potential to abandon even-handedness. There is a risk of allowing one’s

own social and hermeneutical interest to determine not simply the weighting of probability that a given historical hypothesis receives, but even the very selection of hypotheses which are presented for consideration and evaluation.¹⁶

All interpreters are vulnerable to this danger; and key to this thesis is the notion that modern interpreters of ancient impairment texts have fallen into this ditch headlong.

In three respects, attempts have been made here to avoid “offence against historical honesty” in the way Thiselton identifies.¹⁷ Firstly, the resources for reinterpretation offered here are not presented as means to discovering ‘the correct interpretation’ of biblical impairment texts. They are offered as ways to redress the balance, to recover lost traditions – as Thiselton puts it,

to neutralize dangerous texts by suggesting less offensive but equally plausible exegesis...to *complement* dominant traditions by recovering lost and neglected traditions to seek a trans-contextual wholeness.¹⁸

Secondly, not all of the evidence presented here to demonstrate the inadequacy of uncritical modern interpretation is positive about impairment. The mainstream

¹⁴ Thiselton, 443.

¹⁵ Thiselton, 443.

¹⁶ Thiselton, 444f.

¹⁷ Thiselton, 458.

experience of impairment in the ancient world is reflected in the greater range of uses of impairment by ancient writers that go beyond many of the modern unimaginative presuppositions about impairment both in negative as well as positive ways. In the attempts made here to redress something of the balance over against the dominant tradition, overlooked negative uses of impairment are included along with overlooked positive uses.

Thirdly, the purpose of the thesis is to resource and to stimulate other people, especially people living impairment, to engage critically with the biblical impairment texts in order to enlarge the horizons of dialogue with the texts. In this sense, the material presented in the thesis is deliberately open – not only open to scrutiny, but also open to engagement and to a widening of understanding. This entails a reinstatement of the central place of the experience of people who live impairment. This reinstatement is justified hermeneutically on historical-critical grounds (the experience of impairment was mainstream in the ancient world), and ecclesialogically on the grounds of grappling with alienation and injustice within the Church.

In this respect also, in Thiselton's terms, the hermeneutic proposed in this thesis is socio-critical in nature. In discussing types of feminism, Thiselton identifies one group that "presses the claims of a particular social group, namely women" and another that "urges the pleas of the universal principle of justice even if it may do so with understandable but not exclusive attention to a particular social group, namely

¹⁸ Thiselton, 448f; cf., *ibid.*, 450-452. On appropriation of neglected traditions: Milne, 53. To use the term of some feminist interpreters, in this respect this thesis uses a 'hermeneutic of indeterminacy': "As the rabbis say, 'there is always another interpretation'," Ostriker, 165f.

women.”¹⁹ He quotes Janet Radcliffe Richards that feminism “is not concerned with a group of people it wants to benefit, but with a type of injustice it wants to eliminate.” Thiselton adds, “Nothing could more clearly serve to distinguish socio-critical theory and practices from socio-pragmatic theory and practice.”²⁰ The overall aim of this thesis is not simply to benefit people living impairment, but to contribute to the elimination of alienation and injustice within the Church. A move towards the elimination of this injustice and towards the integration of people living impairment is the reinstatement of the experience of impairment as the proper focus of the interpretation of biblical impairment texts. The appropriation of these texts in new readings that are informed by the experience of living impairment will be liberatory for both disabled people and non-disabled people – a “trans-contextual wholeness.” This thesis is an attempt to resource that process of appropriation by identifying ancient themes and attitudes towards impairment.

There is a further way in which a hermeneutic that reinstates the experience of impairment as the proper focus in biblical interpretation does “embody some trans-contextual, metacritical or transcendental principle or critique.” Impairment has a uniqueness amongst groups that are the victims of dominant traditions – a uniqueness that transcends its starting point.

Ours is the only minority you can join involuntarily, without warning, at any time. For many temporarily able bodies, our bodies in trouble predict their future and urge them to confront these radical transformations.²¹

¹⁹ Thiselton, 443.

²⁰ Thiselton, 443.

²¹ Eiesland, “Roundtable Discussion,” 116. Cf., “Sudden handicap can strike anyone, something most able bodied people dread. But even if this...does not happen, almost everyone will eventually get older and less able. It is important to recognise this, and learn to face it without fear”: A. Davies, x.

People living impairment interpret their alienation by able-bodied people as fear, denial, and the refusal to confront the ever-presence of impairment:

It is fear and denial of the frailty, vulnerability, mortality and arbitrariness of human experience that deters us from confronting such realities. Fear and denial prompt the isolation of those who are disabled...as ‘not like us.’²²

A hermeneutic which reclaims the experience of impairment as being the proper place for the interpretation of biblical impairment texts is trans-contextual in two respects: it transcends both its minority starting point, and also the dominant tradition of denial and alienation.

2.2 An Emancipatory Model

The methodology proposed in this thesis also uses principles of research current within the disability movement, specifically the emancipatory model. This model of research has as its basis the social model of disability, and in order to provide some context for the emancipatory model of research, we now look at the key elements of the social model of disability.

On the social model of disability, there is a crucial distinction between impairment and disability:

Impairment refers to the functional limitation(s) which affect a person’s body, whereas *disability* refers to the loss or limitation of opportunities owing to

²² J. Morris, *Pride Against Prejudice*, 85. This is discussed in Shakespeare, “Cultural Representation,” 221, and applied also to the discussion by Sontag of AIDS and illness as metaphors: “Sontag skirts the real process: it is disability which is the most active and prominent metaphor of all, and disabled people become ciphers for these feelings, processes or characteristics with which non-disabled society cannot deal.”

social, physical and attitudinal barriers. Thus an inability to walk is an impairment, whereas an inability to enter a building because the entrance is up a flight of steps is a disability.²³

In short, on the social model, the problems that people with impairments face stem not from their physical or mental limitations but from the inappropriate societal response to them.²⁴

From the 1950's, demands grew from people with impairments who were living in residential homes to have more control over their lives and the institutions in which they lived. At first there was considerable resistance from institution management, and the medical authorities, in whose province and expertise impairment was by this time deemed to be located. Research that was undertaken tended to reinforce the status quo, which led to a great distrust of researchers by people with impairments. As consciousness was raised, and encouragement drawn from the civil rights and women's movements, organizations were formed that were run by people with impairments rather than ones run for people with impairments by non-disabled people.²⁵

²³ Morris, *Independent Lives*, x. Cf., "All the things that impose restrictions on disabled people; ranging from individual prejudice to institutional discrimination, from inaccessible public buildings to unusable transport systems...It is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society" Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 33; cf., Barnes and Mercer, 3.

²⁴ Hasler, 280.

²⁵ Of particular importance amongst these are the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS), the British Council of Organizations of Disabled People (BCODP), the Spinal Injuries Association (SIA), Centres for Independent (or Integrated) Living (CILs), Disabled Peoples' International (DPI).

Independence redefined by disabled people: "in a practical and common-sense way to mean simply being able to achieve our goals...independence is created by having assistance when and how one requires it...The point is that independent people have control over their lives, not that they perform every task themselves" – J. Morris, *Independent Lives*, 23.

Within the social model, there is an emphasis on a redefinition of the problem of disability, along similar lines to the civil rights and women's movements: "it is not disabled people who need to be examined but able-bodied society; it is not a case of educating disabled and able-bodied people for integration, but of

The social model of disability was born from the disability movement, and was received “enthusiastically by disabled people because it made an immediate connection with their own experience.”²⁶ This is in contrast to the dominant model of disability, the medical or individual model. In this, the focus is placed on what is wrong with someone’s body or mind: people’s needs are defined by their diagnosis and by measuring them against a concept of normal function. This dependence on the canon of normality is identified as the main problem with this model: “The pressure to be ‘normal’ can often lead to a focus (by both professional and the person themselves) on changing someone’s body rather than on changing the world around them.”²⁷

The threefold distinction of impairment, disability and handicap used by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the World Health Organisation is strongly opposed by people with impairments “exactly because they repeated the medical view that ‘impairment’ is the determining factor in explaining both ‘disability’ and ‘handicap’.”²⁸ In contrast, the following definitions have been accepted by people with

fighting institutional disablism; it is not disability relations which should be the field for study but disablism” – Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 142.

²⁶ Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 31; cf., J. Morris, *Community Care*, 18.

²⁷ Cf., “The Tyranny of Normality” of Hauerwas, 211-217. See also: Gleeson, 179-202; S. D. Stone, 413-424; Abberley, “Disabled People and ‘Normality’,” 107-115; J. Morris, “Prejudice,” 101-106.

The social model and the experience of disabled people: J. Morris, *Community Care*, 18; cf., people’s reactions quoted by Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 41f.

A summary of the criticisms of the dominant model of disability: “Firstly, it locates the ‘problem’ of disability within the individual and secondly it sees the causes of this problem as stemming from the function limitations or psychological losses which are assumed to arise from disability. These two points are underpinned by what might be called ‘the personal tragedy theory of disability’ which suggests that disability is some terrible chance event which occurs at random to unfortunate individuals” – Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 32.

²⁸ Barnes and Mercer, 3; cf., “These definitions have not received universal acceptance, particularly amongst disabled people and their organisations” as being based on partial and limited approach of individual / medical models of disability, which fail to take into account wider aspects of disability –

impairments and their organizations, and it is these definitions that are used in this thesis:

Impairment: the lack of part or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body

Disability: the loss or limitation of opportunities that prevents people who have impairments from taking part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers.²⁹

The social model is identified as “a crucial philosophy that underpins and informs the direction of the disability movement”: as disability is understood as a socially created problem, so attempts to resolve the problem need “a wide range of political strategies and professional interventions.” The model now extends beyond the disability movement itself. Its effects can be seen, for example, in the analysis of disability currently used by establishment disability professionals, in the definitions of disability used in the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, and in the policies adopted by national funding bodies.³⁰ There are, of course, shortcomings to the social model, such

Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 1-11. OPCS and WHO definitions: Barnes and Mercer, 3; Finkelstein and French, 26f; Swain, 159; Hasler, 281f.

²⁹ This form is used by Disabled Peoples International – Finkelstein and French, 28; cf., Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement*, 11. See also: Oliver, “Re-defining Disability,” 61-67; Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 19-42, 126-144; Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 23-27, 49-67; T. Harrison, 16-18, 30f; J. Morris, *Independent Lives*, ix, 11f, 35, 148-151; J. Morris, *Community Care*, 17-31; Abberley, 107-115; Finkelstein and French, 26-28; French, 17-25; Harrison, J., 215f; Hasler, 281f; Shearer, 10; Swain, 159f; Wong, 235

Nuances in the use and application of these definitions: Shearer, *Living Independently*, 10; Oliver, *Politics of Disablement*, 1-11; French, 17-25; Oliver, “Re-defining Disability,” 61-67; Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 25-27; Bury, “Defining and Researching Disability,” 17-38; Oliver, “Defining Impairment and Disability,” 39-54.

On the tendency of disability scholars “to mire themselves in a definitional bog”: Gleeson, 181f.

In the phrase “people living impairment” the referent is primarily disabled people; where appropriate, I use the phrase to include people who to an extent live disability with them, such as partners or parents. I use it of myself as the spouse of a disabled person. However, as an indicator of difference within this range, in contrast to many disabled people quoted here, I experience living impairment not as oppression, but as alienation. For this reason, I use ‘oppression’ in the context of disability only when quoting disabled people – see above, Preface paragraph 5.

³⁰ The social model directing the disability movement: Campbell and Oliver, 208; Oliver, “Re-defining Disability,” 65.

as problems that arise specifically from a person's impairment that are not linked to any disability they may experience. These are difficulties with the model that are currently being discussed within the disability movement.³¹

Born from the social model of disability is a recommended method for the practice of research, the emancipatory model of research. This model developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s out of a context of disillusion amongst people with impairments at the use of research undertaken by social scientists "who professed to speak on behalf of disabled people, but who in practice mainly pursued their own interests." Through a lack of consultation about the purpose, issues and methods of research, people with impairments became alienated from those conducting the research. The research results, the product of a methodology using the medical model of disability, were viewed by people with impairments as "at best irrelevant, and at worst, oppressive... seen as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution." In response, people with impairments developed

an alternative, emancipatory approach in order to make disability research both more relevant to the lives of disabled people and more influential in improving their material circumstances.³²

The wider effects of the social model: the Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Doyle, 13-38; the Camelot Foundation: "We have decided to adopt the social model of disability. This model says that the problems disabled people face...are not caused by their physical or mental conditions...but by the social and environmental structures that are not adapted to their needs" – The Camelot Foundation Community Support Programme Phase II, *Guidance Notes*, p. 3.

³¹ The social model not able to explain all things: Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 40f; cf., *ibid.*, 32. The origins and implications of the social model discussed, questioned, developed and applied in further detail: Morris, *Independent Lives*, 3-28, 148-151; Oliver, "Disability and Dependency," 49-60; Finkelstein and French, 26-33; Finkelstein, "Disability: A Social Challenge," 34-43; Swain, 159f; J. Harrison, 211-217; Oliver and Barnes, 267-277; Hasler, 278-284; Davis, 285-292; Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 23-25, 49-67; T. Harrison, 16-18; Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 19-42; Campbell and Oliver, 78-94; Crow, 55-73; Shakespeare, "Disability, Identity, Difference," 94-113; G. Williams, 194-212;

The principles of the emancipatory model of research have been adopted in this thesis.³³

The first principle of the emancipatory model of research is that it is located in the social model of disability. This model is used throughout the thesis: from the argument that impairment was common to both the ancient and modern worlds while disability has varied in different cultures, to the use of impairment and disability as defined under the social model. This model of disability is a helpful tool for the interpretation of ancient impairment texts, including the Bible. For example, on the one hand, impairment can be seen as being from God and within God's purposes: "Who makes people unable to speak or hear, sighted or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:11).³⁴ On the other, the disabling of people with impairments is condemned – disability is contrary to God's purpose: "You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling-block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:14).³⁵

Secondly, emancipatory research has as its focus the experience of people with impairments.³⁶ The experience of people living impairment is central to the argument of the thesis. As already discussed, with the segregation of people living impairment in the modern era, the experience of impairment is no longer mainstream. The uncritical

Morris, *Community Care*, 17-31; Barnes and Mercer, 1-5; E. Stone, 219-225; Shakespeare and Watson, 263-273; Pinder, 274-280; Johnston, 281-285.

³² Barnes and Mercer, 1-5; cf., Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 139-141.

³³ Summaries of the key principles of the emancipatory model: Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 139-143; Barnes and Mercer, 1-14; Campbell and Oliver, 24-27.

Application and discussion of the principles: Oliver, "Emancipatory Research," 15-31; L. Ward, 32-48; Priestly, 88-107; Beazley, Moore and Benzie, 142-157; Vernon, 158-176; Rioux, 99-112; Shakespeare, "Cultural Representation" 217-236; Barnes, "Disability and the Myth," 239-243; Bury, "Disability and the Myth," 244-247; Shakespeare, "Rules of Engagement," 248-254.

³⁴ Cf., John 9:2f; Luke 14:21; 1 Corinthians 12:22-25.

³⁵ Cf., Deuteronomy 27:18; Proverbs 31:8; Ezekiel 34:4.

³⁶ This was done often "in the face of academics who abstract and distort the experience of disabled people": Oliver, "Emancipatory Research," 20.

presuppositions arising from this lack of mainstream experience have led to impoverished interpretation of biblical impairment texts and to alienation and damage to people living impairment. Thus the experience of people living impairment has two emphases in this thesis. This experience questions uncritical modern interpretations of impairment texts, by demonstrating that they are based on uncritical presuppositions. It also serves as a means of reclaiming the proper focus of these texts, the overall purpose of the thesis being to resource and to stimulate the critical engagement of the experience of impairment with biblical impairment texts.

Thirdly, this model of research is emancipatory in its goals: it is concerned with change and liberation.³⁷ The goal of the thesis is to demonstrate that the alienation within the Church experienced by people living impairment is based on inadequate and uncritical understandings of biblical impairment texts, and that a reclaiming of the central place of the experience of impairment will release liberatory readings. A biblical scheme for this emancipatory refocus is Paul's model of the body:

The members of the body that seem to be less able are indispensable...God has so arranged the body, giving extra honour to the parts that are less able, that there may be no falling apart of the body [1 Corinthians 12:22-25].

Fourthly, in the emancipatory model, the relationship between researcher and researched is crucial. This relationship is characterised as having as its basis "empowerment and reciprocity" and "a joint search for the truth." To this end, the researcher must be self-reflective on their life-context, and details of their life-context

³⁷ Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 140f; Barnes and Mercer, 5; Oliver, "Emancipatory Research," 16-19.

be made available to those evaluating the results of their research.³⁸ Although what is being researched here is not people with impairments but impairment texts, the spirit of this principle is nonetheless applicable. The methodology, the data, the overall purpose directly relate to people with impairments. Also, in line with the reflexivity requirements of this research model, an outline of my own life context and presuppositions as researcher are included in the Preface.

2.3 A Communication Model

Despite its historico-critical panoply and emphasis, modern commentary is insufficiently critical. Modern commentary does not take seriously enough the relationship of implied author and reader. In ancient impairment texts, there were many themes of impairment, and these impairment themes were being put to many different uses. These uses of impairment, largely overlooked by modern commentary, form the core of the dynamic of communication between implied author and implied reader.

This is a communication model of understanding ancient texts. Historico-critical analysis of ancient texts and literary theory has identified “a rhetorical dynamic...based

³⁸ Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 141; Campbell and Oliver, 26; Oliver, “Emancipatory Research,” 25. Cf., “The central methodological issue concerns the purpose of research and whether this is to interpret or to understand” - Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 139; cf., *ibid.*, 139-144; Oliver, “Emancipatory Research,” 17. However, emancipatory research can only be judged as emancipatory “after the event; one cannot ‘do’ emancipatory research...one can only engage as a researcher with those seeking to emancipate themselves” Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 141. Caveats and criteria for authenticity of non-disabled researcher: Oliver, “Re-defining Disability,” 61-67; Campbell and Oliver, 24-27; Barnes and Mercer, 6. Checklist / audit re emancipatory research: Oliver, “Emancipatory Research,” 15-31.

in the interaction between speaker, hearer and subject matter.”³⁹ On this model, ancient texts are seen to be aiming at a response from an implied hearer or reader: “The response of the hearer was an essential part of the intention: rhetoric was called the art of persuasion, and assent to the speaker’s viewpoint was its aim.”⁴⁰ Using historico-critical resources, analyses can be made of the rhetorical tools at play within the texts, and of the social context of the implied readers or hearers of the texts, in order to identify the implied author’s rhetorical aims in the texts.

However, the elements of the texts’ rhetorical dynamic are not simply located; they can also be appropriated, by “reading the text as addressed to readers who were expected to respond...[and] taking seriously what the implied author wishes to communicate.”⁴¹ An actual reader can appropriate for themselves the aims inherent in these ancient texts of bringing about a response in the implied hearer or reader. This might be the aim of persuading the hearer to assent or even to transform the hearer.⁴² A dimension is added if the interpreter has a confessional standpoint: if so, a further ingredient in their appropriation of the text is the fact they recognise in the text authority as scripture.

In any event, the appropriation is “responsible” in the sense that the actual reader assesses critically the implied author’s aims and their own response to these aims.

Crucial in this process of responsible appropriation is the establishing of difference

Both disabled and non-disabled people experience disablism in society: J. Morris, *Independent Lives*, 40-49.

³⁹ Young, “Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading,” 115.

⁴⁰ Young, “Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading,” 115. See also: J. F. Williams, 67-88; Schokel, 55-93. For a summary of the elements in the rhetorical dynamic in classical and patristic material: Young, “Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading,” 115f; Young, “From Suspicion and Sociology,” 431.

between the context of the implied reader and the context of the actual reader. Included in this analysis are the life-contexts and presuppositions of both implied and actual readers. The data established in this way is applied in the next step of the appropriation process, when the actual reader's response to the text is analysed in terms of "taking seriously what the implied author wishes to communicate." For example, an interpreter might ask whether the rhetorical aims identified in the text are successful in the response they themselves experience as an actual, current, reader. Are they persuaded? Are they transformed? How do their life-context and their presuppositions affect whether or not these aims are successful? If the current reader is not persuaded by a text that aims at persuasion, to what extent does the aim fail because of differences in life-context and presuppositions between implied and current readers?

In this way, for an actual or current reader to appropriate the text, both historical-critical and reader response resources are engaged together: to identify ways in which the life-contexts and presuppositions of implied and actual readers differ, and to analyse the actual reader's responses to the texts in relation to the responses aimed at in the implied reader.

The success of the operation [of appropriation] will depend to a considerable extent on the knowledge and imaginative capacity of the interpreter, a competence which can be constantly improved by learning and practice.⁴³

This communication model illustrates helpfully the hermeneutic of suspicion that forms a central element of the argument of this thesis. This hermeneutic of suspicion is not

⁴¹ Young, "Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading," 109.

⁴² Young, "Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading," 119.

applied here to biblical impairment texts – such a task lies beyond the scope of this thesis – but to modern interpretation of these texts. In the ancient world, the experience of impairment was mainstream. Attitudes towards and understandings of impairment that resulted from this common knowledge of impairment feature in the rhetorical dynamic of ancient texts: as Chapters 2-4 show, they can be identified in the presuppositions of implied author and implied reader, and in the subject matter of the texts. In the modern era, however, as Chapter 1 demonstrates, mainstream experience of impairment has been lost: people with impairments became segregated and medicalized. Disability scholars have identified how modern disablist presuppositions and attitudes towards impairment have arisen from this segregation and medicalization of people with impairments. Further, modern societies are shown to produce literature that reinforces the disablist presuppositions and attitudes it reflects.⁴⁴

At this point we can apply the hermeneutic of suspicion: this disability critique applies also to modern interpretations of biblical impairment texts. In many cases, where modern interpreters have little or no awareness of their own attitudes towards impairment, as they interpret they see in the ancient texts what they know from their own presuppositions. As a result, much material relating to impairment is overlooked: uncritical modern interpretation is greatly impoverished interpretation – as we see in the radical historico-critical analysis of Chapters 2-4. In addition, negative presuppositions

⁴³ Young, “Pastoral Epistles and the Ethics of Reading,” 110; see also: Schokel, 55-93. “The imagination is an extraordinary necessary organ of comprehension and interpretation”: Schokel, 90.

⁴⁴ This is a common theme in disability studies. See, for example: Oliver, *Politics of Disablement*, 12-94; Finkelstein, “Disability and the Helper / Helped Relationship,” 58-63; Ryan and Thomas, 69-116; Barnes, “Legacy of Oppression,” 3-24; J. Morris, *Pride Against Prejudice*, 117-145; Barnes, *Disabled People in Britain*, 11-97.

are reinforced, not least by the use of language. The effect of this on people living impairment has been, and continues to be, alienation and damage.

Many people living impairment in the modern era have rejected the biblical impairment texts both because of this damage done to them, and also because the texts are seen as having no relation to their experience. However, on the argument of this thesis, in which my own confessional standpoint is a dynamic, it is not the biblical texts that are damaging and that have no relation to the experience of people living impairment, but modern uncritical interpretation of these texts. On the communication model, there has been little or no analysis of the differences in life-context and presuppositions of both implied and actual readers in relation to impairment and disability.

A result of this is an unacknowledged dissonance in modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts between the presuppositions of the implied reader (for whom impairment was a mainstream experience) and the presuppositions of the actual reader (the modern interpreter, for whom impairment is, by and large, not a mainstream experience). So the impoverishment of uncritical modern interpretation arises: interpreters overlook many uses of impairment in ancient texts arising from mainstream experience of impairment that feature in the rhetorical dynamic of the texts. It is this dissonance, and its damaging consequences, that people living impairment in the modern era react against in saying that the Bible has no relation to their experience.

This thesis identifies and questions this dissonance. With a socio-critical liberatory emphasis, and using the analysis of disability studies, the thesis identifies

presuppositions relating to impairment of actual readers in the modern era, the historical roots of these presuppositions, and the effects of these presuppositions on people currently living impairment. By using components of historico-critical analysis applied to ancient texts of various genres, including much Early Church material, the context and presuppositions of the implied authors and readers are identified. The data from these analyses is used here in two ways. Firstly, difference is established in the contexts of implied author / implied reader and of actual reader. Secondly, presuppositions relating to impairment of both implied author / implied reader and also of actual reader (at least, actual reader in the modern Western context) are articulated. In these ways, inadequacy in uncritical modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts is demonstrated, and by identifying the extent and the origins of this inadequacy, the inadequacy is challenged.⁴⁵

However, while the thesis identifies and questions the dissonance, it also offers a way forward. The biblical impairment texts themselves are not here rejected as impoverished texts of dissonance and damage, but are reclaimed as texts of liberation. The establishment of difference in context and presuppositions of implied reader and uncritical modern reader locates the origins of the dissonance and damage not to the biblical impairment texts themselves, but to uncritical modern interpretation of the texts. Just as it is the experience of impairment that is used to identify and question the inadequacies in modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts, so the experience of impairment is reclaimed as the proper focus in the interpretation of these texts. Central

⁴⁵ For a similar use of historico-critical analysis to critique unself-critical modern perceptions of ancient attitudes, see: on ancient views of black-white relationships – Snowden, *passim*; on Celtic views of disability – Bragg, 165-177.

to the analysis of the texts in Chapters 2-4, is the taking “seriously what the implied author wishes to communicate.” This is a critical assessment, engaging imaginative creativity and empathy as ‘the foreign country of the past’ is entered. Drawing on the thematic data identified through critical analysis in Chapters 2-4, within the methodology proposed here, the actual reader is invited to relate their responses to the responses of the implied reader, consciously engaging their own life-context – including the experience, or not, of living impairment.

In these ways, both historical-critical and reader response resources are used, within a communication model. Rhetorical dynamics in the texts and difference in the contexts of the implied and actual readers are identified critically. The experience of living impairment is used to identify and to question the dominant tradition of uncritical interpretation of biblical impairment, and to reclaim the proper focus in the interpretation of impairment texts: a focus informed by mainstream experience of impairment. In summary, the methodology proposed and resourced in this thesis can be described as *a socio-critical disability hermeneutic within a communication model*.

3.0 *Some Caveats Arising from the Methodology*

This methodology raises a number of caveats, and three in particular are acknowledged and discussed in this section of the Introduction. Historico-critical and reader response tools each have their strengths and weaknesses; but there is no guarantee that a

combination of the methods will be complementary. The methodology draws heavily on parallels with feminist readings, but the relationship between feminism and disability studies is not straightforward. Also, theological questions have been raised about whether liberatory readings are in any case appropriate for people with impairments.

3.1 Historico-Critical and Reader Response Approaches Combined

Some of the strengths of historico-critical methods have been identified already. The social location of language is essential to its meaning, and so the concern to establish historical context and cultural differences between the original location of the texts and the location of the current readers of the texts is proper and pressing. A key example in this thesis is the difference in readers' presuppositions relating to impairment, and responses to a text's use of impairment. Critical tools are also a means to bridge these differences, to establish communication or 'trans-contextuality' in Thiselton's term. Critical techniques can be used to ensure "historical honesty" and impartiality, by placing the interpretation "at the bar of accepted norms of evaluation." In order to identify and question deficiencies in modern uncritical interpretation, critical tools, such as those of literary and socio-scientific analysis, are applied here. Interpretation that can be assessed in terms of these accepted critical norms is open: open to scrutiny, and open to "new horizons" – that is, horizons that are not predetermined by the interpreter's starting point.

There are also difficulties with the historico-critical method. The impression of objectivity and comprehensiveness that can be given by a historico-critical interpretation is false and misleading. It is not possible for people in different cultures with different life contexts and presuppositions to ‘think the authors’ thoughts after them.’ Nor is it desirable: gaps in the ‘original meaning’ are inevitable, and crossing these gaps with both creative imagination and critical assessment is, in the process of reading texts from the past, “what it’s all about.”⁴⁶ This imaginative-critical process is as much about assessing what and why an author omits material as it is about reconstructing the material an author includes. Also, as Chapters 1 and 4 show, much of the damage for people with impairments in relation to modern and fundamentalist attitudes towards sin, healing and miracles, arises from uncritical projection by interpreters working with a false sense of objectivity and the unquestioned presupposition that ‘modern is best.’

There is also a danger that an over-emphasis on the historical context and content of the text “only produces an archaeological reading, and fails to connect the text with the reader.”⁴⁷ A reader’s selection of material from the past will be influenced largely by their interest, by what they see in the text that links to their own life-context; this selection influences their choices of and their recollection of what they read. As the communication model demonstrates, critical analysis itself shows that very few texts from the past are simply archival documents. There are many genres with an explicit rhetorical dynamic, where the readers and hearers are expected to respond. A key

⁴⁶ Young, “From Suspicion and Sociology,” 422; cf., Schokel, 33-47.

⁴⁷ Young, “From Suspicion and Sociology,” 426; cf., Schokel, 55-93.

reason why there is currently so little material available about impairment in the Bible is that the dominant tradition of interpretation, with a so-called historical and critical emphasis, is failing to connect with the experience of people living impairment.

Reader response methods have many strengths. The analyses of experience-focused readings have enlarged the horizons of familiar texts. They have identified and challenged inadequacies in traditional and dominant presuppositions. In disability studies, as in feminist studies, these analyses enable the awareness that what has been regarded as comprehensive and universal is partial, impoverished and exclusive. These analyses can also enable the appropriation of the texts: they connect the texts with current readers – a process that not only justifies the texts’ preservation for the future, but also has the potential to stimulate response, even to transform the appropriating reader. New readings of biblical impairment texts emerging from the data collected in the investigation of Chapters 2-4 are already changing the way people living impairment see themselves and their place in the Church. Impairment identified and interpreted as a common experience has the potential to enable people to acknowledge fears and denial, and also to engage with their experience resourcefully.

There are also many difficulties in reader response methods, not least the fact that facing fears and denial has great potential to provoke rejection. Also, unacknowledged presuppositions are notoriously difficult to engage with, as people with impairments record in the context of such classic interpretations as, “If only your faith were strong enough...” These interpretations are an example of reader response shaped uncritically by pre-formed attitudes towards faith healing. Using Thiselton’s term, they “collapse

into socio-pragmatic hermeneutics.” More generally, identifying the fact that a reader’s own interests are insidiously powerful when unacknowledged does not eliminate their influence on the reader. If a text is not a window to another mind or another world, but a mirror, is it ever possible to escape the hamster-wheel of one’s own presuppositions and projections? Is the possibility of relation to fact or of communication lost altogether? If the response is a relativism of ‘each to their own’, then the activity of research itself is devalued, and there is no resource available for distinguishing fact from fiction, nor for rejecting or refuting the damage done by culture-bound dominant interpretations.⁴⁸

There are other dangers to reader response interpretation: as Thiselton points out, there is the danger of ‘oppressed turning oppressor.’ Living impairment could become a place of privilege and manipulation in new readings of impairment texts. For example, if only those who live impairment were seen as valid interpreters, a different group would experience alienation and exclusion. Also, where it is clear that a selection has been made in the facts presented, it is easy for opponents to dismiss the evidence or treat it with contempt:

Without rigorous critical thinking in which ‘interest’ is firmly disciplined, feminist transformations of traditions merely invite the patronizing response: ‘That’s all right, if it helps them.’⁴⁹

Combining historico-critical and reader response resources does not in itself ensure that the drawbacks of each method are complemented. However, the hermeneutical aim in

⁴⁸ Young, “From Suspicion and Sociology,” 431f; see also, Thiselton, 439-453, 515-555.

⁴⁹ Oppressed turning oppressor: Thiselton, 443f. Patronizing dismissal: Susanne Heine quoted by Thiselton, 457; cf., *ibid.*, 462.

this methodology is to appropriate the texts ‘responsibly’, by using schemes analysed and developed by scholars of hermeneutics out of the context here. The interpreter enters the ‘foreign land of the past’ by empathy and imaginative creativity, and in this process expertise, training, knowledge, and discernment are needed, along with awareness of oneself and one’s own context. A reader’s own interests and presuppositions cannot be transcended, but, as Thiselton shows, not being neutral in arguing for a case does not rule out the possibility of being impartial or intellectually honest. By drawing on the established schemes of the communication model, of a socio-critical reading, and of emancipatory research, the hermeneutic proposed and resourced in this thesis uses historico-critical and reader response approaches in a complementary way.

3.2 Parallels and Differences between Feminist Studies and Disability Studies

In several ways, this methodology draws on parallels between feminist and disability studies that have been identified and discussed by the respective disciplines. These include the aim of exposing uncritical presuppositions in the dominant traditions, especially in relation to Western attitudes towards the human body; the emphasis on experience as a means of identifying, challenging and reclaiming the focus of interpretation; the task of bringing about change to the status quo in a collaborative

way; stating the requirement of identifying the purpose and life-context of the person engaged in research.⁵⁰

However, caution is needed. Scholars of feminist and disability studies have identified particular areas where the parallels are not straightforward, specifically that some feminist models are inadequate to or reinforce the context of people with impairments. Some of the strategies in the feminist movement are shown by women with impairments as inappropriate or irrelevant to their life-context. Many women with impairments reject a tendency identified amongst feminist writers to speak for all women, as non-disabled women have little idea of the issues current in the disability movement.⁵¹ An example is the feminist theme of complete separation from patriarchal society; this is seen by women with impairments to contradict their needs, on the grounds that women with impairments experience physical segregation already. Also, as feminists talk in terms of empowering and strengthening women, they are seen to perpetuate current perceptions of normality, and “the patriarchal way of judging a person on how good-

⁵⁰ Discussion of these points as parallels across the disciplines of feminist and disability studies:
 a) Exposing presuppositions – Eiesland, “Roundtable Discussion,” 115; Stiteler, “Roundtable Discussion,” 118f; Elshout, 100-102 (Mary Daly’s 7 characteristics of the “Sado-ritual syndrome” applied in terms of disabled people);
 b) Attitudes towards the body in human society – Abberley, “Concept of Oppression,” 172; Shakespeare, “Cultural Representation,” 218, 225f, 234;
 c) Emphasis on experience – Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 166f; Campbell and Oliver, 49, 62, 126; Chappell, 56; Barton, 154; Oliver and Zarb, 211f; Shakespeare, “Cultural Representation,” 235;
 d) Changing the status quo – Barnes and Mercer, 4-7; Rioux, 100;
 e) Collaborative task – Elshout, 102f; Shakespeare and Watson, 271; Pinder, 277, 279;
 f) Purpose and context of researcher – Barton, 155; Shakespeare, “Rules of Engagement,” 249f.
 In these discussions, other parallels not made use of in the thesis, are identified across the disciplines: the demand to write own history and define own issues: Campbell and Oliver, 26; the aim of displaying the other side to oppression – resistance, power, struggle: Elshout, 102; Eiesland, “Roundtable Discussion,” 114; the distinctiveness of being ‘other’: Shakespeare, “Cultural Representation,” 225-229.
⁵¹ Feminists criticised for claiming to speak for all women: Eielsand, *Disabled God*, 28f; Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 39; Chappell, 58; Shakespeare and Watson, 269; Pinder, 277. Feminists with little idea of disability issues: J. Morris, *Independent Lives*, 40-49; cf., Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, 142.

looking, healthy or productive he or she is.”⁵² Many women with impairments question this perception, and explicitly offer as a challenge to traditional feminism Paul’s image of the body, in which “the parts of the body which appear to be less able are indispensable” [1 Corinthians 12:22]. There are other themes within feminism under question from women with impairments, such as “issues of reproductive technology, eugenics, and the dilemmas of caregiving and career.”⁵³ Women with impairments experience the effects of uncritical presuppositions relating to impairment, such as the use of language and the effects of denial and fear, from feminists as from anyone else.

3.3 Liberatory Approaches in a Disability Context

Objections have been raised against the feasibility of liberatory approaches in a disability context, principally by David Pailin in *A Gentle Touch*. Central to Pailin’s argument that a liberation model is “mistaken” is his conclusion that a liberatory disability theology “would differ from liberation theologies in basic respects.”⁵⁴ Of the four indispensable characteristics of liberatory approaches identified by Pailin as not in place with people with impairments, the first is that people with impairments have limited understanding and ability to communicate, and so they are not able fully to express their own experience. This inability he associates with “many mentally and a

⁵² Elshout, 100, 103; cf., Wilhelm, 104f, 107f.

⁵³ Paul’s image of the body as a challenge to feminists: Elshout, 103f; cf., Eiesland, “Roundtable Discussion” 116f; Stiteler, “Roundtable Discussion,” 120-122; McCollum, 128. Uncritical presuppositions: Stiteler, “Roundtable Discussion,” 117f, 119f; cf., Wilhelm, 106f; Fontaine, 108. See also: particular problems in feminist thought relating to carers: J. Morris, *Independent Lives*, 40-49; cf., *ibid.*, 152.

⁵⁴ Pailin, 16; see also *ibid.*, 15-37.

few physically handicapped people.” However, he overlooks both the many millions of people with impairments who are able to, and who do, articulate their experience, and also the many means of communication available for people specifically unable to speak, such as British Sign Language, prostheses, computer facilities, and the use of advocates.⁵⁵

Pailin also states that consciousness raising within one’s own community without interference from others is an opportunity not possible for people with impairments:

For most handicapped people for most of the time, however, an ‘apartheid’ solution is far from obviously appropriate...[and] is to prevent them taking their place in the human community and to deprive that community of some of its members. This is not acceptable.⁵⁶

The history of the disability and independent living movements, briefly outlined above, shows how false the perception is that consciousness-raising cannot be done without the interference of non-disabled people. There is nothing to say that this opportunity to spend time with people sharing a similar experience need be permanent. As Chapter 1 shows, these movements emerged from the situation of people with impairments working for greater autonomy from the imposed conditions of segregation that they experienced. Ironically, ‘apartheid’ is a term often used by people with impairments to designate how this imposed segregation is unacceptable.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Pailin, 22f. Pailin may also be saying that for non-disabled people to speak for disabled people is not compatible with a liberatory approach, although he himself refers to doing “liberation theology *for* handicapped people”: Pailin, 36 (my italics). We can compare the publisher’s notes on the back cover of *A Gentle Touch*: “a theology of liberation for the handicapped”.

This issue has been discussed in the relationship of non-disabled people engaged in emancipatory research with those being researched: see above text at page 19 and footnote 38. It is in these terms that I understand my methodology here as a non-disabled person (albeit living mainstream impairment as the spouse of a disabled person) engaged in research relating to disability.

⁵⁶ Pailin, 24-26.

A third ingredient that makes for Pailin a liberatory approach incompatible with disability is that liberation itself is impossible:

The goal of total liberation for them is a delusion. Social, political and economic engineering will not stop them being handicapped... In this respect, a theology of the handicapped cannot share the vision – and goal – of a liberated state where all will be well, at least not in the sense that handicap will have been eradicated together with political oppression, social discrimination and economic injustice.⁵⁸

Pailin's use of the medical model of disability is clear here: the supposed goal of liberation is the eradication of impairment, the perfectibility of impairment.

However, the aim of the social model of disability, and its offspring emancipatory research, is the removal not of impairment, but of disability.

Impairment remains, but disability is to be eradicated, through the political and social consequences of uncritical presuppositions being changed – “social, political and economic engineering” by another name. Impairment in various forms is a constant across many cultures, but disability is not; this is a key element to the thesis. For many people with impairments, their impairment is essential to their identity. They have no desire to be liberated from their impairment (as Pailin states, this is not in any case possible) but every desire to find liberation from their disability. That this desire is not a delusion but something that can be achieved is a fundamental motivation behind the disability movement.

Pailin's fourth key point is that disability terms cannot be restricted. On his view, it is not possible to define

⁵⁷ On the history of the disability and independent living movements, see Campbell and Oliver, *passim*.

the referent of the description ‘handicapped person... Who are the handicapped and... how are they to be identified as distinct from the non-handicapped?... There is no universal way of identifying ‘handicap’... [a liberatory and disability approach] fundamentally fails to identify a distinct group of people who are to be the object of its concern... All are limited.⁵⁹

Despite this claim by Pailin, universally applied definitions of impairment are used to limit a distinct group, as we see, for example, in the assessment of eligibility for disability-related benefits. Also, as discussed above, definitions are at the heart of the disability movement. While the definitions used by the movement are as yet not universally adopted, significant advances have been made recently, as mentioned already. That there are people at the borders of other groups discriminated against by the majority is no evidence that a group discriminated against cannot be identified, as we see with race, sexuality and age. Also, the argument that all people are to an extent disabled is a not uncommon one made by non-disabled people. Under the social model of disability, its speciousness becomes clear:

There is no-one without physical and mental limitations... this is self-evident. But to move from this to assert one’s own disability is a mistake. Disability is not just having an impairment or limitation, but occupying a particular relationship to society and the environment. It consists in occupying a certain social role (a devalued one) and having to cope with physical, social and attitudinal barriers. These barriers simply do not exist for non-disabled people.⁶⁰

On these four grounds, Pailin rejects the compatibility of a liberatory approach with people with impairments. From his use of language, his understanding of disability, and

⁵⁸ Pailin, 27f

⁵⁹ Pailin, 29f, 31, 34, 36.

⁶⁰ “Why we are not all disabled” – title and theme of Editorial of *Contact* 113 (1994), 1f. Ironically, when dismissing liberatory approaches by saying that disability cannot be restricted, Pailin makes a point that is used in this thesis to demonstrate the importance and universal relevance of identifying a liberatory approach specific to disability: “All begin and may end life in a state of massive dependence” – Pailin, 36; see above text at page 11 and footnote 21.

his expectations of people with impairments, it is clear that he uses the medical model of disability. Insights from the social model of disability address each of the problems he raises about people with impairments engaging in a process of liberating themselves. Questions of feasibility and even desirability could well be raised if the ‘liberation’ was seen as an attempt to remove impairment – the notion of impairment’s perfectibility identified in Chapter 1. However, central to the social model of disability itself is a liberatory response. The analyses of disability studies, as well as specific liberatory disability theologies, are drawing life from this crucial impairment / disability distinction.

Pailin himself demonstrates a key point in this thesis: the requirement for modern commentators whose experience of impairment is not mainstream to be critical of their presuppositions relating to impairment. Pailin explains that his own argument is developed from his experience of a short relationship with a 12 month old child: “I only met him – and then briefly – on a few occasions.”⁶¹ Also, in the face of Pailin’s concerns, liberatory works by people with impairments are being produced. However, although a liberatory model is adopted here, it is not the only approach possible and taking place. People living impairment are interpreting their experience within many different models, and doing so deliberately:

Any theology which is put forward as being suitable for the disabled person must be done with humility, and with a recognition that many others have found God by a different route.⁶²

⁶¹ Pailin, 1.

⁶² Monteith, 76.

Some examples of liberatory approaches made by people living impairment: Eiesland, *Disabled God*, passim (with summary of method: *ibid.*, 22, 28f); T. Harrison, 123-131; Fontaine, “Roundtable Discussion,” 113f; Fontaine, “Disabilities and Illness,” 295-300; Stiteler, “Roundtable Discussion,” 121f.

4.0 *Summary of Chapter Aims*

In this section of the Introduction, I identify the aims and place of each chapter in the argument of the thesis as a whole. Chapter 1 contains a survey of disability history, focusing primarily on impairment in England from the medieval to modern periods. The first aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the cultures of moderns and of pre-moderns in relation to impairment are vastly different. The second aim of the chapter is to show that modern Western attitudes towards impairment are not the most advanced in an evolving progression, but are the products of identifiable cultural currents. The segregation and medicalization of impairment, two themes specified in disability studies as having particular effect on modern presuppositions, are features peculiar to the modern era.

While the contexts of impairment between the cultures of implied and current readers of ancient texts may not differ radically, the contexts of disability do. This difference is central to the argument of the thesis. The particular disabling of people with impairments in the modern era is traced in this chapter in terms of the segregation and

Examples of non-liberatory approaches: Borsch, *passim*; Monteith, 65-77; Govig, *passim*; Pailin, *passim*; Black, 34-42; Young, *Face to Face*, *passim*; Cooper, *passim*; Wenig, 133f; McCollum, 122-129 (a summary of traditional approaches); Hauerwas, 159-217; Pierce, 47-58; Austen and Austen, 10-15; Eiesland, "Religion and Disability Studies," 4-9; Betenbaugh, 32-34; Owen, "Viewing Christian Theology," 50-52; Bishop, "Religion and Disability: A New Wave," 53-56; Owen, "Missing Characters," 56f.

medicalization of impairment, a peculiarly modern response to impairment.⁶³ This disabling of people is reflected in, and reinforced by, uncritical modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts. As a result, modern interpretation of these texts is impoverished, and people living impairment experience alienation and exclusion. With impairment out of the mainstream in the modern era, modern interpreters see what they know – or rather, what they do not know: they project presuppositions arising from this lack of mainstream experience onto ancient writers. This is inappropriate: in the ancient world, as in other pre-modern cultures, impairment was a mainstream experience and an expected feature of human living. With the awareness of the origins of these modern presuppositions thus raised in Chapter 1, we can identify more readily in the following chapters ways in which these presuppositions have been engaged with biblical texts inadequately and with such damaging effect.

In Chapters 2-4, the thesis focuses on three key aspects in modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts: the causes of impairment, the effects of impairment, and the taking away of impairment. In each chapter, there are two aims. The first is to demonstrate that uncritical modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts in relation to each of these aspects is inadequate. The second is to resource and to stimulate ‘responsible’ appropriation of these texts in new readings that are informed especially by the experience of living impairment. The pattern in each chapter of achieving these aims is similar. An aspect relating to impairment that modern interpreters assert to be predominant in the biblical impairment texts is analysed in the context of a wide spread

⁶³ The segregation and medicalization of impairment in the modern era is the primary emphasis here; others draw out other factors also: capitalist economics – Oliver, *Politics of Disablement*, 12-59; Oliver,

of ancient material. In each case, the particular aspect is shown to be not predominant, but peripheral. Its inappropriate predominance in modern interpretation arises from uncritical modern presuppositions. The much wider range of themes relating to impairment at play in the rhetorical dynamic of implied author and reader is identified and analysed. These elements in the rhetorical dynamic are then offered as a basis for responsible appropriation by actual readers – a stimulation to new readings that are informed especially by the experience of living impairment. These new readings are not made here: the analysis and data of this thesis are a resource for actual readers to appropriate the biblical impairment texts and to make new readers.

In Chapter 2, the first of these three aspects is scrutinized: the assertion that impairment was generally regarded as a punishment for sin. The chapter demonstrates the inaccuracy of modern interpretation's emphasis on divine punishment as the generally perceived cause of impairment in the ancient world. The chapter identifies a wide range of specified causes of impairment in biblical and other ancient texts, such as impairment being a natural human experience, a result of disease, injury or excess, or as something that God permits and sometimes works, and does so for a variety of reasons. Within this range of impairment's causes, punishment for sin is identified, but as one out of many. The predominance in modern interpretation that sin was generally seen in the ancient world as the primary cause of impairment is shown to be false and damaging.

"Disability and Dependency," 49-60; a combination of economic and cultural factors – Barnes, "Legacy of Oppression," 3-20; Barnes, *Disabled People in Britain*, 11-27.

Chapter 3 looks at a second aspect in modern interpretation of impairment texts: the use in ancient texts of the effects of impairment. The modern assertion under scrutiny here is that people with impairments were used simply to illustrate inability or dependence – they were not portrayed as characters of any depth. In a similar way, it is stated that impairment imagery is invariably used for a negative effect, such as incapability, stubbornness, or carrying the mark of punishment. Chapter 3 demonstrates the inadequacy of these assertions. People with impairments in the biblical texts are depicted with engaging characterization, and are employed in representative roles. The evidence of this chapter makes it clear that the range in imagery of the effects of impairment is far wider than is generally recognised in modern commentary.

Chapter 4 focuses on a third aspect of modern interpretation of impairment texts: the preoccupation with the event and historicity of the impairment healings. The assertions follow that the removal of impairment is the key issue in the stories, the removal of impairment is what God wills, and with enough faith impairment can even today be removed. The aim of this chapter is to show that biblical texts where impairment is taken away carry much more significance than simply the removal of impairment. These texts are used to indicate specific points that are not identified by modern interpreters, who focus inappropriately on the healing itself, overlooking how the ancients were using the impairment healings. An example is the ancient belief that impairment was incurable, a theme identified from medical and non-medical texts. The curing of the incurable is used in the rhetorical dynamic to communicate divine ability with, and divine support for, those who cure the incurable, and not the undesirability of

impairment or the expectation of healing that characterise uncritical modern commentary.

Chapters 2-4 have a place in the overall structure of the thesis in two respects. Firstly, the thematic evidence in each of these chapters reinforces the argument that uncritical modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts, even in its three central aspects, is inadequate and misleading. Secondly, each chapter provides a critical basis for new readings of these texts “to *complement* dominant traditions by recovering lost and neglected traditions to seek a trans-contextual wholeness.”⁶⁴ Responsible and liberatory readings are possible, even in the areas of impairment’s cause, effects and removal – areas that have been central in the modern Church’s alienation and exclusion of people living impairment.

⁶⁴ Thisleton, 449.

CHAPTER 1

SEGREGATION AND MEDICALIZATION: A MODERN RESPONSE TO IMPAIRMENT

1.0 *Introduction*

In order for us to explore the rhetorical dynamic between implied author and reader, that is, in order for us to interpret ancient texts at all, we need to see how different are the circumstances of our own culture and the circumstances of the cultures of the ancients whose texts we are reading. This is a central element of the communication model of interpreting ancient texts. Drawing also on insights from hermeneutics influenced by reader-response understandings and from disability studies, we see that certainly to be included within this differentiation are modern presuppositions about impairment.

Although often unconscious, modern presuppositions about impairment are not neutral.

The emancipatory model of research itself has emerged as a response to the methodology of researchers uncritical of their own presuppositions.

In this first chapter, we identify as a particular modern response to impairment segregation and medicalization. The focus in this chapter is largely England from the Middle Ages to the Modern era. While specific geographically, the analysis of this chapter has a general application: it demonstrates two principles of the methodology of

interpretation proposed in this thesis – the establishment of difference, and the articulation of presupposition. The evidence here aims to show both that there are huge cultural differences in relation to impairment between the pre-modern and modern worlds, and also that modern presuppositions about impairment have been culturally shaped: they are neither impartial nor universal. In this chapter, the origins of the modern presuppositions experienced by people with impairments as profoundly negative are traced in the segregation and medicalization of impairment characteristic of the modern era.

These aims established, we will move in the following chapters to demonstrate how a vast swathe of impairment themes in ancient texts – central to the rhetorical dynamic between implied author and reader – is being overlooked by modern commentary. On our methodology here, this filtering vision results from the uncritical interference of culturally shaped presuppositions relating to impairment. Chapter 1 establishes that these presuppositions are peculiar to the modern era, demonstrating their origins and how they have been shaped.

2.0 *From the Middle Ages: Flexibility and Common Knowledge*

Many historians assert that for people with impairments the situation was essentially bleak before the modern era. On the contrary, there was a remarkable variety of provision for people with impairments in pre-industrial periods. This flexibility was

bound up with the fact that people with impairments were common and well-known in society, of all ages, and at all levels. People with impairments were of necessity in the mainstream – there were few institutions available: institutionalisation has been a modern response.⁶⁵

Before the modern era, it was the expectation that people with impairments in general would not require assistance from their communities. A large proportion of people with impairments, at least those who survived early childhood, supported themselves and their households through various forms of work, independently or semi-independently. These forms of work were not limited to jobs particularly associated with disabled people. In addition to regular forms of employment, an opportunity for people with impairments was to beg for alms, although this activity was often restricted to local people, whose circumstances were known in the community⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ Gloomy modern beliefs about the pre-modern lot of people with impairments: Shanley, 77f; Handel, 50-70; Ryan and Thomas, 85-116; Hargrove, 11-20; N. Roberts, 5-14; Dickerson, 6f; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 18-30; Sines, 4; see also other historians identified by D. Thomson, "Welfare and the Historians," 355-358; Sumner, 395f.

Continuity of flexible arrangements from medieval to the early modern periods: D. Thomson, "Welfare and the Historians," 355-378; D. Thomson, "Welfare of the Elderly," 213; Slack, 5f; E. W. Martin, 31; Barry and Jones, 1f; McIntosh, 234f.

Contrast the view of Luckin: the "collapse of community" post-Reformation; Luckin, 92

Impairment a common factor at all levels of society: Mollat, 1-11; Pelling, "Healing the Sick Poor," 119f; Pelling, "Illness Among the Poor," 273f, 281-286; Pelling, "Old Age, Poverty and Disability," 74, 76-78, 90; D. Thomson, "Welfare and the Historians," 362f; Lawrence, 7; Slack, 6; Orme, "A Medieval Almshouse," 8; Orme, "Sufferings of the Clergy," 62-71; Rushton, "Idiocy, the Family and the Community," 44f, 52; Andrews, "Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled," 65; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 8, 17f, 21f; R. Porter, "The Patient's View," 193f; Park, "Medicine and Society," 59, 60-64; Pelling and Smith, 8f; Kamenetz, 205-208; S. Rubin, 19-42, 108, 135f, 139, 146-149; M. L. Cameron, 5-18; Siraisi, 42, 181-183, 192f; Paracelsus in Cranefield and Federn, 61; Finucane, 59-82, 130-151; E. C. Gordon, "Child Health," 502-522; cf., Dettwyler, passim; Riley, 1-61; Cooter, 1550f.

⁶⁶ People with impairments supporting themselves in work: Pelling, "Healing the Sick Poor," 120; Pelling, "Illness Among the Poor," 274f, 281f, 286; Pelling, "Old Age, Poverty and Disability," 74-101; Suzuki, "Lunacy" Part 2, 44; Rushton, "Lunatics and Idiots," 39; D. Thomson, "Welfare of the Elderly," 206; Tobriner, 251f; Andrews, "Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled," 74f, 78f; Pelling and Smith, 16, 21-25; Leonard, 139f; E. Clark, 388-390, 393f; Billington, 12; James, 106; Barry and

Those without the opportunities to support themselves were maintained in the first instance by their families. In branches of a family where there were several dependants, able-bodied members of the family were distributed as required; this happened especially with children, who often acted as carers around the extended family. There are also many records of “unequal” or complementary marriages, where a significant age difference is understood often to indicate a relationship entailing physical assistance between spouses. Family responsibilities were limited, however: parents or grandparents could be obliged under law to maintain their children or grandchildren, but not the other way round; nor were siblings liable to provide. Even sons and unmarried daughters could not be compelled to care for their parents; their duties under the law extended simply to monetary payment for their parents’ support, and then only in circumstances of their parents’ destitution.⁶⁷

Jones, 5; S. J. Wright, 102-133; Willis in Cranfield, 302; Salter, 111f; E. G. Thomas, 2; Beier, 5f; Neugebauer, 22; Illich, 195f; Gladstone, 151; Orme, “Sufferings of the Clergy,” 62-71.
 Begging associated with people with impairments: Orme and Webster, 45, 57, 98f, 126, 151-5, 180; Pelling “Healing the Sick Poor,” 119; D. G. Pritchard, 2; Carlin, 35; Leonard, 54-60; Rawcliffe, 4; Salter, 50f.
 Other sources of income, such as parish or county pensions (the county pensions were usually for maimed ex-servicemen): Orme and Webster, 15-18; Tobriner, 248; Orme, “A Medieval Almshouse,” 6-8, 14; Orme, “Sufferings of the Clergy,” 65; Leonard, 169f, 213f; Cooter 1554f.
⁶⁷ People with impairments and their families: D. Thomson, “Welfare of the Elderly,” 194-221; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 1, 438f, 440-451; Laslett, “Family, Kinship and Collectivity,” 153-175; Rushton, “Lunatics and Idiots,” 41f; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 45f; Digby, “Contexts and Perspectives,” 4; R. M. Smith, 409-428; J. E. Smith, 429-449; Laslett, “Significance of the Past,” 379-389.
 Able-bodied family members mutually shared: Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 85-87, 90-93; Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 80.
 Children as carers: Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 85-87; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 120; M. Thomson, “Family, Community and the State,” 221. See also, R. M. Smith, “Manorial Court and Elderly Tenant,” 39-61.
 Complementary marriages: Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 80-82, 87-95; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 120.

In the medieval period, kings, lords and masters were regarded as having particular responsibilities towards those of their own who became sick, elderly or infirm, including people with impairments. Often they would give these dependants the means of maintaining themselves, such as an area of land; the income from this would maintain the impaired person and their family and would also employ those who worked the land on their behalf. Others were made tenants of other households on the estate, with no or very little rent to pay, or, in towns, of prominent citizens in the community. These almsmen were often supported further, as the need arose, by relief officers working throughout the master's estate.⁶⁸

For those without patrons, severe injury or the onset of infirmity became a public matter. The manor courts were used both to make need known as it arose, and to match need with the resources available, such as a household willing to take someone in. Sometimes people who were physically dependant were taken into a household on a mutual basis: their income was used to maintain those who were assisting them physically. These courts were also places where custodians were appointed, if necessary, to act on a person's behalf if their mental state required this. Often, but not always, the custodian appointed would be a relative or neighbour. Clear conditions were set for the giving and receiving of assistance under these circumstances, such as

Narrow family line of obligation: D. Thomson, "Welfare of the Elderly," 197-200, 209f, 213; Andrews, "Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled," 80; Slack, 47; a wider scope identified in Rushton, "Idiocy, the Family and the Community," 52-55.

⁶⁸ Those with particular responsibilities: Orme and Webster, 15-19, 112, 159; E. Clark, 388-390, 393f; Suzuki, "Lunacy" Part 1, 451; Pelling, "Illness Among the Poor," 278f; Beier, 3; Tierney, 113; R. M. Smith, "Manorial Court and Elderly Tenant," 39-61; D. Thomson, "Welfare and the Historians," 369. Other households in the local community: tenancy arrangements: Andrews, "Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled," 74f; R. M. Smith, "Manorial Court and Elderly Tenant," 39-61; Pelling, "Healing the Sick Poor," 120; Pelling and Smith, 12-17.

These responsibilities were not always met: Rushton, "Lunatics and Idiots," 39.

the amount of the impaired person's income that would pass over to the custodian. Before Tudor times, the impaired person's family were not always included in this calculation. Controversies were few, and decisions of arbitration were made with consistency and without recourse to 'experts', a fact understood by historians to demonstrate that the facts and complexities of impairment were commonly known and understood.⁶⁹

If the need for public assistance arose (such as from the absence or incapacity of an appropriate relative), there was a flexible system of short- or long-term support focused through the parish, both for people with impairments, and for their carers. Regular pensions were paid, single items were provided, assistance with clothing or food was given, and housing was built at parish expense on waste or common ground. Also, 'guiders' or 'keepers' (also referred to as nurses) were provided to assist people in their own homes, or in the homes of other citizens, including the guiders themselves. Often these keepers were themselves receiving relief.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Few legal controversies, and legal definitions widely understood: Digby, "Contexts and Perspectives," 1f; Neugebauer, 23-43; Rushton, "Lunatics and Idiots," 34-41; Rushton, "Idiocy, the Family and the Community," 44-60; Andrews, "Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled," 67-74, 84f; S. Rubin, 140-149; E. W. Martin, 34f; cf., R. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 112-118. People with impairments mutually contributing in their adoptive household: D. Thomson, "Welfare of the Elderly," 208-210; Pelling, "Old Age, Poverty and Disability," 74-101. Custodians / guardians: Orme and Webster, 15; Neugebauer, 38f; E. Clark, 388-390.

⁷⁰ Death and incapacity in a family caring for a person with an impairment as a reason for public assistance: Rushton, "Idiocy, the Family and the Community," 54-58; Andrews, "Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled," 79-82, 86f; Digby, "Contexts and Perspectives," 4. Flexibility and wide discretion in parish provision: Leonard, 177; Suzuki, "Lunacy" Part 1, 451-456; Pelling, "Healing the Sick Poor," 115-137; Pelling, "Illness Among the Poor," 275; Pelling, "Old Age, Poverty and Disability," 74-101; D. Thomson, "Welfare and the Historians," 355-378; D. Thomson, "Welfare of the Elderly," 212-217; E. W. Martin, 31-34; McIntosh, 213-217, 220f, 232; Rushton, "Lunatics and Idiots," 34, 42; Rushton, "Idiocy, the Family and the Community," 45; Andrews, "Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled," 74-79; E. G. Thomas, 1-3; Beier, 3f, 26-29; Slack, 9-13, 17-21, 37-40, 49f; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 15f; M. Rubin, "Development and Change," 43-45; Oxley, 62-65; J. D. Marshall, 32-40, 48f; Sumner, 399-401; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 20-23.

For people with impairments, and others deemed ‘deserving’ of relief, there are few records of cases being contested: “public aid...[was] relatively unquestioned if not generous.” Throughout this period, discrimination was made between those deemed to deserve relief, and those not deserving. People with impairments and their carers almost without question fell into the first of these categories. Perhaps for this reason it was not unheard of for people to sham impairment in order to gain relief. This sometimes lead to scepticism about claims for relief on the grounds of impairment made by people from outside a local area who were not commonly known. ⁷¹

This flexibility a characteristic of English provision: Pelling and Smith, 17f; J. D. Marshall, 48-50; Kerson, 205.

Means testing: Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 274; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 274; Beier, 26; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 74.

Public housing: Beier, 24; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 94; Leonard, 57, 73-77.

Use of guiders / keepers: Neugebauer, 38f; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 45, 55-57; Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 67, 74-79, 82-87; Park, “Healing the Poor,” 33; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 84; B. K. Gray, 1, 10; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 1, 454-456; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 2, 36.

“This system of boarding out appears to be the origin of the private madhouse”: E. G. Thomas, 6.

⁷¹ Unquestioned and generous public aid: Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 45.

In debates about discrimination of relief, people with impairments and their carers as unquestionably ‘deserving’: Orme and Webster, 57f, 151-155; McIntosh, 212f, 217-225, 231-234; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 116; Beier, 5f, 13f; Slack, 19; Park, “Healing the Poor,” 27; Luther, in Salter, 91-93; Barry and Jones, 5; Oxley, 51-60; Leonard, 54-60, 71.

People with impairments amongst the ‘deserving’ in general: Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 45, 52, 59f; D. Thomson, “Welfare of the Elderly,” 212; Beier, 36; Slack, 5f, 27f, 47f; Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 81; Leonard, 195.

An exception would perhaps be criminals in the Middle Ages mutilated as punishment: G. M. Bruce, “A Note on Penal Blinding,” 369-371.

Fraudulent impairment: Rushton, “Lunatics and Idiots,” 45; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 58; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 131f; Carlin, 27; Billington, 20-23, Vives, in Salter, 12, 17; Salter, 117; Cooter, 1554-1556.

Emphasis on support for people locally-known: “Social welfare was based on the close relationship of the village and the hamlet”: J. D. Marshall, 10 (cf., *ibid.*, 50); “In the close-knit communities where the wants of most were known, relief could be generous and effective”: E. G. Thomas, 3; cf., E. W. Martin, 34-38.

Use of settlement and other locally-defined attempts to restrict reform: McIntosh, 217, 224f; Leonard, 96-103; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 48; E. Clark, 396-400; Beier, 26f; Slack, 27-40; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 131; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 80f.

In many areas, there was a limited amount of institutional provision. However, compared to the flexible outdoor arrangements, this was exceptional. From the late Middle Ages there were four main forms of institutional provision: leper houses, alms- or poorhouses, hospices for wayfarers and pilgrims, and hospitals for the sick poor. Those people with impairments who were using institutions were largely living in almshouses, although they did occasionally emerge in the others also. Often, people with different impairments were mixed together, along with others deemed deserving, in the single local almshouse. Occasionally, there were some specialist institutions, often reflecting the particular concerns of the founder. Although this specialisation sometimes related to a person's physical condition (an example being institutions for people with blindness), the criteria for admission would as likely relate to a person's social or occupational status prior to the onset of impairment – clergy, mariners, servants and knights being a few examples. These restrictions for admission, however, were not always strictly kept, especially in times of political crisis. As before, local provenance and kinship were key factors. Whatever their clientele, these institutions were small, numbering from around two or three residents to about thirty. In hospitals that were specialising in the cure of the sick, people with impairments were often explicitly excluded, as incurable and so “not proper objects.”⁷²

⁷² Institutions the exception, not the rule: Pelling and Smith, 17f

The range of institutional provision: Carlin, 21-39; Gilchrist, 102; McIntosh, 216f; Orme, “A Medieval Almshouse,” 1-15; Orme, “Sufferings of the Clergy,” 62-73; S. Rubin, 172-188; Rawcliffe, 1-21; Kealey, 82-116; Gray, 215-224; Oxley, 79-101.

Mixed institutions: Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 47, 57; Carlin, 33-35; Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 86f; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 126, 132f, 137; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 94; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 2, 41; Tobriner, 245f, 251; Barry and Jones, 7f; Pelling and Smith, 19f; Cranfield, 489f, 501; S. Rubin, 177, 186; Orme, “A Medieval Almshouse,” 3; Leonard, 113, 356; E. G. Thomas, 8f; Vives, in Salter, 10, 16f; Gray, 64-68, 72, 129. Cf., people with different impairments erroneously mixed together: Cole, 21f, 49

Specialist institutions for people with impairments: Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 75, 86f; Orme and Webster, 119-121; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 131-137;

Even people living in institutions did not disappear from mainstream life. Apart from specialist institutions for those with leprosy or ‘the pest’, institutions were sited beside main thoroughfares, in order to make it easier to appeal for funds from passers-by. Residents were sometimes involved in the business of their local community, providing, for example, other forms of poor relief: the resident of an almshouse might be employed to assist someone who was living in their own home. They were often given uniforms, to publicise the institution, to indicate their status, and on occasions, to restrict the practice of begging. Integration also occurred through the fact that many people stayed in institutions temporarily, returning to their own homes when a period of specific need had passed. Within the institution itself, physical care was provided by other people living in the institution.⁷³

Digby, “Contexts and Perspectives,” 4f; Carlin, 33f, 35; Park, “Healing the Poor,” 31; Park, “Medicine and Society,” 89; Orme, “A Medieval Almshouse,” 1-15; Leonard, 27, Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 56-60.

What institutional provision there was was local, ‘one’s own’, and small: McIntosh, 214-217, 220f; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 131f; Park, 88-90; M. Rubin, “Imagining Medieval Hospitals,” 20-25; M. Rubin, “Development and Change,” 43f, 56; Orme and Webster, 127-131, 138-146; Martin, 34-38; Tobriner, 253; Carlin, 23f; Orme, “A Medieval Almshouse,” 7; Orme, “Sufferings of the Clergy,” 64; Henderson, 68f; J. D. Marshall, 9-13, 47, 50; Jewson, 232f; Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 6f; Granshaw, “The Hospital,” 1184; Sterns, 63f.

English practice in contrast to the large institutions of Italy and France: Orme and Webster, 148-150; Henderson, 63-84; M. Rubin, “Development and Change,” 56; Pelling and Smith, 17-20; Mullett, 147f; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 2, 34.

People with impairments excluded from some institutions as being in long-term need or incurable: Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 67; M. Rubin, “Development and Change,” 49; Park, “Healing the Poor,” 35f, 39; Park, “Medicine and Society,” 85-90; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 57; Orme and Webster, 40f, 58f, 107-126; Carlin, 25f; Pelling and Smith, 17f, 20.

People with impairments as “improper objects” for infirmaries: Pelling and Smith, 20.

⁷³ Siting of institutions and the use of uniforms to maintain institutions in the public eye: Orme and Webster, 41-48; Gilchrist, 113-116; Carlin, 26f, 35; M. Rubin, “Development and Change,” 51; D. G. Pritchard, 2; Kealey, 97, 102f, 108f; Rawcliffe, 10f; cf., use of badges: Salter, 100-102, 106f.

Physical care within institutions: Lorentzen, Part 1, 103-5; Tobriner, *passim*; Maggs, 1313-1315; Carlin, 25, 32.

Institutional provision, although the exception, could be a popular option – it was one sometimes favoured by the rich, as we see from a number of private institutions that emerged. Also, there were systems of insurance in anticipation of the onset of some future incapacity. Corrody was a late medieval scheme whereby a person would contribute regularly to an institution over a period of years, with the guarantee of admission to the institution once infirmity developed. Similarly, confraternities and guilds would group together to assist their members by endowing their own almshouses.⁷⁴

The role of the Church in the provision of assistance for people with impairments throughout this period was very significant, especially in relation to institutions, both funding them and founding them. Charity was seen as the supreme Christian virtue, and Christ's words in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats at Matthew 25:31-46 were understood and used as "a charitable template." From the days of the Early Church, in both Eastern and Western Christendom, those in need were cared for in religiously founded hospitals. Some hospitals were independent, while others were linked to particular religious houses. To a considerable extent, the conversion of Europe to Christianity had been based on the Church's healing powers, not least in the cults of the saints and their relics. In these cults, the healing of impairment had had a particular impact, although modern historians are sceptical about whether any miraculous healings

⁷⁴ Private institutions for people with impairments: Rushton, "Lunatics and Idiots," 34; Rushton, "Idiocy, the Family and the Community," 57.

Corrody: Orme and Webster, 123-125; M. Rubin, "Imagining Medieval Hospitals," 22f; Pelling and Smith, 12; Kealey, 89; cf., Vives, in Salter, 14f.

Guilds, insurance and mutual aid: Beier, 3; Slack, 41-44; Granshaw, "The Hospital," 1183f; Henderson, 68; McIntosh, 214-218; Orme and Webster, 18f, 142, 182; Kealey, 95, Gray, 242-245; Barry and Jones, 5f.

of impairment ever took place. From the earliest times, impairment was distinguished from disease as being beyond the curing ability of medicine. There were also a number of specific impetuses relating the Church to provision of poor relief, such as the work of particular religious orders (the Franciscans and Augustinians were especially important in fashioning attitudes towards and in responding to poverty), the Crusades, the Black Death, and various movements for Church reform.⁷⁵

During the medieval period, then, the segregation and the medicalization of people with impairments were negligible. There was no sense that impairment could or should be done away with. The key element in the comprehensive and flexible system of relief throughout this period was the fact that people with impairments were known in their communities, whether they maintained themselves, at least in part, or whether they benefited from patronage or public assistance. Similarly, carers who made application for assistance were known in their communities: the accountability in the system came from this common knowledge. Institutional provision was slight, and for people with impairments, this form of provision was deliberately socially visible. Medicine's limits were only too well known, and impairment was among the many conditions understood to be beyond the range of physicians' skills. People with impairments were specifically excluded from infirmaries on the grounds of their incurability. On occasions, the cult of

⁷⁵ Poor relief as the supreme Christian duty, and Christ's words a charitable template: C. Jones, 1470; cf., Orme and Webster, 15-31, 49-61; Granshaw, "The Hospital," 1181-1184; R. Porter, "Religion and Medicine," 1449-1468; C. Jones, 1469-1475; Park, 70-73; Rawcliffe, 11f; Tierney, 44-67, 92, 94f; Kealey, 101; Mullin, 158-163, 181-190; in early modern texts: Salter, *passim*. Impairment, miracles and the cults of the saints: Park, 72-75; Finucane, *passim* (his scepticism about impairment miracles: *ibid.*, 218); S. Rubin, 81, 83f, 87f; Bonser, 188-191; Bruce, 370; E. C. Gordon, "Child Health," 502-522; C. W. Bynum, 68-106. These specific impetuses and the Church's provision of relief: Orme and Webster, 17f, 21-31, 127-136, 138-146; R. Porter, "Religion and Medicine," 1449-1468; C. Jones, 1469-1475; Kealey, 82-106; Hume, *passim*; Sterns, 43-69.

the saints was linked to the healing of impairment: this was used to indicate the superior power of saints and their relics over the skills and abilities of those who practised medicine and medical folklore.

3.0 *With Humanism and the Reformation: Management and Efficiency*

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, with urbanisation and population growth, the presence of those in need of assistance became increasingly insistent. That the extent of poverty was growing could be measured through censuses and taxation registers, and there was a corresponding increase in anxiety and fear relating to the poor. The provision of local communities was being outstripped by need and expectation, and this was happening not, as before, only at periods of crisis. Poverty began to be seen as being a matter of social concern rather than simply a problem of families and local communities. Some of the medieval notions of the celebration of poverty, spread by the Franciscans in particular, were discarded along with the dissolution of the religious houses. In addition, the upheavals of the Reformation had an effect on the provision of relief that was available. A considerable number of the larger institutions that had direct connections to religious communities, both almshouses and hospitals, were closed down. On the other hand, many of the smaller almshouses continued as before, especially if they had no obvious link with religious communities.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Increase in poverty from population growth and urbanisation: M. Rubin, "Development and Change," 43f; Park, "Medicine and Society," 75-83; Slack, 3-5, 21-26, 45-50; Mollat, 197.

As we see from treatises on poverty from this period, the expectation was, as before, that people with impairments, like anyone else, would and should support themselves by work:

Laziness and listlessness are the causes of their declaring themselves unable to do anything, not their bodily infirmity... For no-one is so enfeebled as to have no power at all for doing something.⁷⁷

However, these treatises show also an understanding of the need for flexibility in this respect: where a person's impairment prevented them earning their keep completely, their own earned income was to be supplemented from the common purse to meet their need.

The growing insistence of the poor, and the effects of the closing of religious houses, led to an understanding that social problems should be not simply responded to, but managed: through increased welfare activity from central government, and also through disciplined charitable giving being directed in specific ways. This coincided readily with current humanist notions of reform through education to be implemented through social and political activity. An optimism began to emerge that social management was possible (this was the specific duty of those who governed) and that poverty was not inevitable.⁷⁸

Changing attitudes towards poverty: Martin, 26-30; Park, "Healing the Poor," 40; Park, "Medicine and Society," 88-90; M. Rubin, "Development and Change," 52-57; M. Rubin, "Imagining Medieval Hospitals," 20f, 24; Beier, *passim*; Mollat, 251-300; E. Clark, 381f, 406; McIntosh, 212; Slack, 41-50; Barry and Jones, 4; Tierney, 1-21, 109, 133; B. K. Gray, 94-99, 145, 206-215, 273-291; Salter, xf, xvi-xx. Poverty and disease a public concern: Park, "Healing the Poor," 26-45; Park, "Medicine and Society," 83-89; Pelling, "Healing the Sick Poor," 115-137; Pelling, "Illness Among the Poor," 274f, 281f; D. Porter, "Public Health," 1234-1238; B. K. Gray, 43f; Salter, *passim*.

⁷⁷ People with impairments should work: Vives, in Salter, 13-17, 25.

⁷⁸ Humanist emphasis on reform through education, self-help and self-reliance: McIntosh, 209, 232; Rushton, "Idiocy, the Family and the Community," 60; M. Rubin, "Development and Change," 52-57;

In England, as a result of these focussed energies, there were set in place the acclaimed Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1597 and 1601, that were to last almost unchanged until the reforms at the beginning of the 19th century. In fact, these laws enshrined in legislation practices that had been in place for centuries: the enduring system of flexible outdoor relief, administered by and for people who were known in a local area. This remained the backbone of provision for those people with impairments and their families who were not able to support themselves fully. Particular items were provided on a one-off basis, such as artificial limbs, items of clothing, or rent subsidy during periods of crisis. Especially encouraged was the providing of some form of training in a trade that would lead to employment, such as teaching a musical instrument to a blind person. In keeping with the management emphasis in relief, means testing was regularly used.⁷⁹

An important change that took place with these Poor Laws was that the rates to pay for this system were now compulsory: “one of the most significant developments of early modern English history.”⁸⁰ Despite this element of compulsion, unique to English relief at this time, additional income was raised for parish relief in various ways, including

Slack, 3, 6-9, 17, 31-36; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 118-121, 132-135; Pelling, “Illness Among the Poor,” 274f; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 95; Beier, 17-19; Martin, 28f; D. G. Pritchard, 2-6; R. Porter, “The Patient in England,” 91-118; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 14-16, 19-26; Passmore, 134-170; C. Jones, 1473-1478; Salter, *passim*.

Local experiments: Slack, 9-13, 14-26; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 115-137; E. W. Martin, 31-34; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 278f; J. D. Marshall, 15; Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 400f.

Institutions of reform: Slack, 29, 32-40; MacIntosh, 232; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 60; E. W. Martin, 31-34; Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 11f.

Humanists in politics: Slack, 7-9, 16f; Beier, 18f; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 116f, 121; McIntosh, 235.

⁷⁹ Effects of the Reformation on charitable giving, institutional relief and outdoor relief: Orme and Webster, 147-166; Beier, 14-17, 19-23; R. Porter, “Religion and Medicine,” 1453f; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 15f; R. Porter, “Hospitals and Surgery,” 216; C. Jones, 1473-1475; Slack, 8f, 42-44; Pelling and Smith, 18; Salter, *passim*.

direct appeals through sermons, and fines for misdemeanours such as playing unlawful games on a Sunday, or for not attending the sermons! Many attempts were made to regulate, if not abolish, begging. This was partly due to the views identified above that all were expected to work, and partly on religious grounds: in the Protestant treatises on poverty management, amongst those deemed undeserving of relief are former mendicant religious.⁸¹

As before, key to this flexible, face-to-face system of outdoor relief was the fact that people were locally known: “So shall the guardians with constant industry make search and inquiry, and know thoroughly about all such people...in our parish.”⁸² Attempts to limit the scope of relief, such as the settlement laws that restricted payment of relief to those with a specified period of local residence, were also administered on the basis of local knowledge: “a matter of face-to-face management by overseers among their neighbours.” However, the system was not without its problems: the very flexibility in the parish system, and the sectional interests and powers of discretion that came from the system resting on local knowledge, made consistency and restriction very difficult to achieve.⁸³

⁸⁰ Compulsory parish rates: McIntosh, 235; cf., *ibid.*, 225-235; Beier, 4f, 24, 29; Slack, 12f; E. W. Martin, 26f.

⁸¹ Increased centralization of government and links with institutions: D. M. Fox, 1204-1209; Slack, 3, 6, 9-13, 37-40; C. Jones, 1476-1478; Gray, 31-33; J. D. Marshall, 23; cf., early modern medicalization of society: Risse, 171f.

Attempts to refine the relief system: Slack, 11-13, 37-40, 49f.

Restrictions on begging – e.g., limited to “one’s own”: Beier, 4, 6, 15, 27; Leonard, 76-77; Salter, *passim*. Summaries of specific legislation during this period: Slack, 51-56; Beier, 39-42.

⁸² Luther, in Salter, 92f.

⁸³ Face-to-face management: Slack, 20. The role of family and support for family: J. E. Smith, 429-449; R. M. Smith, “Structured Dependence,” 409-428.

During this period, there was a slight increase in the use of institutions as a means of providing relief. The social scope of those who endowed almshouses widened, partly in reaction to some of the facilities lost from the closing of religious foundations, and also in line with the current emphasis in discriminate charity: patronage meant influence. Charitable provision was becoming sponsored and directed not only by craft guilds and mutual associations, but also by the emerging political and economic elite,

who saw in poor relief a means of symbolically marking their own raised social status, establishing patronage networks, and shaping provision to benefit their own material and political interests.⁸⁴

A belief arose that given the right environment, and an efficient pooling of resources, it would be possible to find a way out of the circumstances that were causing poverty: with the right conditions, self-reliance was a universal possibility. It was in these terms that institutions became significant in early modern schemes – places for the management of poverty. Many local experiments were tried; some were even adopted nationally. From the middle of the 16th century the first houses of correction were opened; these soon became houses of industry or workhouses. Originally, a ‘work house’ was a place where people in receipt of relief would be able to work for their livelihood, or to learn a trade in order to be independent. There was little sense of the

⁸⁴ Charity and the emerging elite: C. Jones, 1474.

Charity and influence - widening social scope of benefactors: Orme and Webster, 155-165; Gray, 124-130; patronage and the gift relation: Cavallo, “Motivations of Benefactors,” 46-62; C. Jones, 1473-1475; M. Rubin, “Development and Change,” 43-46, 51-55; Gray, 269 – patronage a *sine qua non*. Charity and politics: C. Rose, 123-148.

Disciplined and ‘organised’ charity: Slack, 41-44; E. W. Martin, 26-30; Handel, 62-70; Salter, *passim*; Gray, 39-41, 154-163, 229f. Attempts to measure poverty, to aim effective discrimination: Slack, 10, 16, 18; Park, “Medicine and Society,” 87; Beier, 26-29; Pelling, “Illness Among the Poor,” 275f; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 77f; Leonard, 57-60, 96, 128f; Salter, *passim*; a distorting effect on public perception: R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 160-168.

Italian experience, Cavallo, “Motivations of Benefactors,” 46-62.

Management of the poor: E. W. Martin, 26-30; Salter, *passim*.

work being harsh or punitive: on the contrary, it was the chance to work one's way out of dependence on the parish rates. However, its aims were too varied to be practical: as well as providing a sheltered workshop and a limited training scheme, the early workhouses were required to maintain those unable to support themselves physically, as well as being self-supporting and so free of liability to the rates. In order to use limited resources with effectiveness, in some areas these institutions began to grow in size, accommodating together people from different parishes. However, this policy drew great criticism and even disturbance from local people: they wanted relief in their own parish.

While the use of institutions in the management of society's problems was growing generally, it had little impact at this stage on the lives of people with impairments. Some increase in the private provision for people with mental illness was taking place – the beginnings of what became in the 18th century the 'lunacy trade.' However, no parallel increase occurred in private provision for people with mental or physical impairments. For people with impairments, the two main reasons for institutionalising people with mental illness did not apply. They were not believed to be curable, or educable, out of their impairment, even with the right environment; nor were they perceived to be of such a threat to public order that they had to be removed from society. These two specific distinctions between mental illness and mental disability had been made from the earliest times, as medieval legislation demonstrates. It was only in the modern era that people with "mental disorders" were indiscriminately mixed together.

Important too for humanist benefactors was being able to see the results of disciplined charity: high-profile curability was a prime concern. For this reason, while many institutions emerged for the sick, there was little interest, at least in England, in making the specialist institutional provision for people with impairments, the *incurabili*, that occurred in France and Italy. There were in addition religious reasons for the lack of segregation, especially in relation to people with mental disabilities. On the one hand, some people saw in them “Reason subverted by brutish appetite and the wild man within”; they were “Providence’s warnings to the fortunate to shun the sins of pride and lust.” On the other hand, people with mental disabilities were referred to as “our brethren...to be considered more than the wise man” for not resisting or desiring to control the “inner man”, that is, the human part made in God’s image. Integration was important on both these theological grounds.⁸⁵

The system of relief in the Elizabethan Poor Laws was so well established that it continued unscathed despite the radical political changes that were taking place; indeed, it is said to have contributed to continuity through these changes. Even with its limitations, the system was to an extent mutual: it suited both those who received relief, and those who provided it – an acceptable face to urbanisation and industrialisation. A flexible arrangement had arisen, described even in terms of entitlement and legal dues,

⁸⁵ Continental hospitals for *incurabili*: Henderson, 71-84; Cavallo, “Carity, Power and Patronage,” 101-110.

Two theological reasons identified for mainstream integration of people with mental disabilities at this time: a) those with “reason subverted”: R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 110; cf., *ibid.*, 33-110
 b) those not resisting the inner man: Paracelsus, *De generatione stultorum*, in Cranefield and Federn, 56-74; see also Billington, 16-31. We can compare the Papal Bull of 1537 describing indigenous people with learning disabilities in the New World as “truly men...capable of receiving the catholic faith” – Greenwald, 181-183.

See also the use of impairment in political and social satire: the 16th and 17th century adaptations of the *Ship of Fools*, in Bendek, *passim*; cf., Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, in Billington, 27-31, James, 105

that protected from extreme hardship those deemed to be ‘deserving’, which included without question people with impairments. Those who provided the bulk of the parish rates were, by and large, willing to do so as a means of maintaining the status quo: successfully, it seems, as it is claimed that the Poor Laws “undoubtedly contributed to England’s long-term social stability compared with other states.”⁸⁶

There was during this period an increased use of institutions as a means of directing charity in a discriminating way. As a tool for managing society’s problems, it had mixed success. This tendency did not affect to a large extent people with impairments and their families. The face-to-face system of outdoor relief that was so important for them was strengthened through legislation proceeding from centralising government. As for the medicalization of impairment, the limits of medicine were well understood, and the fact that impairment was perceived to be beyond the sphere of medicine was a factor in the mainstream place that people with impairments maintained throughout this period.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Mutual benefit in the system: quotes from Beier, 36; cf., Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 121, 126; Pelling, “Illness Among the Poor,” 283f; Park, “Healing the Poor,” 28-30, 39f; E. Clark, 382, 396-400; Slack, 30f, 46-50; Barry and Jones, 11; Cavallo, “Motivations of Benefactors,” 46-62; Gray, 145; Scull, 39; Leonard, 91, 303f; Kealey, 89; Vives, in Salter, 30f; Ypres scheme, in Salter, 66-72;

⁸⁷ Limits of medicine relating to impairment during this period: Park, “Healing the Poor,” 37; Park, “Medicine and Society,” 61f; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 6, 8f; Carlin, passim; Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 115-137; Pelling and Smith, 8; Bonser, 3-12, 382-387, 413-417; Cameron, 5-24; Siraisi, 8f, 42-47, 130, 133f, 154-157, 171f, 187.

Willis sees some forms of mild learning disability “not improperly reckoned among diseases of the brain” and those with them open to the influence of teachers and physicians (whose medication can purify the fluids of the brain, and so clarify the brain); other forms mental disability are completely incurable: *De anima brutorum*, 1672, in Cranefield, 301-303.

Impairment seen as incurable: Pelling, “Healing the Sick Poor,” 121-123; Pelling, “Illness Among the Poor,” 281; M. Rubin, “Development and Change,” 49; Park, “Healing the Poor,” 35f, 39; Park, “Medicine and Society,” 85-90; Orme and Webster, 40f, 58f, 107-126; Carlin, 25f; Rushton, “Lunatics and Idiots,” 37, 48; Digby, “Contexts and Perspectives,” 2; Neugebauer, 25; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 46, 48f, 57f; Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 70; Ryan and Thomas, 86f, 90f; E. C. Gordon, “Child Health,” 522; E. C. Gordon, “Accidents Among

4.0 *With the Enlightenment: The Origins of Perfectibility*

The Enlightenment is described not so much as a revolution as a “continuation...of a reorientation that broke into the open in the 17th century”, with the difference lying “not in achievement but in aspirations.” This general description would summarise fairly the provision for people with impairments during this period. Little changed materially, but the aspirations that were spawned would have great impact in the following century when these aspirations were finally put into practice, and appeared to bear fruit.⁸⁸

A characteristic of this period was the application to all things of the scientific method: “All questions were open”: “Truth ceased to be regarded as revealed...or as disclosing itself...It was to be sought after and pursued. Nature had to be investigated, its secrets unravelled.”⁸⁹ In this age of rationality, there was a particular interest in its opposite, irrationality. During this period, the curious were shown round the Bethlem hospital for their entertainment, and among the tales that travellers brought home were the stories of the Swiss ‘cretins.’ Similarly, as isolated experiments around Europe became

Medieval Children,” 145; Ryan and Thomas, 91; Siraisi, 87, 133f, 168; S. Rubin, 105, 206f; Paracelsus in Cranefield and Federn, 57, 59, 61-65, 162; Willis in Cranefield, 301.

⁸⁸ Continuation from humanism and 17th century: *BCE*, 3; Gelfand, 216 (quoting K. Thomas, p. 658); cf., *BCE*, 355, 452. Summary: Risse, 149f.

⁸⁹ Enlightenment method: *BCE*, 7, 355, 358-60, 477f; Gelfand, 212f; see also: Hampson, 35-40, 73-96; Moravia, 247-268.

Cf., “Dramatic and cumulative changes in science” as origin of new usage of ‘revolution’ *BCE*, 479.

Importance of journals and encyclopaedias for disseminating ideas and results: *BCE*, 145, 150, 253-255; R. Porter, “Medical Science,” 171; Hampson, 132f, 141-143.

publicised through that Enlightenment resource, the journal, people began to hear of new teaching techniques that were presented in terms of intriguing paradox: the *surdus loquens*, and the deaf person hearing.⁹⁰

However, impairment was not simply a subject of curiosity: it was useful in more general investigation. People used impairment to support or subvert the scientific theories that multiplied throughout the period, such as the debates of innate ideas, and the comparative effects on development of nature or nurture. The mathematics of harmony and acoustics were applied to questions of language and speech mechanisms; these ideas were tested on people unable to speak or hear. Another general question that people with impairments were used to illustrate was the relation between perception and thought conception. Similarly, with rationality as the defining human quality, innate mental impairment (in contrast to mental illness which was understood as acquired) raised questions relating to the boundaries of humankind, to the extent that the Swiss ‘cretins’ became objects of interest as evidence of a possible new species.⁹¹

Impact of exploration as “stimulating anthropological relativism”: *BCE*, 161; cf., *BCE*, 351, 447; Camp, 254f; Hampson, 25-27.

⁹⁰ Curiosity as a feature of the Enlightenment: *BCE*, 2, 7, 355, 358-360, 442f; Jewson, 235.

Curiosity and impairment: Mullet, *passim*; Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 392-403; Gelfand, 210f.

Pre-Enlightenment interest – 16th century: Willis in Cranefield, “Discovery of Cretinism,” 489-511; Platter: James, 103-108.

Curiosity and irrationality at Bethlem: R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 91f, 122f; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 237.

Less interest in people with learning disabilities: Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 67; Lawrence, 21f (not the same curability / productivity requirement).

Travel anecdotes – Cranefield, 491; Swiss ‘cretins’: Ryan and Thomas, 88-90; Goodey, “John Locke’s Idiots,” 229; paradox of *surdus loquens*: Mullet, 135; D. G. Pritchard, 12.

⁹¹ Impairment used to illustrate nature and nurture debate: Hurt, 109-111.

Impairment illustrating nature of perception and communication: Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 397; Mullet, 126, 129, 132, 139-141, 143; Hurt, 99f; D. G. Pritchard, 4.

Reason, thought and the boundaries of human and animal nature: D. G. Pritchard, 9f; Camp, 283-296, 291f; Weiner, 60f; Hurt, 99f, 107-111; Goodey, “John Locke’s Idiots,” 215-250; Goodey, “Psychopolitics of Learning and Disability,” 93-117; Passmore, 163f; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 50f.

A consequence of this attention focused on impairment was the invention of devices to ‘supply nature’s defects’, especially for those deemed the most educable: machines appeared, and were publicly celebrated, to enable blind people to calculate, read, write, make musical notation and produce maps. Distinctive methods of teaching were devised, and the stories of individual teachers who achieved this, the emerging experts, were told in parabolic terms: the conquest of ancient superstition by reason and fraternity.⁹²

There was at this time unprecedented interest in impairment, in the investigation and classification of different impairments, but the interest was often in impairment itself, rather than in the person with the impairment. This reflects the contemporary movement in medical science: the attention of physicians was focusing less on the sick person and more on the diseased bodily part. Key to this was the newly developing institution of the Enlightenment, the hospital. Here, large numbers could be collected together and fruitfully examined – this new emphasis has been described as a shift from “Bedside Medicine” to “Hospital Medicine.”⁹³

⁹² Impairment and devices: Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 392, 395, 399-401; Hurt, 94, 97f; D. G. Pritchard, 2f. Experiment and teaching: Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 392-403; Mullet, *passim*; D. G. Pritchard, 2-65. Literacy and ineducability: D. G. Pritchard, 9. Parabolic treatment of the exploits of Hauy: Weiner, 61-87; Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 400; Hurt, 93; D. G. Pritchard, 2f.

⁹³ The person disappears and the condition predominates: Jewson, *passim*; Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *passim*; Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 393f, 402; Risse, 191; Hurt, 109. Classification of boundaries between and within impairments: Hurt, 96-101, 110f; Mullet, 146-149; Weiner, 126f; E. W. Martin, 26f, 50f; Benton, 54-60; Schiller, 115-131. Pre-Enlightenment: Willis, in Cranefield, 301; Spencer, Sturrock and Buchanan, 64-66; cf., humanist classification of the poor: Vives, in Salter, 11f. Specialism and expertise: Jewson, 234-236; Granshaw, “Fame and Fortune,” 199-220. Early Enlightenment – “a shared world of medical knowledge in which the laity could participate”: R. Porter, “Laymen, Doctors and Medical Knowledge,” 314; cf., *ibid.*, 283-314. Cf., demystification of medicine: Passmore, 171-190; Camp, 282f; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 108f, 279-281; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 17-23; E. W. Martin, 41, 44; Gelfand, 202-204, 214-217; Lawrence, 8,

The hospital was a characteristic of French Enlightenment medicine; in England, far more significant was the market economy. Here, discovery and invention were means not only to reputation, but also to fortune. Great rivalries developed, with claims and counter-claims, and one new theory replacing another, one system of therapy or style of environment outdoing the other. As in the early modern period, visible success was essential. This was more achievable, at least in the shorter term, with people with mental illness. It was during this period that the ‘lunacy trade’ blossomed; but no comparative burst of private provision was made for people with impairments. As before, the incurability of impairment deterred the entrepreneurs and philanthropists. An exception was a group perceived to be at least open to training: many charitably-funded workshops emerged for blind people to learn skills that would make them self-sufficient and independent of the parish rates. However, the Enlightenment journals and encyclopaedias that publicised experiments and discoveries were also publicising the claims of a number of people with impairments that expectations of their abilities were far too low: most professions and areas of work, they were claiming, should and could be made fully open to them.⁹⁴

34-36; Risse, 152-155; K. Thomas, 770-774, 788-794. (cf., role of health manuals: Risse, 186-189-Enlightenment themes of human progress and popular education).

⁹⁴ Invention, reputation and rivalry: Hurt, 95-101; D. G. Pritchard, 4-8, 11-23; Weiner, 60-89; Lawrence, 7-25; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 27-44; R. Porter, “Medical Science,” 162-173; Risse, 155-171, 184-186, 194; Jewson, 234.

The Enlightenment lunacy trade: R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 31, 38-40; R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 285, 290-298; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 115f, 118, 142-145; Gelfand, “Demystification,” 213; Camp, 289-293; Scull, “Domestication of Madness,” 233-236, 247; Parry-Jones, *passim*; Sumner, 395-412; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, *passim*; Crammer, 107-109.

Blind people as most educable, and so the best investment for charity: Hurt, 93-99; D. G. Pritchard, 8f, 16-19, 21-23.

Calls for better work opportunities for and by blind people: J. Rose, 16-37.

Curiosity and scientific method brought about important changes relating to people with impairments. A further Enlightenment principle that had great impact was the belief that salvation was an earthly, social quest, that progress was happening, and that perfectibility was possible – “perfectibility now”.⁹⁵ It was not simply, as the humanists had believed, that society’s problems could be managed with some success, but that progress would remove the problems of society altogether. A consequence of Enlightenment secularization was the faith that paradise was not to be awaited, but to be achieved in the present by rational means.⁹⁶

A specific way that became identified as a means of reaching this state of perfection was through medical science. This was, however, a belief more in hope than in substance. Medicine had a particular theoretical status as philosophy practically applied, but in the market economy of 18th century England, orthodox medicine had by no means cornered the health market. In the combination of a growing general

⁹⁵ The phrase “perfectibility now” is adapted from the title of a chapter in Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man*, outlining modern attitudes of perfectibility: “The New Mysticism: Paradise Now”.

For modern perceptions of perfection in relation to the human body, compare Passmore, 304-327; H. Oppenheimer, 739f; Turner, “The Body in Western Society,” 20-25; Prokes, 1-17; P. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 222. With particular reference to people with impairments: S. D. Stone, 413-424; J. Morris, *Pride Against Prejudice*, 84-116; Abberley, “Disabled People and ‘Normality’,” 107-115.

On ancient views towards the body and bodily perfection, especially Early Church ambivalence:

Passmore, 11-148; *EEC* 1:123f; Meredith, 541f; Turner, “The Body in Western Society,” 20-25, 38f; Ware, 90-110; Louth, 111-130; P. Brown, *Body and Society*, 31f, 64, 83-88, 222-224, 441f

⁹⁶ *BCE*, 1, 2, 160; Hampson, 232f. Cf., *BCE*, 4, 9, 90, 160, 228; Hampson, 97-127, 149f, 232-234, 242f, 252f.

Secular perfectibility in Enlightenment: Passmore, 157; Lawrence, 20-22; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 279f; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 36; R. Porter, “Medical Science,” 168; Imhof, 400, 403; Gelfand, 207; Cartwright, 36; Gay, 12; Risse, 149; K. Thomas, 785-794; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 42f; E. W. Martin, 25.

Enlightenment and optimism: *BCE*, 382f, 394; Optimism and curability: Risse, 149f, 152-154, 194f; Gay, 2:12-23; Mullet, 132, 143, 145; Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 397; Hurt, 110f; Passmore, 150-153, 157, 163f, 167-169, 191, 195-209, 215-222, 239-259; Cartwright, 36; K. Thomas, 785-794; Slack, 24, 16f; Gray, 13f; R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 289-292; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 131-3, 139f, 143, 147, 279f; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 1, 453-456; E. W. Martin, 25; Andrews, “Hardly a Hospital,” 63-81. cf., Hampson, 23; Willis, in Cranefield, 301-303.

affluence, and a need for and tradition in self-treatment skills, health was a lucrative commodity. Physicians themselves were not high in status: the limits to their skills were well known, their professional bodies were riddled with religious partisanship, and there were few medics in state employment or public life. The shift to hospital medicine occurring in France happened much later in England, and before the 19th century there was not much authority invested in doctors.⁹⁷ In some respects, however, the status of orthodox medicine did start to rise: surgery changed from a trade or manual skill to being seen as the Enlightenment branch of medicine par excellence: a practical and progressive science. Also, with the changing classification of disease, especially the diseases of populations, some control and power did pass to doctors, especially in the naval and military spheres: the association developed of order with health, and disorder with disease.⁹⁸

Blows to optimism – a) the Lisbon earthquake *BCE*, 159f; cf., *BCE*, 357, 431; b) French revolution: Hampson, 251-283.

⁹⁷ Medicine as philosophy applied: Gay, 14, 17-19; Scull 233f; Wear, “Introduction,” 5; Risse, 149f, 152f, 154; K. Thomas, 770-774; Lawrence, 14.

Market forces, medicine and welfare: Lawrence, 7-25; Risse, 194; Winston, 50f; Hurt, 94, 111; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 1, 440; Camp, 309-312; Sumner, 396f; R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 284f, 288; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 129f, 133, 136-147, 163-168, 277. R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 29f, 40-44; Pickstone, “Medicine, Society and the State,” 309-311; Porter and Porter, passim; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 30f, 42-48; Parry, 281-292; Slack, 45; Lawrence, 8f, 15, 19f, 36-38; Wear, “Introduction,” 3f.

Medicine and self-help: R. Porter, “Laymen, Doctors and Medical Knowledge,” 249-282; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 18, 43; K. Thomas, 794-797; Lawrence, 11f.

Limits of medicine, even the new knowledge: Guy, 19; Kerson, 211; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 20; R. Porter, “Hospitals and Surgery,” 217f; Risse, 195; Illich, 198f.

Doctors not high status: R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 43.

Doctors and patients: R. Porter, “The Patient in England,” 91-118; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 24-26; Porter and Porter, passim; Risse, 184f; Lawrence, 9, 31; Jewson, 227-233.

Doctoring still face-to-face: Lawrence 8-18; J. D. Marshall, 9-11.

Rise of the specialist: Jewson, 233-236; Granshaw, “Introduction,” 8-10; Granshaw, “Fame and Fortune,” 203-205; Risse, 154; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 35-44; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 46-49 – a consequence being less self-sufficiency and more dependence.

Doctors less restrained with poor: Barry and Jones, 9f

Medicalization occurring in the late 19th century: R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 44.

⁹⁸ Changing attitudes concerning medics – increasing status as ability to cure increases: R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 29; Risse, 171-193; Gelfand, 213; Lawrence, 22f; rise of surgery: R. Porter, “Hospitals and Surgery,” 214-217; Risse, passim; (cf., other branches of medicine: Lawrence, 19f, 22-25).

It was during this period that medicine took “nearly a quantum leap in the range of its mission.” In this respect, the growing status of medicine did have some impact on the lives of people with impairments. For the first time doctors had widespread contact with the poor, people previously outside the medical sphere through high medical fees and traditions of self-medication. The flexibility of the Poor Laws stretched to including medical fees in certain circumstances, especially with diseases perceived to threaten public health. At the outbreak of epidemics, the homes of the poor were targeted and, unlike the wealthy, people on low incomes were compelled to undergo treatment.⁹⁹

“A pivotal factor fostering the process of medicalization” was the dispensary movement. Dispensaries were free outpatient and domiciliary services for those not needing to be admitted to the growing number of subscription and county hospitals, and also not able to afford physicians’ fees. For some doctors, Poor Law service brought high profile medical specialism and expertise, such as inoculation, and the management of people with mental illness. For people with impairments, this swelling of medicine in society impinged on them through physicians’ Poor Law service and through the

Changing classification of disease: Lawrence, 22-25; cf., Social health and body politic: R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 30, 33; Weatherall, 256; Pickstone, “Medicine, Society and the State,” 310-314; Heller, “Educating the Blind,” 397f; Risse, 151, 154, 171-193; Lawrence, 3, 11, 15, 20-25, 29-33, 40; Sumner, 397; Imhoff, 400; Gelfand, 210f, 217; Gay, 16f; E. G. Thomas, 12-17; R. Porter, “History of the Body,” 206-232; Turner, *The Body and Society*, 30-59, 85-114, 137-226; Turner, “The Body in Western Society,” 18; Louth, 127f.

⁹⁹ Homes of the poor and disease: E. G. Thomas, 15-17. Cf., the role of the Ladies’ Benevolent Society and other visiting groups as inspectors and reporters of the poor – acute (cholera epidemics) and chronic: E. G. Thomas, 16f.

Compulsion for the poor: E. G. Thomas, 12f, 16f; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 27-30.

Outlets for medics, including Poor Law service: R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 36-40; R. Porter, “Hospitals and Surgery,” 220; Risse, 189-193; Lawrence, 9; E. G. Thomas, 1-17.

dispensaries: hospitals did not accept people with impairments, on the familiar incurability grounds.¹⁰⁰

A further means perceived to be moving progress forward was the proper use of philanthropy (formerly known as charity). This was concentrated to a large extent in the founding and supporting of specific institutions, where environment and therapy could be structured to optimise the benefit. Institutions that were philanthropically funded were like the medieval almshouses: in order to retain their charitable income, they needed to remain in the public eye, and so were built in the middle of population centres. They were not segregated away from society, as the public asylums would be in the next century. Some well publicised successes were achieved in private institutions for people with mental illness, and this encouraged the faith in institutions that was to have such impact in the following century.¹⁰¹

On the model of the joint stock company, philanthropy became charity ‘in association’: individuals joined together in order to maximize benefit, with a common aim and a shared benefit. Contributions rolled in so long as this philanthropy by association was

¹⁰⁰ Dispensaries: Risse, 153f, 171f, 178-181; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 32f; Lawrence, 33f; Imhoff, 400; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 205f; E. G. Thomas, 4, 18. Rise of the specialist and expert: Risse, 154; Jewson, 233-236; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 35-44; Rushton, 46-49; Granshaw, “Fame and Fortune,” 203-205; a feature of the 19th century: R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 115f; Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 47f, 51f; Luckin, 88; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 17f, 42-48. People with impairments not hospitalized: Lawrence, 21f; Andrews, “Identifying and Providing for the Mentally-Disabled,” 67.

¹⁰¹ Hospitals: R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 30-35, 39-43; R. Porter, “Hospitals and Surgery,” 216, 223f; Lawrence, 10, 19-22, 25, 27f, 33f; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital”, 199-220; Granshaw, “The Hospital,” 1184-1189; Risse, 178-186. Importance of environment: Risse, 172; E. G. Thomas, 15; Scull, “Domestication of Madness,” 233-248; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 205f; C. Stevenson, 1495-1519.

seen to be effective. At first, the emphasis in these 18th century charities was on cure and education, that is, on producing an efficient workforce and improving productivity. In effect, the objective was to perfect the nation's health and wealth. In the second half of the century, however, the emphasis shifted to organising and encouraging those on lower incomes and the poor to help themselves, through, for example, subscription hospitals and friendly societies. Also, charities emerged that as their aim bringing about change for the poor in a new way: improving their morals and making their habits more respectable. However, many of these developments in philanthropy passed by people with impairments; the new emphases on perfectibility, efficiency and improved behaviour were seen to have no applicability to them.¹⁰²

The means to realising the perfectibility of society was most clearly identified in the perceived role of government: "The belief in perfectibility...encouraged designs of various legislative and educational reforms which would bring humanity to its perfected final state." There was an optimism that the "problems of poverty could be subjected to scientific management" by an intervening state. Humanitarianism in legislation, such as penal reform, was seen as evidence that progress and perfectibility through government were already happening. Particular hope was placed in the philosophy of utilitarianism, the rational law designed to maximise human happiness and social benefit. It was a philosophy that chimed well with current social thinking. In a way that would be clearly expressed in the reforms at the beginning of the 19th century, the failure of these

Institutions not the same – a) private: Parry-Jones, 291; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 163; Risse, 201; b) subscription: Sumner, *passim*; c) public: Sumner, 405; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 17f; Kerson, 205; Luckin, 88. Demand created and filled: R. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 164-168.

¹⁰² Changing Enlightenment attitudes of philanthropy: Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, *passim*. Less dependency and more self-help: Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 135-197.

perfecting aims from central government was blamed on local administrators, who were seen to be “most unresponsive to reforming initiatives and Enlightenment ideology.”¹⁰³

Some historians follow Foucault in understanding this increasing role of government, alongside the growing use of institutions in both poor relief and medical science, in terms of a ‘great confinement’ by centralized government to clear from society’s sight deviants and the ‘horde of unreason.’ However, the model is inappropriate, certainly for people with impairments in Enlightenment England. Firstly, people were not at this stage confined in large numbers: as we have seen, the provision for those unable to support themselves independently was first and foremost with family and through the system of outdoor relief. Secondly, central government had a limited role: it passed legislation, but the system was administered with its great flexibility at local level. Public money (in any case locally raised) was only made available for county asylums early in the 19th century, and it was another forty years before this policy was made compulsory through legislation from Parliament. Thirdly, it was not centralized control,

¹⁰³ Government and utilitarianism quotes: “Utility was a weighty and ubiquitous concept in enlightened rhetoric...the notion was deployed in a variety of contexts...anything conducive to self-reliance and self-sufficiency was presented as useful, desirable and good.” *BCE*, 538f; Pickstone, “Medicine, Society and the State,” 311; *BCE*, 60; *BCE*, 201.

Role of government as bringer to perfection: cf., *BCE*, 199-201, 242f.

Growing centralization of government: Hampson, 48-51; *BCE*, 504.

Limited state responsibility previously (e.g. limited provision for maimed war veterans): C. Stevenson, 1499f.

Centralization of government and compulsion in intervention (as a medicalization of society): Risse, 171-178; Winston, 47-50; Alaszewski, 5-34; D. M. Fox, 1204-1230; D. Porter, “Public Health,” 1231-1261; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 44-48; R. Porter, “Hospitals and Surgery,” 214; (Lawrence, 22f, but – contrast 19th century: Lawrence, 18; Kerson, 205). “Drive towards administrative centralization”: R. Porter, “Hospitals and Surgery,” 214.

Contrast the less extent in England to Germany and France: Pickstone, “Medicine, Society and the State,” 310f; Risse, 181-183; C. Jones, 1477f; Pelling and Smith, 17.

Utilitarianism as epitome: Pickstone, “Medicine, Society and the State,” 311; *BCE*, 60, 536-538; cf., *BCE*, 151, 538.

Humanitarianism in legislation (such as penal reforms) seen as evidence of progress and perfectibility, e.g. punishment, *BCE*, 437-9, 537; Hampson, 155-157, 232-234.

but optimistic philanthropy and the forces of the marketplace that encouraged the faith in institutional provision that grew during the Enlightenment period.¹⁰⁴

The means were available for a Foucault-style confinement but, at this point, the will was not. Workhouses had been given a boost by the late 18th century Gilbert laws, enabling parishes to marshal their resources more efficiently by grouping together in larger institutions. Not many local authorities took the opportunity, however. In general, the workhouse movement lost its impetus through local sectarian divisions and mistrust: few workhouses operated successfully for any length of time. A chief cause of failure was that the aims of the workhouse were too varied. Although the need for specialization was agreed in theory, it was rarely attempted in practice. People with impairments were included with a wide variety of others, as we see from the plaque over the entrance to Rollesby House of Industry that was opened in 1777: “For the

Failures blamed on local government: *BCE*, 199-201; cf., *BCE*, 446.

¹⁰⁴ The ‘great confinement’ of Foucault: Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 38-64; see also: Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 80-85; C. Jones, 1474; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 13-48.

Foucault’s ‘great confinement’ refuted: Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 2, 29f, 39-44; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 5-9, 110f, 278-290; R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 281-4, 287; R. Porter, “Mental Illness,” 286-289; Granshaw, “The Hospital,” 1187f; Park, “Medicine and Society,” 88-90; Pelling, “Old Age, Poverty and Disability,” 93-5; Rushton, “Lunatics and Idiots,” 49; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 204; Andrews, “Hardly a Hospital,” 67-69; Sumner, 401; Camp, 284, 286f; Wear, “Introduction,” 9f; Scull, “Psychiatry and Social Control,” 154f.

See also – a) on *Madness and Civilization*, and increased administration, institutionalization, and social control: Jones and Porter, 1-13; McGowen, 91-112; Driver, 113-131; Crammer, 103-115; b) on *The Birth of the Clinic*, and hospitalization of medicine: Armstrong, 1641-1662; Osborne, 28-72; C. Rose, 123-148. See also, Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 202-204; Granshaw, “The Hospital,” 1186-1188. Statistics on the lack of a great confinement in England: in 1800 there were around 5,000 people in specialized lunatic asylums, with an equal number in workhouses and jails (1/1000 in the population of 10 million); R. Porter, “Mental Illness,” 288f.

On the use in France of institutions to confine political opponents: Ackerknecht, “Political Prisoners,” 250-255.

Instruction of Youth, the Encouragement of Industry, the Relief of Want, the Support of Old Age, and the Comfort of Infirmity and Pain.”¹⁰⁵

By the beginning of the 19th century, there was a strong drive for radical reform of the Poor Law system. Enlightenment principles can be seen in this movement: reformers were often “magistrates, driven by a desire for social discipline, fuelled by motives of scientific improvement.” In the economic difficulties and the accompanying social unrest in the period after the Napoleonic wars, the draw on the parish rates had increased substantially, and the many attempts to reform the system had failed. The ever rising bill for the Poor Law had become unacceptable. To many, the Poor Law was also unacceptable ideologically: drawing on utilitarian arguments, there were calls to do away with systematic relief altogether, so that only those unable to support themselves and their families ‘through no fault of their own’ (including people with impairments) would need to be maintained by the charity of individuals.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Means but not the will for confinement: Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 50, 56-58; Slack, 34-36; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 110f, 121; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 2, 40; McIntosh, 24f, 27f; Sumner, 404; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 29f – the same evidence interpreted differently! Georgian “domestic” institutions and resistance to large institutions: Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 25; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 117-121, 157f; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 39; Scull, “Domestication of Madness,” 233-248; Alaszewski, 6; J. D. Marshall, 15, 48f; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 142-146; Sumner, 404; Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, 1f, 12f, 47-51, 203-207.

Even so, a growing faith in institutions as the answer to the problems of urbanisation: R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 119f, 164-168, 277 (cf., 167f, 282f); R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 282; E. W. Martin, 45; J. D. Marshall, 49f; Kerson, 203f; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 34-36.

Workhouses under the Old Poor Laws: Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 11-29; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 28f, 51-54; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 24, 34-36, 39f, 41f; J. D. Marshall, 15, 26; Slack, 38f, 46; Pelling and Smith, 17f; Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, 1-14, 32-53, 197-207. Few successful workhouses: J. D. Marshall, 15.

Rollsby House of Industry: Digby, *Pauper Palaces*, 37.

¹⁰⁶ Reforming magistrates: Pickstone, “Medicine, Society and the State,” 310.

Labour unrest, sectarian divisions; post-Napoleonic wars – fears of effects of unrest re status quo; pressing need for reforms: J. D. Marshall, 25-32; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 163-169; Brundage, *passim*.

Poverty measured by data: Risse, 189-194; Slack, 47f; J. D. Marshall, 27-45, 49f; Crowther, 27f. But statistics of disease possibly exaggerated by reformers: J. D. Marshall, 15-17, 18-32, 46-50; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 163f; Crowther, 13f, 23-26.

The reformers concentrated their arguments in particular areas. In the wake of public revelations, they attacked what had come to be understood as outmoded, corrupt and unhealthy institutions. Their chief concern, however, was to improve the efficiency of what resources there were by diminishing the power of the local overseers of outdoor relief, who were attacked as indiscriminate and profligate, as encouraging idleness, and above all, as being inconsistent. Also, through the activities of Poor Law physicians and those working through the dispensary movement and visiting societies, the homes of the poor had become associated with disease and bad morals. It was this perception that was sounding the death-knell for outdoor relief: faith was growing fast in institutions, now seen as places where an alternative and greatly improved environment could be constructed and managed. After a Royal Commission into the relief system, the New Poor Law of 1834 was passed by Parliament. The medicalization of impairment was still far off, but through these new Poor Laws the era was beginning in which people with impairments unable to support themselves in full would be, for the first time, put away from mainstream society.¹⁰⁷

Fear at increasing numbers and cost (role of data): Slack, 14-26, 36, 45-48; J. D. Marshall, *passim*; Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 17; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 163f. Calls to do away with relief altogether: Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 17, 27f, 274; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 140f; J. D. Marshall, 16f; Slack, 45; especially utilitarians: J. D. Marshall, 18-32, 46-50.

Failed attempts to reform relief: J. D. Marshall, *passim*; E. W. Martin, *passim*; Slack, 27-40.

¹⁰⁷ Criticisms of outdoor relief locally and “inefficiently” managed: J. D. Marshall, *passim*; Slack, 37-40, 48f; Crowther, 11-29; M. Thomson, *Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 191f; Goodey, “John Locke’s Idiots,” 242; E. W. Martin, 25, 32-34, 38-45, 47-49; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 34; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 27-30, 49; Kerson, 203f; Brundage, *passim*.

5.0 *In the Modern Era: Segregation and Medicalization*

The disappearance of people with impairments from mainstream experience is a recent phenomenon, occurring during the 19th century and reaching its peak in the mid 20th century. It was during this period of a little over a hundred years that, as a matter of policy, outdoor relief within local communities was replaced by segregated provision in large institutions. Towards the end of this period, impairment became the province of medicine and health services, despite the fact that impairment was still perceived as being as incurable as ever. The interventions of administrators show how impairment was perceived even in this period not on any medical model, but as a social problem: people with impairments were segregated from their local communities not because they were in need of medical treatment, but because they were no longer able to live independently. Nevertheless, by the mid 20th century, the place deemed appropriate for people with impairments unable to support themselves fully became a hospital, where they underwent treatment by doctors and nursing staff. The circumstances that brought these changes about were not, as various historians have asserted, the consequence of a progressive evolution in service provision, nor of a state policy of social control of those who deviated from the norm.¹⁰⁸ Rather, these circumstances involve a cluster of causes: ideologies driving policy, and expedient reactions to limitations and national events.

The predominant role of institutions over provision in the community followed from the New Poor Law of 1834. The ideology behind this legislation included many strands, as

¹⁰⁸ Some historians of progress: see above footnote 65 on page 44.
Historians who emphasise social control: Foucault, Scull; Szasz, Illich; see also list at Crammer, 115.

discussed above. At its heart however, there was a conflict of purpose. The aim of the workhouse was both to protect as well as to punish, to provide refuge for the ‘deserving’ impotent poor, and also to deter the ‘undeserving’ able-bodied poor. People with impairments were, without question, seen as ‘deserving.’ This may ultimately have worked to their disadvantage, as most of the effort for and discussion of means of relief was spent in relation to the ‘undeserving’, those who were able-bodied and yet unable to maintain themselves. The architects of the New Poor Laws spent little of their attention or energies on developing provision for people whose entitlement to relief was beyond question, such as people with impairments.¹⁰⁹

People with impairments may have received little attention from the planners of the New Poor Laws, but for them, the impact of the New Poor Laws was immense. In these new laws, the explicit policy of central government was to reduce the bill for outdoor relief by enforcing unattractive indoor relief through the workhouse – conditions would be such that only those in desperate circumstances would even apply for relief. In this way, the deterrent effect of “less eligibility” in the workhouse would, it was claimed,

¹⁰⁹ Workhouses and the relationship of outdoor and indoor relief during this period: Crowther, *Workhouse System*, passim; Crowther, “Family Responsibility,” 131-145; Robin, 505-516; Ryan and Thomas, 91-116; D. Thomson, “Welfare of the Elderly,” 194-221; M. Thomson, “Sterilization, Segregation and Community Care,” 487-493; M. Thomson, “Family, Community and the State,” 207-230; E. W. Martin, 30-56; Alaszewski, 3-34; Sines, 148-161; Summers, “Costs and Benefits of Caring,” 133-148; Summers, “Hidden from History?” 227-243; M. E. Rose, passim; J. D. Marshall, 13-50; Marland, 149-171; Calhoun, 105-129.

Conflicting purposes in 1834 reforms, especially relating to aims of the workhouse policy: Crowther, 11-29; D. Thomson, “Welfare of the Elderly,” 215; McIntosh, 23, 28f; Suzuki, “Lunacy” Part 2, 42-44; J. D. Marshall, 15, 46f; Slack, 31-36; Hurt, 111; E. W. Martin, 30f; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, 39f.

Victorian confidence in institutions and the role of environment for cure / therapy: “attempts to create model societies within societies” Alaszewski, 6 (5-34); cf. R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 155-160: “asylums as, potentially at least, more rational, harmonious, and civilised than society itself.” Cf., Hampson, 238; Sumner, 399-401, R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 129-160.

Larger institutions, greater segregation and loss of local knowledge come with the Victorians: Rushton, “Idiocy, the Family and the Community,” 45-50; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg’d Manacles*, 135f, 155f, 159f,

operate automatically. Previously, outdoor relief was the principle means of local communities providing for people with impairments or their families who were not able to support themselves in full independence. For people with mental illness, the asylum system had been growing in popularity as a specialist institutional provision (public, philanthropic, and private) since the early 18th century. For people with impairments, however, this option was not available: in contrast to those with mental illness, people with mental or physical impairments were not deemed to be curable even with the right environment nor were they perceived to be a threat to public order and in need of confinement. However, a small proportion of people with mental impairments, and people with multiple impairments, were being admitted to these asylums, not from policy but out of expediency.

The very flexibility that had previously supported people with impairments or their families to go part way in supporting themselves without having to leave their own homes was to a large extent abolished. Unprecedented pressure was put upon families to support family members with impairments entirely themselves, especially from the middle of the 19th century. People with impairments were no longer supported in local communities where they and their particular needs were known and where they were contributing to social and economic life. Under the new system, this flexibility was greatly reduced: if they and their families were unable to fend entirely for themselves, they had to submit to the workhouse discipline and stigma, which deliberately deterred integration with the local community and contact with families and friends outside.

278f; Crowther, 6; R. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 280f; J. D. Marshall, 47; E. W. Martin, 32-34; Sumner, 404f.

With the system of workhouse unions between parishes, people could be removed great distances from their own area, even across county.¹¹⁰

Originally, specialist institutions for people with impairments had been intended by the planners of the New Poor Laws: the mixed nature of the old workhouses and houses of industry had come under severe criticism from the reformers. The intention was that once the undeserving poor had been deterred from applying for relief by the conditions of the workhouse, the institutions could then be adapted and used for those unable to work to maintain themselves ‘through no fault of their own’: that is, children and those who were elderly or those who had impairments. However, although in a few regions specialist areas in workhouses were built for those with mental illness, specialist facilities for people with impairments did not emerge. Contrary to expectation, even with the severe conditions and stigma, workhouses did not at any stage fall empty and become available as specialist institutions for, amongst others, people with impairments.¹¹¹

There was for some time considerable local resistance to the New Poor Laws. In areas of Wales and the north west of England especially, administrators refused to reduce outdoor relief to the extent required; nor did they implement the severe conditions of the

¹¹⁰ Unprecedented pressure on families: Crowther, “Later Years of the Workhouse,” 41; Crowther, “Family Responsibility,” 131-145; D. Thomson, “Welfare and the Historians,” 372-375; D. Thomson, “Welfare of the Elderly,” 199f. See also: R. M. Smith, “Structured Dependence,” 409-428; D. Thomson, “Decline of Social Welfare,” 451-482; D. Thomson, “Workhouse to Nursing Home,” 43-69. Institutions intended as places of respite for families: Gladstone, 134, 151. Despite family wishes, this did not occur – admission of a relative became permanent: M. Thomson, “Family, Community and the State,” 225f.

¹¹¹ Specialist provision in the workhouse intended, but not delivered: Crowther, “Later Years of the Workhouse,” 40; McCandless, 565-569; Hodgkinson, 146f, 151.

workhouses. Drawn out battles of will, sometimes erupting into riots, ensued with the Poor Law Commissioners in Somerset House over independence and control; but few local initiatives were able to last long in the face of consistent policy from central government, with the in-built systems of inspection and policing. Some local officials, however, did subvert the regulations to the benefit of those receiving outdoor relief (including people with impairments), but they were able to do so only on a small scale.¹¹²

Significant in the reforming campaigns of the 18th and 19th centuries, including the ones that led to the New Poor Laws, was the use of statistics: scientific information credited as being rational and impartial. Data and statistics were gathered on a new scale in the drive for reforms in public health, and the less than impartial use of this information by reformers contributed to the perception that outdoor relief was not a realistic option: however bad the conditions of the workhouse, they were at least better than the homes of the poor. For people with impairments and their families, this was self-fulfilling. No longer able to receive the flexible topping-up support from parish rates, instead of simply being poor they became paupers, eventually obliged to seek indoor relief as any alternative had by now been removed. This pauperisation process was exactly what the new laws were intended to reverse. These perceptions about the homes of the poor contributed to the widespread and persistent faith that survived for so long that institutions were, potentially, model societies. Even when the bubble of optimism burst in the final quarter of the 19th century, reformers campaigned, not to abolish institutions,

Attempts made in populous areas: Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 37, 45; when it did occur, less stigma attached: Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 52.

but to ameliorate them and to render them ever more efficient. Understandings of the causes of poverty came and went, but faith in the institution as the primary means of welfare provision remained absolute.¹¹³

The workhouse was, however, not the only option for people with impairments and their families who were not able to maintain themselves independently if they had financial means. Similar practices continued through privately funded arrangements (the full extent of which is not clear) that had been publicly-funded under the old Poor Laws. Full-time assistants were employed (later to become professionalized as nurses), working in the homes of individuals or of families, or taking people into their own homes. Their fees increased in proportion to the social status of their employers. Neighbours were sometimes used in a similar way, sometimes full-time, sometimes for temporary respite. There were also a number of small private institutions specialising in provision for people with learning impairments, but enterprise in this area was not on anything like the same scale as for people with mental illness.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Local resistance to and subversion of the New Poor Laws: Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 36; M. E. Rose, 11-14, 41-43.

¹¹³ Use of statistics and measurement: J. D. Marshall, 49; M. E. Rose, 11f, 19-33 (the poverty line: *ibid.*, 28); Mellett, 234f; J. R. Hay, 39f; Lawrence, 28f, 43-46, 60f (normality).
Administrators' attitudes to the homes of the poor: McCandless, 561-565; M. Thomson, "Family, Community and the State," 215-226; Crowther, "Later years of the Workhouse," 42; Summers, "Hidden from History?" 232-239; Hodgkinson, 139f; cf., Cole, 18, 30, 55f, 58, 61.

¹¹⁴ Home-carers and single "boarders": D. Wright, "Child-like in his Innocence", 123f; Summers, "Hidden from History?" 227-243; Webster, *Caring and Health*, 74f, 93; Pelling and Smith, 16; Mellett, 232, 236 (2 people or more brought a house within inspection); cf., nursing of the sick by people with impairments in workhouse infirmaries: Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 49f; Summers, "Costs and Benefits of Caring," 133-148; Summers, "Hidden from History?" 231f; Hodgkinson, 147; Crammer, 107.

Private specialist institutions: Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 41; Crammer, 108; Gladstone, 134; Mellett, 221-224, 243-247; Cole, 21.

A significant proportion of people with learning impairments, and others erroneously classified with them (if, for example, their impairment affected their speech and mobility), were accommodated in the public County or Metropolitan Asylums that proliferated in size and number from the middle of the century. In these larger and *per capita* cheaper asylums, groups of people deemed incurable began to be collected together, including people with impairments, so that the older and smaller institutions could accommodate those deemed to have a greater chance of cure or of successful return to society – that is, achieving self-reliance. These larger institutions for the persistently incurable were the ones most removed from local communities. Various means of dividing the cost were devised across parishes and counties, but, due to their siting and size, for the first time almost all contact was lost between those paying for and those receiving this public provision. The common knowledge – central to the support and provision of earlier periods – was gone.¹¹⁵

In response to the enormous and rising costs of these institutions, care in the community in various forms was suggested as an alternative or complementary strategy. Small cottage asylums were being used in Scotland, and experiments in community care had been happening in Belgium for some time. In England, however, this option was repeatedly rejected, on the grounds of the anticipated neglect and mistreatment in the homes of the poor that could not be sufficiently supervised. It was also argued that there would be an unacceptable loss of benefit both from and for the emerging specialists who operated in the institutions. Hostile public reaction was also a key

¹¹⁵ County and Metropolitan Asylums: McCandless, 569; Hodgkinson, 138-154; Parker, Dutta, Barnes, and Fleet, 95-105; Crammer, 103-115; Sumner, 404f; Pernice, 55-68; Gladstone, 134-160; Mellett, 239; M. E. Rose, 37f; Cole, 21.

feature in these debates: policy-led faith in institutions had been too successful – the public were understood now to believe that institutions were the only place where people unable to support themselves independently could be safely looked after.¹¹⁶

From the middle of the 19th century, five specialist charitable institutions for people with impairments were built in different regions of the country. They filled an important niche for those who found private care too expensive, and the workhouse or County Asylum socially unacceptable. In contrast to the more hidden nature of private and public provision, these charitable institutions gave their residents a high local profile. Publicity was very important in what became a nation-wide competition, on the one hand for places in these non-public and non-private institutions, and on the other for subscribers, donors, and Poor Law fund-holders. The selection of residents was, however, very carefully made: places went to those who were most able to support themselves – people whose ‘improvement’ could be measured and publicised, and people who had proven ability to work in the institutions’ farms and workshops. In some areas, in a similar non-profit making vein, insurance schemes developed through friendly societies, mutual aid groups and trades unions to make collective provision, in institutions or at home, for individuals who became impaired through injury or chronic disease.¹¹⁷

Campaigns of criticism against the large asylums: L. D. Smith, 191-214; cf., Cole, *passim*.

¹¹⁶ Community care rejected: McCandless, 556-565, 571-574; M. Thomson, “Sterilization, Segregation and Community Care,” 487-493; Pernice, 61-65.

¹¹⁷ Charitable / Subscription specialist institutions: Sumner, 395-412; D. Wright, “Child-like in his Innocence,” 119-121; Gladstone, 134-160. Selective admissions: Zihni, 80; Crowther, “Later Years of the Workhouse,” 41f; D. Wright, “Child-like in his Innocence,” 121; Gladstone, 141-157. Some comparative costs: M. Thomson, “Family, Community and the State,” 222; Crowther, “Later Years of the Workhouse,” 38-40.

Some comparative figures of residents’ classification: Hodgkinson, 142f, 153; Crammer, 110-112; Gladstone, 140, 146f; Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 89, 225f, 235.

An area where segregation into specialist institutions was far less clear-cut for administrators was the education and training of children with impairments. As the range of general school provision expanded during the 19th century, the particular needs of children with impairments came to the attention of legislators. Just as statistics had influenced significantly the attitudes of policy makers towards outdoor relief, so statistics influenced also the spread of special education: it was through statistics that educational achievement could be identified for the first time as normal, and ‘subnormal’. Children whose learning ability was limited reduced the pass rate in examinations. In the early days of universal education, these pass rates determined the pay of the teachers, so pressure was soon applied for children falling below the norm to be removed. In this way, large numbers of children were segregated who would otherwise have been integrated with their peers both at school and in adult life. The process of measuring ability in terms of normality was boosted further by the invention at the beginning of the 20th century of the IQ test.¹¹⁸

Across the country, many different variations in integration and segregation of schooling took place: the mixing of disabled and non-disabled children in special and regular schools (both day and boarding); large specialist institutions with full or partial boarding; small home-like special schools. The integration / segregation debates were heated, and no agreement was reached on how provision should best be made. A key

Mutual aid and insurance schemes: Webster, *Caring and Health*, 79-81; M. E. Rose, 38, 46-48; J. R. Hay, 54-57; A. Mitchell, 172-189; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 213f.

¹¹⁸ Rising awareness of children with particular learning needs: D. Wright, “Child-like in his Innocence,” 119, 125-127, 130; Gladstone, 136, 155f; Cole, 11f, 29; cf., the use of IQ tests from early 20th century: Ryan and Thomas, 111-116; Kevles, 79f.

factor in the open-mindedness of legislators concerning community-based provision for children, which was absent for adults with impairments, was the influential voice of parental opinion. Family influence had a unique strength in the schooling of children with impairments, but it was greatly reduced when their children's schooling ended. Despite the wishes and intentions of many families, the general faith in institutions for adults remained the orthodox and unalterable policy.¹¹⁹

Most of what provision there was for children with impairments, however, was not for education but for training. The segregation of children that did take place was done on the grounds that re-integration would occur after their schooling. This meant that children were to learn trades that would make them self-sufficient in adulthood.

However, this emphasis reflects the social focus of special schooling before local school boards were compelled to provide special educational facilities at the end of the century (some thirty years after the same requirements for non-disabled children). Despite the prestige of public schools, no private schools for children with impairments were started until the end of the 19th century. The great philanthropic activity that had taken place earlier in the century had been for paupers (and so also for the benefit of their communities): the short-term expense of training a child in a trade was presented as being outweighed by the long-term saving of expense to the parish rates of residence in the workhouse. Whatever the outcome, however, it is important not to overlook the

¹¹⁹ Variations tried but no agreement reached in the integration / segregation debates: Cole, *passim*. Early educability optimism: E. Miller, 361-364, 368-370; Ryan and Thomas, 91-97; McCandless, *passim*; Summers, "Hidden from History?" 238f; Hodgkinson, 140; Gladstone, 138-140; cf., R. Porter, "Madness and its Institutions," 292.

Influence of parents over provision for children: Cole, *passim*; contrast failure of parents to influence provision for their offspring as adults: M. Thomson, "Family, Community and the State," 218, 221-226. Cf., Influence of people with impairments: J. Rose, 16-37.

humanitarian concerns of campaigners for provision for children with impairments. Noticeable in their rhetoric, both private and public, is a particular emphasis on the children's dignity, self-determination and independence.¹²⁰

Some increase in segregated special education appears to have taken place at the end of the century. This may be connected with a developing body of expertise in impairment: larger special institutions were justified at this time on the grounds of the chance for greater classification and specialist provision, and an improved therapeutic environment for training and learning. The external environment was significant too: many special schools were situated away from unhealthy urban areas, in the countryside or by the sea. Whatever the intentions of the planners, however, many of the children themselves understood what was happening to them in less positive terms: they recall the experience as being put away 'out of sight and out of mind.'¹²¹

The social and national status of the medical profession increased greatly through the 19th century. From the doctors' point of view, fame and great fortune were to be made through medical specialisation, and their professional bodies finally had political teeth. From the public's side, there were a number of specific achievements made by medical science that brought medicine and medical practitioners into high national profile. The

¹²⁰ Training rather than education: Moynihan, 10, 24, 107-126; Gladstone, 141-143; J. Rose, 18-25, 29f; Cole, 22, 30. Private facilities for children with impairments: J. Rose, 30f; Cole, 21. See also Fowler, 1-12.

Philanthropy for paupers: Gladstone, 141-143. Humanitarian concerns: Cole, 6f, 169f.

For images of disability in 19th century children's literature, see Davidson, Woodill and Bredberg, 33-46.

¹²¹ Segregation increasing at the end of the century: Cole, 5.

Segregation for environmental or classification / specialization reasons: Moynihan, 12; Gladstone, 156f; cf., Suzuki, "Politics and Ideology", 17; cf., Cole, *passim*.

medicalization process that was happening in society in general fed and was fed by a growing optimism, and then an expectation, that medical science would at last be able to cure society's ills. It was no longer enlightened government and philanthropy that were seen to be capable of perfecting society. Medical science was now dominant in public expectation: it was medicine that would bring to society's problems cure and healing.¹²²

This process of medicalizing society increased even further the faith in large institutions. It was stressed that research and classification would improve in the large hospital environment; in turn, this would create the model conditions for therapy and treatment. Confidence increased in hospitals as places of cure (not of pauperism nor as 'gateways to death' as before), and the social scope of admissions to hospitals broadened to include all classes. However, the focal point of medical science had moved away from the face-to-face relationship of doctor to sick person, to the investigation of the faulty bodily part collected *en masse* in the specialist hospital, and then, by the end of the century, to laboratory research of the hidden pathogen. This process led to an inevitable distancing and imbalance in the relationship of doctor and patient that later would be a key feature in the experience of people with impairments

Students' understanding of segregation in other terms: Humphries and Gordon, 35-97; Potts and Fido, 13-23; cf., Szasz, *Age of Madness*, 242-250; Szasz, *Manufacture of Madness*, 260-275; Goffman, *Asylums*, 23-72, 89-336; Cole, 171f, 175.

¹²² Increasing status of doctors: J. R. Hay, 20; M. E. Rose, 26; Granshaw, "Fame and Fortune," 199-220; Granshaw, "Rise of the Modern Hospital," 197-218; Lawrence, 33f, 55-83; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 49-52, 59.

Fame and fortune through specialism: Granshaw, "Fame and Fortune," 199-220; Granshaw, "Rise of the Modern Hospital," 197-218; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 49-52. High profile medical achievements: Fee and Porter, *passim*; Lawrence, 40-53, 64, 75f; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 60-62.

when they were finally brought into medicine's sphere, that is, when the medical model of disability reached its zenith.¹²³

The effects of this medicalization process on people with impairments were mixed. For those people with impairments who were living independently of institutions, their contact with doctors was limited, as for anyone else, to treatment for illnesses – if, that is, they could afford the fee. Although some advances in medical understanding of specific impairments did occur, the impact of these on the lives of people with the impairments was slight. Very few specialist hospitals for people with impairments were founded: there was little appeal either to doctors or to their patrons, for while research could be done, little by way of cure or healing could be achieved – neither fame nor fortune was found in impairment specialization! Of the 169 specialist hospitals founded in Britain during the 19th century, only two were associated with impairment. In 1908, a promising young physician who decided to specialize in impairment faced rigorous dissuasion from his disappointed peers and mentors: “He must realise that his work is not to cure the patient, but just to run a home for cripples.”¹²⁴

Medicalization and the curability expectation: E. Miller, 361-373; Ryan and Thomas, 97-102; McCandless, 553-574; Summers, “Hidden from History?” 238f; Hodgkinson, 140; R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 294-298; Lawrence, 27-83.

¹²³ Increasing faith in institutions: Alaszewski, 5-34; Sines, 152-161; Ryan and Thomas, 98-102, 107-109, 112; Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 41-44; Sumner, 398f; Scull, *Museums of Madness*, passim; Scull, “Psychiatry and Social Control,” 149-169; Gladstone, 135f, 146-148; Mellett, 245-247; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 197-218; R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 292-298.

Contrast the campaigns of criticism of the large institutions: L. D. Smith, 191-214; cf., Cole, passim. Broadening social scope of hospital admissions: Summers, “Costs and Benefits of Caring,” 133-148; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 197, 201, 211f, 214f; Lawrence, 33f, 85f. Hospitals and the middle and upper classes: R. Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 131-138, 163, 168; R. Porter, “Madness and its Institutions,” 279; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 40; Parry-Jones, 291; Risse, 201; Jewson, 236.

Distancing and imbalance in doctor-patient relationship: Granshaw, 202-204; Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, passim; Lawrence, 30f, 66-70, 71-83, 86f.

¹²⁴ Medicalization and impairment – Some specialization: Riese, 322-334; Howard-Jones, 102-104; Kanner, 532-534; Schlich, 421-443; Maltsberger, 1-17; E. Miller, 361-373; Zihni, 74-81; Crowther,

The main medical contact with people with impairments came largely in the public, private and philanthropic asylums and institutions (including the workhouses) where many pauperized people with impairments were now living. Legislation ensured for many of these institutions the regular attendance of medical officers, and their expertise was often drawn on to create the model environment that had become the core of institutional policy. Doctors were also expected to act as watchdogs for cruelty or neglect. However, in these institutions, the influence of doctors was far less than in the hospitals: initiatives on policy, admission and treatment were usually led by those who were not medically trained, and in the non-public domain, doctors were hired and fired by management committees. By the end of the century, public and private health and disease had become firmly the province of the orthodox medical profession; but medical science did not yet hold sway over impairment.¹²⁵

The overwhelming predominance of medical science provoked the emergence of several alternative health movements. Two of these had particular impact on people with impairments. In reaction to a medical science that was often perceived as secular in its origin and application, both were explicitly religious. The first was ‘moral’ therapy,

“Later Years of the Workhouse,” 41-43; Wangensteen, Smith and Wangensteen, 106-117; Webster, *Caring and Health*, 66-69; M. E. Rose, 3f; Marland, 155f.

Very few specialist hospitals for people with impairments: e.g. in Kershaw’s list of 169 “special hospitals founded in the United Kingdom during the 19th century” only 2 relate to people with any impairment, and 1 other to “incurables”: Kershaw, 62-72.

Impairment not considered an appropriate specialism for a doctor by his peers (1908): Moynihan, 14, 18.
¹²⁵ Medical officers at non-hospital institutions: Sines, 157; Ryan and Thomas, 97-116; Moynihan, 7-15; Suzuki, “Politics and Ideology,” 1-17; D. Wright, “Child-like in his Innocence,” 118-133; Hodgkinson, 141-154; Crammer, 103-115; Gladstone, 143; Mellett, 245-247; Pelling and Smith, 20; M. E. Rose, 26, 38; Marland, 149-171; Granshaw, “Rise of the Modern Hospital,” 208f; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 54-58; Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 156-190. Cf., of people with mental impairments in

practised in particular private or philanthropic institutions. The second occurred at public meetings in local communities, largely within the emerging charismatic movement: faith healing. Both movements made full and public use of people with impairments. The context for these developments, however, was polemic and ideological: by claiming cures of the incurable, these movements were asserting their superiority over secular medical science. Faith healing in particular was to have a devastating effect on how people with impairments were perceived and treated in the Church in the late modern period.¹²⁶

Despite the ascendancy of medical science, towards the end of the 19th century a loss of confidence developed: it was believed that Britain was becoming a degenerating nation, and clearly medical science was not, after all, capable of curing society's ills. An important factor in this perception was the newly measured extent of 'subnormal' learning ability that had emerged with the increase in universal education. These fears were also focused in the much-publicised poor physical condition of recruits for the

asylum: "the patients were altogether incurable and therefore not under medical treatment" quoted from a report of the Lunacy Commissioners (1846/1847) in Mellett, 230f.

¹²⁶ Non-medical institutional treatment – "moral therapy" – (a continuation of educability movements at the end of the 18th century): Pritchard, *passim*; Kraft, 393-418; Sumner, 401; Scull, "Psychiatry and Social Control," 152-156; Mellett, 237-239; Luchins, 203-220; Suzuki, "Politics and Ideology," 1-17; Belkin, 591-613; R. Porter, "Madness and its Institutions," 290f; see also D. Wright, "Child-like in his Innocence," 118-133.

Faith healing as a reaction to secular medicalization, with a particular emphasis on the "impossible" cures of impairment – also, the costs of medicine beyond the reach of the majority, medicine experienced as dehumanising, and miraculous healing appropriate for the modern age, being open to empirical investigation: Hollenweger, 353, 357, 369-371; Pattison, *Alive and Kicking*, 50-62. See also: Percy, 6, 10f, 42f, 111, 150, 156, 159; Bruce, 11-24; R. Porter, "Religion and Medicine," 1465; Mews, 301, 304-307, 310; Numbers and Amundsen, "Introduction," 3; Amundsen and Ferngren, "The Early Christian Tradition," 44f; Lindberg, 197; Smylie, 221-224; Booty, 256f; Weber, 292-295; Vanderpool, 343, 345; Harrell, 391f; Bush, 403-405; Ferngren, "The Evangelical-Fundamentalist Tradition," 491-495; Wacker, 516-530; Raboteau, 554-556, 560f; Luchins, 203-220; Avalos, "Disability and Liturgy," 50-52; H. Cox, 108-110; Dayton, 115-141; Lay, *Seeking Signs*, 53-83; Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 276-282. Specific effects of the faith healing movement for people with impairments are discussed at the beginning of Chapter 4.

Boer Wars. Combined both with primitive genetic theory as a branch of evolutionism, and also with the energies and influence of key reforming individuals, this degenerative alarm led to the popularisation of the eugenics movement. Although short-lived in scientific respectability, this movement of so-called ‘scientific morality’ had a profound and long-lasting influence on the provision for people with learning disabilities, and others with impairments associated with them. The brief partnership of eugenics and medical science had its greatest impact in the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act. With the new category of “moral defective”, this Act extended the scope of people who could be compelled into segregated institutions (often for the term of their life). Importantly, the Act also blunted the classification of and specialist provision for people with different impairments. It spread too a moral stigma to impairment in particular in a way that formerly had been associated with residents of workhouses in general.¹²⁷

The inability of expensive institutions to do anything but grow in size and number to meet ever-increasing demand finally led to a loss of faith in institutions as the optimum places of therapy and reintegration. However, it was by now too late for any radical change in provision. Many very expensive buildings had been built, often with the

Compare the particular modern emphasis on achieving paradise in the present life: Mews, 308; Passmore, 304-327.

¹²⁷ Origins and effects of the eugenics movement: Kevles, 3-95; E. Miller, 364-371; Mazumdar, “The Eugenists and the Residuum,” 204-215; Mazumdar, Review, 365f; Roll-Hansen, 295-331; Solis-Cohen, 33-50; Ludmerer, 59-81; Zihni, 73-81; M. Jackson, 161-183; Webster, *Caring and Health*, 64-66; Gladstone, 156f; Cole, 37-48, 62; Lawrence, 70f; Humphries and Gordon, 88, 100f, 150; Barnes, *Disabled People in Britain*, 19f; G. Jones, 5-42, 160-164; Mews, 307-310. For the continuing effects of the eugenics movement for people with impairments, see: Pfeiffer, 481-499; Kliewer and Drake, 95-111; Rock, 121-127.

Origins and effects of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act: Kevles, 96-112; Simmons, 387-403; Potts and Fido, passim; Zihni, 78-81; P. Cox, 184-206; Gladstone, 156f; M. Thomson, “Sterilization, Segregation and Community Care,” 475-478; M. Thomson, “Family, Community and the State,” 207-230; .

Medical influences on the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act: Simmons, 391-393, 400; G. Jones, 5-42.

The Act as medics taking expertise in mental deficiency from educators: M. Jackson, 175-178; cf., Scull, “Psychiatry and Social Control,” 165-168.

entangled co-operation of different authorities, and they were overseen by what had become socially-vocal specialists. Also, the institutions themselves were filling up as fast as they were being built. So the plant remained, but the policy changed – from cure to containment, from training people in skills that would enable their reintegration, to setting people to work within the institution itself so that it would be efficient, if not self-sufficient. The early 20th century colony was a direct result of these changed priorities.¹²⁸

Another major factor in the provision for people with impairments was war – war on a total scale. On the one hand, the First World War interrupted and deferred for several years key initiatives of reform that had finally been set in motion. Also, many existing institutional buildings, and their personnel, were lost to the armed forces, while at the same time increased demands were made on the relief system that remained. On the other hand, there was a new level of integration into mainstream society: people with impairments were employed in jobs left empty through conscription. In the Second World War, this became a government policy, with half a million disabled people being employed in vital war work. Also, returning servicemen who were maimed were, at least to begin with, high in public profile and sympathy. After the First World War, there was a general zeal for welfare reform, especially reform of the punitive policy at

¹²⁸ Crises in confidence in medical science's curability: Ryan and Thomas, 97-109; Passmore, 260-285; cf., Touraine, 91-198; M. Thomson, "Sterilization, Segregation and Community Care," 483f; Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse", 46-48, 50f; McCandless, passim; Scull, "Psychiatry and Social Control," 156-169; Gladstone, 135f, 156f; Luchins, 212-215; Cantor, 227; R. Porter, "Madness and its Institutions," 298-300; Lawrence, 87; R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society*, 62f; Illich, passim. From asylum to colony: Sines, 156f; Alaszewski, 14-25, 33; Potts and Fido, passim; M. Thomson, "Sterilization, Segregation and Community Care," 477-488. Compare also the component identified in faith healing: modern society avoids what it cannot heal – Hollenweger, 370.

the heart of the workhouse system – seen as intolerable for veterans and war widows who fell on hard times.¹²⁹

It was also the demands of war that brought impairment more fully than ever before into the domain of medicine. During the World Wars, there arose on a new scale medical specialists in impairment. Surgical applications, such as prostheses and orthopaedic techniques, through war had been refined and were being performed for the first time on a significant proportion of the population. Also, medical historians point out how war focussed medical research into areas of obstetrics, paediatrics and genetics – an emphasis that also led to new expertise relating to impairment.¹³⁰ In addition, many workhouse infirmaries and asylums of all types that had been appropriated for military use remained after the war as hospitals under medical supervision. This process of hospitalisation occurred in a more systematic way after the Second World War. At the very moment when figures show that the nation's use of institutions as a response to people with impairments under the Mental Deficiency Act was reaching unprecedented levels, the emerging National Health Service adopted into its fold, at a stroke, these same institutions, the asylums and colonies. Institutions that had previously had very little medical contact overnight became hospitals! The specific expertise was now not

¹²⁹ End of 19th / beginning of 20th century drive for reforms, many of which were delayed by World War 1: Alaszewski, 23-27; Millman, 122-137; Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 40-54; M. E. Rose, 34-49; J. R. Hay, *passim*.

People with impairments and the two world wars: Sines, 157f; Alaszewski, 14f; Humphries and Gordon, 117-141; Potts and Fido, 11; K. Wilson, *passim*; M. Thomson, "Family, Community and the State," 213f; Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 49; Wangensteen, Smith and Wangensteen, 118f; Webster, *Caring and Health*, 81; J. R. Hay, 46; Cantor, 227f; Granshaw, "Rise of the Modern Hospital," 214-216; Crowther, *Workhouse System*, 92-99; D. Smith, 9-55; Tremblay, 149-169; Fraser, 179f, 197f, 287-289; R. Means and R. Smith, 157-181.

¹³⁰ New medical impairment specialists: a) in response to the unprecedented scale of maiming: Cooter, 1544, 1549-1551, 1557-1560; b) as a result of anxiety about declining birth rate and the quality of future fighting resources: Dwork, 1084-1086; Loudon, "Childbirth," 1061-1070.

administration or containment, but medicine. The institutions' staff were no longer wardens but nurses; they were run by doctors, and their residents were patients – to be treated with medication, and, by implication at least, liable to cure! The welfare legislation that was passed in the decades following the Second World War enshrined the medical model of disability, a model that had come together not through relentless progress, nor through policies of social control, nor through empire-building by the medical profession, but largely as a matter of national expedience.¹³¹

6.0 *Conclusion*

The segregation of people with impairments away from the mainstream, and the adoption of the medical model of disability have been very recent phenomena. Although recent, their impact has been far stretching, as the analyses of disability studies show. For many centuries, debates relating to impairment have swung between the two poles of family and individual provision on the one hand, and provision by local communities on the other. Until the modern era there was no question of whether

¹³¹ Increasing medicalization of impairment after the wars: Alaszewski, 14-23; Cole, 2; K. Wilson, 21, 25; Crowther, "Later Years of the Workhouse," 37, 50f; Sumner, 397; Sines, 157-159; Ryan and Thomas, 112, 114-116; Webster, *Caring and Health*, 91; Cole, 66-94; Kevles, 193-222; Laing and MacQuarrie, 53; Fraser, 213f, 232-239, 243; cf., D. Thomson, "Workhouse to Nursing Home," 43-69. Similarly, an increased interest in faith healing after the First World War: Mews, 314-319. Adoption of mental impairment institutions as hospitals, "Without any public debate as to whether they should be or not": Ryan and Thomas, 115. Statistics: a) 3-fold increase of "Growth of Mental Deficiency System 1924-1954" in Alaszewski, p.15; b) 10-fold increase of "Defectives under the Care and Control of the Mental Deficiency Acts" in Sines, p.156

people with impairments and their families should be supported by their local community: the question was rather to what extent they should be supported. In the modern era, however, the swing between these poles was deflected by the policy of moving people into the potentially model environment of institutions where the Enlightenment dream of ‘perfectibility now’ might finally occur. So a new swing developed, between institutional provision on the one hand and care in the community on the other. The objective of the Independent Living movement – to establish as the primary option for people with impairments enablement into independence – has a very much longer history than the segregation and medicalization of impairment that the Independent Living movement is seeking to replace.

This chapter has established two key points in the methodology of interpretation being proposed in this thesis. Firstly, the evidence here demonstrates that the circumstances relating to impairment in the modern and the pre-modern eras were hugely different. Secondly, it has been shown that modern presuppositions arising from these circumstances are neither impartial nor universal – they are loaded and culturally shaped. These key points form the first stage in the methodology: the establishment of difference and the articulation of presupposition. We now embark on the second stage – exploring the contents of the rhetorical dynamic of implied author and reader – by focussing on ancient perspectives and presuppositions of impairment identified through impairment themes in ancient texts.

Cf., post-World War 2 legislation relating to impairment in medical terms: 1959 Mental Health Act – Ryan and Thomas, 114f; 1983 Mental Health Act – Gostin, *passim*; The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 – J. Morris, *Community Care*, 4-12.

CHAPTER 2

ANCIENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE CAUSES OF IMPAIRMENT

1.0 *Introduction*

Modern commentators assert with confidence that people in the ancient world understood impairment as caused by sin, “as a punishment inflicted...by the gods.”¹³² In a more specific context, this assertion – apparently unquestioned by scholars – results in the Bible being interpreted in very damaging ways. “Your eyes are bad because you have sinned. If you pray hard enough, Jesus will forgive your sins and restore your sight. The he’ll love you.” These incidents are not uncommon for people living impairment: “Persons with obvious physical impairments get this kind of response sometimes daily.”¹³³

In this chapter, we see that ancient writers, the Early Church included, did not at all routinely hold this opinion. There was an understanding in the ancient world that

¹³² Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 13; see also references above at text pages 1-3 and footnotes 1-4.

¹³³ “Your eyes are bad...”: Spoken to Kathi Wolfe, United Church of Christ pastor: Wolfe, 17. This response “sometimes daily”: Wilke, *Creating the Caring Congregation*, 21. Compare similar statements made directly to people with impairments recorded in Wilke, *Creating the Caring Congregation*, 21; Bishop, *Religion and Disability: Essays in Scripture*, 12; J. Hurst, 40-42; A. Rose, 397f; . “As told to me...the continuance of disability came from lack of faith in God’s healing power,” McCollum, 26. “Episodes like that were ultimately very depressing” – Reeve, 111; cf., *ibid.*, 110-112. See similar references above at text pp. 1-3 and footnotes 1-4.

Due to limitation of size in this thesis, in the investigation of ancient perspectives I have focussed chiefly on physical impairment rather than mental impairment.

impairment occurred “not without cause or purpose.”¹³⁴ That impairment was caused by sin is a single view amongst many different ones – some shared with pagan writers, some specific to Christian and Jewish traditions. Firstly, impairment was seen as a natural part of being a human person, resulting from any number of causes that might arise throughout a person’s life – from the circumstances of their conception, to the effects of living into old age. Secondly, in some traditions, demons were said to have a contributory role. We see, however, that this belief was usually applied in terms not of bodily impairment, but of impairment of the soul. Thirdly, God Himself was said to permit or even work impairment. Again, this was understood in a variety of ways: to make things happen, or prevent them; to bring about changes in people’s lives; to enable people to learn and experience things of great importance; to respond in an appropriate way to particular wrongdoing, and to cleanse and heal sins.

In many passages, impairment’s causes were explained in the context of transgression, whether wrong-doing or error. However, as we shall see, the connection between impairment and transgression that the writers most frequently made was not to identify transgression as the cause of bodily impairment, but to illustrate transgression by means of impairment of the soul. This pattern was many times repeated – the view that impairment is useful to illustrate sin, not that impairment is caused by sin. Even when the writers did draw on the specific belief that impairment is a consequence of sin, they showed a marked ambivalence towards it. On the one hand, impairment of soul was described as having sin as its cause; very occasionally, particular examples of bodily

¹³⁴ “Not without cause or purpose”: a phrase used of the paralysis of the person Jesus encounters at John 5 - John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 3; *PG* 51:53; *NPNF i* 9:214.

impairment were also said to have sin as its cause. On the other hand, when it came to particular individuals who were experiencing bodily impairment, the belief that sin was the cause was explicitly refuted: in terms of logic and scriptural precedent, and by reference to the doctrine of original sin and to God's unsearchable wisdom. That sin was the cause of impairment was not a generally held view in ancient cultures. When ancient people considered why impairment occurred, they held a range of many different views.

2.0 Common to Human Nature

Impairment was seen to come to all people – no-one was exempt, whatever their status, wisdom, or closeness to God. Many things could and did happen to make a person impaired. The variety of causes crops up across periods and regions with remarkable consistency, in terms of both bodily and non-bodily impairment. This consistency suggests that if there was a routinely held view about impairment's causes, it was that impairment, like death, is in “the common nature of humankind.”¹³⁵

2.1 Wide Extent and High Frequency

¹³⁵ Impairment in the common nature of humankind: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:83; *NPNF i* 14:41; cf., *ibid.*, 56.2; *PG* 59:307; *NPNF i* 14:201. No-one exempt from impairment: Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.4; *CCL* 48:666f; *NPNF i* 2:401f. Cf., “This is the law of mortals: we are born for these and similar accidents of fortune, so that in the case of the human being no confidence must be placed” – Pliny (the Elder), *HN* 7.52.173; *Loeb* 2:622f.

In an early Jewish tradition, “the vast majority” of the people of Israel that Moses led out of Egypt had been seriously injured in Pharaoh’s building works: their hands had been cut off, their limbs had been broken, they had been blinded by scaffolding and splinters of rock.¹³⁶ While ancient historians, both Egyptian and Jewish, later disputed the extent of the Israelites’ impairment when they were led out of Egypt, the story fits with the picture of impairment that we see from literary and non-literary evidence: in the ancient world, impairment was widespread and a familiar feature of life.

Studies from different regions of the ancient world demonstrate the wide extent and high frequency of impairment. Limb injuries “must have accounted for a large part of the physician’s time...The sight of women and children, as well as men, with missing limbs would have been a common one.”¹³⁷ This is borne out by archaeological evidence:

Trauma, accidental and afflicted, was one of the most frequent causes of pathological conditions apparent in ancient skeletal remains...A variety of states of disability must have existed anciently owing to many causes.¹³⁸

Once injuries had occurred, although most fractured bones healed, their healing would often result in permanent impairment.

Many ancient fractures, though firmly united with great masses of new bones, are appallingly deformed and it seems certain that until recently surgeons had little skill in setting a broken limb.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Israelites impaired: *Numbers R.* 7.1, 13.8; *LOTJ* 3:212. Disputes in ancient traditions about the extent of their impairments: Josephus, *C. Apionem* 1.26.227-1.35.320; Loeb 1:254-290; Whiston, 787-793; cf., texts quoted in Feldman and Rheinhold, 350-357. Specific risks of impairment for those engaged in building works: see below text at pages 108-109 and footnote 177.

¹³⁷ R. Jackson, 68; cf., *ibid.*, 185f

¹³⁸ *ABD* 5:67

¹³⁹ Wells, 58; cf., *ibid.*, 50-59, 66f, 131-147. High frequency: *ibid.*, 53f. “No evidence of any attempt to set or reduce fractures or dislocations”: *ibid.*, 88; for many, these injuries left them “immobile for the rest of their lives”: *ibid.*, 89f; Podzorski, 22-25, 35f, 46-50, 52; “high incidence of fractures”: Wells, 86.

Paleopathologists are clear, however, that from the evidence of healed bones there was a high survival rate from impairment-causing injuries.¹⁴⁰

A similar picture emerges with particular impairments. Arthritis in its various forms was “one of the most common diseases found in ancient bones”¹⁴¹ – “the most common pathological condition.”¹⁴²

No ethnic group in Egypt was immune and almost every adult was affected to a greater or lesser degree...at times, with great intensity and impairment...but people lived long despite their infirmity.¹⁴³

Ancient writers themselves record the early onset of arthritis and its consequences of permanent impairment: “The most common age is after thirty-five...for the most part,

Fractures healed, but many people lived with consequential impairment: Roberts and Manchester, 94-98. Fractures “often resulted in deformity” Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 122. “10% of all known Greek skeletons exhibit at least one fracture. 4/5 of these occur in males”: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 19. Grmek, 57-62: 1/3 fractures with healing complications from infection.

¹⁴⁰ High survival rate – people with impairments cared for after injury or onset of impairment:

a) By community / relatives: Stringer and Gamble, 94f; Grmek, 57; Salib, 601; Roberts and Manchester, 38, 40, 41-43, 94f; Dettwyler, *passim*; Podzorski, 88; Gore, 21.

b) By the state: Athenian provision for disabled war veterans: Hands, 100, 202; cf., Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 212f; cf., Lysias – “On the refusal of a pension to an invalid” – Loeb, 516-533; Plutarch, *Vit., Solon* 31.2; Loeb 1:494f – on low income / discussion re when the provision started; cf., blind man on state pension – from age or disease: Aeschines, *Against Timarchus* 104; Loeb 1:84f; cf., Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 49.4; Loeb 20:136-139; “a blind man shall receive a thousand denarii from the state” – Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 3.1; Loeb 1:392f; the blind friends Dandamis and Amizoces “maintained with every show of honour at public expense by the Scythian folk” – Lucian, *Toxaris* 41; Loeb 5:170f; Aristotle: military exemption “on the grounds of bodily incapacity” -

μη δυνατοὺς εἶναι τοῖς σώμασιν - Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 49.2; Loeb 20:136f; cf., “Incapables” being those on low income and “incapacitated by bodily infirmity” – τὸ σῶμα πεπηρωμένους – receiving grant for food at public expense – *Ath. Pol.* 49.4; Loeb 20:136-139; cf., Aristotle, *Politica* 3.4, 1275a; Loeb 21:174f; cf., those injured by others incurably have their military service done for them by their attackers – Plato, *Leges* 9.874e-882c; Loeb 11:270-295; “The man who suffers from hunger or the like is not the man who deserves pity, but he who, while possessing temperance or virtue of some sort, or a share thereof, gains in addition evil fortune; wherefore it would be a strange thing indeed if, in a polity or State that is even moderately well organised, a man of this kind (be he slave or free man) should be so entirely neglected as to come to utter beggary” - therefore begging outlawed – Plato, *Leges* 11.936b-c; Loeb 11:464f.

¹⁴¹ Sandison, “Diseases in Ancient Egypt,” 36.

¹⁴² Podzorski, 87

¹⁴³ Salib, 600f; cf., Roberts and Manchester, 99-123. Compare: “Four out of six adult Neandertal skeletons found in a cave near Shanidar, Iraq, are deformed by disease and injury [including blindness, loss of limbs and severe arthritis]...All the injuries show signs of healing, evidence that crippled members of the group were fed, protected, and helped to move by others” – Gore, 21.

the patient remains lame.”¹⁴⁴ Celsus refers to arthritis as prevalent and very persistent: “frequentiora longioraque.”¹⁴⁵ Eye diseases also were widespread: “There is no doubt that eye diseases were amongst the most common afflictions of the time.”¹⁴⁶ These eye diseases frequently led to impairment: “that these diseases often resulted in blindness is evidenced by the frequency with which the condition is mentioned in the literature and portrayed artistically.”¹⁴⁷ Ancient texts give evidence of the prevalence of impairment not only in the frequency with which impairment is mentioned. Medical writers used terms that were familiar from common parlance. Similarly, the fact that there is such a richness of impairment terms has been understood as a reflection of impairment’s social significance. Also, the use of impairment for a person’s name was not uncommon.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases*, 2.12; Adams, 118-123, 362-365.

¹⁴⁵ Celsus, *De medicina* 4.31.1; Loeb 1:454f; cf., *ibid.*, 2.8.28; Loeb 1:146f; *ibid.*, 4.29.1-4.32.2; Loeb 1:452-461. Many by mid-30’s with degenerative arthritis “accompanied by significant neurological problems”: Grmek, 69, cf., *ibid.*, 73. High incidence of arthritis in general: Stringer and Gamble, 94f; cf., Roberts and Manchester, 121, 124; Nunn, 178f; Preuss, 310; ABD 5:66f; Wells, 59-76: due to various forms of arthritis, many ancients, including Neanderthals, “Did walk with a pronounced stoop” – Wells, 62. Arthritis as “the chief disease of ancient Egyptians and Nubians” Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 143; ¹⁴⁶ R. Jackson, 82f; see also: *ibid.*, 84, 121-123, 161. Cf., Preuss, 270; *EJ* 4:1088-1090; Wallis Budge 2:74-84; cf., Ebell, 94-106; ABD 6:12; Sandison, “Diseases of the Eye,” 457-463: “More abundant and more readily interpreted than that concerning other organs or systems”: *ibid.*, 457. See also ABD 6:12.

¹⁴⁷ Sandison, “Diseases of the Eye,” 462. Sight lost from eye infection: Wallis Budge 2:81-83; Nunn, 197-202; Filer, 13f: eye infection “often led to blindness”; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 119; Wells, 32, 114; Preuss, 267-270. Compare the evidence from paleopathology of a “very high incidence” of deafness from infection: ABD 5:66.

Compare Garland’s comments on impairment in the Graeco-Roman world: “Very familiar...experienced at first hand by most...at least as equally widespread [as in the modern world]” – *Eye of the Beholder*, 11-13; “Extremely high”...numbers of impairments post-natally acquired – *ibid.*, 20; “Commonplace among members of all social strata” – *ibid.*, 21; “Extremely common in ancient world” – *ibid.*, 126; “Affected everyone sooner rather than later” – *ibid.*, 26.

¹⁴⁸ The richness of the terms for impairment understood as reflecting the social importance of impairment: Grmek, 18; cf., Preuss, 88f, 234f, 270, 291f. Also, medics took on as technical terms for impairment the words used in common parlance: E. Clarke, 306f.

Compare the use of impairment words as personal names: Grmek, 19; Josephus – Preuss, 207; Physician – Preuss, 155; in satire: Juvenal, 8.32f; Loeb 160f; Persius, 1.128; Loeb 328f; Plautus, *Curculio* 392-393; Loeb 2:230-232; Pliny, *HN* 7.12.54; Loeb 2:540f; *ibid.*, 11.55.150-151; Loeb 3:526f; *ibid.*, 11.105.254; Loeb 3:590f. Synesius described how a crew of sailors, all of them having some “physical defect,” called each other by impairment nick-names: Synesius, *Epist.* (4)30; Fitzgerald 3:81. Acacius, a bishop of Caesarea, nicknamed “One-eye” – Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 98; *PL* 23:700; *NPNF ii* 3:380; cf., Jerome, *Adv. Jovinianum* 2.22; *PL* 23:330; *NPNF ii* 6:404. Cf., James the lame – Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 47.2; Bartelink, 226; *ACW* 34:125; on Didymus the blind scholar and tutor of Jerome – see below text at page 247 and footnote 474.

This high incidence of impairment seen from the paleopathological evidence runs against the assertion of many modern commentators who state that the extent of impairment in the ancient world was less than in the modern era. Apparently overlooking this evidence of acquired impairment, modern commentators focus on congenital impairment, presenting two grounds for their assertion: that modern medical technology has resulted in a greater survival rate for people with the severest impairments, and that children with impairments in the ancient world were often, if not usually, exposed at birth.¹⁴⁹

Certainly, paleopathology has its limits. It cannot, for instance, provide with precision any comparison of the survival rates of the minority of people with impairments whose survival would have been in jeopardy without modern medical intervention, and those with similar conditions in the ancient world who did not survive.¹⁵⁰ However, paleopathology does provide much evidence that many of the hereditary, congenital and

¹⁴⁹ Modern commentators on lower survival rates in ancient world: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 12: “Although the incidence of congenital disability was probably higher in antiquity than it is in modern society, a far smaller percentage of persons so afflicted would have survived infancy.” Exposure alleged as specific response to birth of infant with impairment: “There is every reason to assume [*sic*] that the overwhelming majority of infants exhibiting gross abnormalities, and many, too, afflicted with minor aberrations, were exposed immediately, while others spontaneously succumbed to their abnormalities shortly after birth for lack of basic medical treatment” - Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 13; cf., *ibid.*, 12-18.

On exposure and infanticide of infants with impairments, see Appendix.

¹⁵⁰ Paleopathology summaries: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 19-23; Grmek, 57-62; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 236-238; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 16-21; Leake, 79, 94-96, 58f, 62f; Stringer and Gamble, 94f; Ghalioungui, 65; Brothwell and Sandison, *passim*; Roberts and Manchester, *passim*; Nunn, *passim*; Filer, *passim*; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, *passim*; Wells, *passim*; Sandison, “Diseases in Ancient Egypt,” *passim*; Zivanoic, *passim*; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, *passim*; Brothwell, *Skeletal Biology*, *passim*; Podzorski, *passim*; ABD 5:60-69. Caveats and difficulties in interpreting paleopathological evidence: Boddington, Garland, Janaway, 3-9, 43-64, 180-197; A. T. Sandison, “Pathological Changes,” 205-243; Wells, 176-183; Paleodemography and variable factors – Grmek, 87-118; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 60-63, 150; Podzorski, 71-73. Caveat re artistic representations: Nunn, 67.

degenerative impairments familiar in the modern world occurred also in large numbers in the ancient world. In addition, many people in the ancient world became impaired as a consequence of events and circumstances that in the modern world, with medical technology, might well not result in lifelong impairment. These circumstances include the effects of fractures not set, untreatable eye and ear infections, hazards of specific occupations and living conditions, penal systems, and the frequency and style of war.

The exposure of children was certainly a widespread practice, at least in the Graeco-Roman world. However, exposure was primarily a means of getting rid of unwanted children, a form of family planning rather than a device for reducing the number of people with impairments in society. Of the references to exposure, even in highly polemical debate, few relate to impairment in any way. Archaeologists refer to the scarcity of evidence of infants with impairments to dispute the theory that exposure on the grounds of impairment was widespread.¹⁵¹

Impairment was familiar in the ancient world, and, as we shall see in the course of this chapter, the causes of impairment were familiar also. There is a remarkable consistency in the understanding of impairment's causes across different ancient cultures, and across a variety of genres of literature. Ancients had their own presuppositions, of course: theirs were based on, amongst other things, familiarity with impairment, on impairment commonly known. As we saw from Chapter 1 and from the disability analyses of the Introduction, modern presuppositions relating to impairment can be traced to a lack of familiarity with impairment, to the segregation and medicalization of impairment

peculiar to the modern era. The wide extent and high frequency of impairment in the ancient world is one of the key points of difference from the modern world that has been established for the methodology here.

2.2 Conception to Childhood

It was understood in the ancient world that, in particular circumstances, parents could be a contributory factor in their children being born with an impairment, either in terms of heredity or in the circumstances of the particular conception. Jewish tradition warns against two people of restricted growth parenting together. This theme occurs also in Graeco-Roman writers: Archidamus, king of Sparta, was fined for marrying a short woman, “For she will bear us not kings but kinglets.”¹⁵² On some occasions, the theme could be applied with malice: at the birth of infants with impairments from aristocratic families, rumours were spread that the child’s mother had had intercourse with slaves with deformities in her household.¹⁵³

The circumstances of conception were also seen to be significant. In certain Talmudic traditions, various forms of impairment are identified as having been caused by indecent behaviour during intercourse, with each impairment caused by a corresponding behaviour – such as seeing the partner naked resulting in blindness.

¹⁵¹ Exposure and infanticide in relation to infants with impairments are discussed below in the Appendix.

¹⁵² Plutarch, *Vit.*, *Agesilaus* 2.3; Loeb 5:4; cf., Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De liberis educandis* 2, 1d; Loeb 1:6f. Similar warning in Jewish tradition: Talmud, *Bechoroth* 45b; cf., Preuss, 201

On the theme more generally, see: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 146-148; Schrage, 271

¹⁵³ Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 52f.

However, these traditions are disputed both within the Talmud itself and also by later commentators. In particular, the purpose of the passages is seen as unclear:

It remains undecided, however, as so often happens in the Talmud, whether or not the warning intends to discourage indecent behaviour, and whether or not the threat [of impairment] in one's offspring only represents added emphasis.¹⁵⁴

What a mother was imagining or her mental state at the point of conception was also thought to be contributory – even to the point of putting beautiful statues in place for her to look at.¹⁵⁵ From the father too, the circumstances of conception could cause impairment: Aristotle states that excess or deficient heat in the seminal fluid was seen to “cause the forming product to be inferior or deformed.”¹⁵⁶ The writer of the *Homilia Clementina* categorises physical impairment as a human condition arising from ignorance of the right circumstances for intercourse. Interestingly for our discussion here, the writer at the same point states categorically that wrongdoing is not the cause:

In truth, such affections arise because of ignorance; as, for instance, by not knowing when one ought to cohabit with his wife, as if she be pure from her discharge...not, assuredly, [because] of any wickedness that has been perpetrated.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Preuss, 300; cf., Preuss, 230f, 293, 302, 457; Schrage, 283; *Leviticus R.* 16.1; Talmud, *Pesachim* 112b, *Kethuboth* 60b; tradition disputed: Talmud, *Nedarim* 20a, 20b. A similar reference in Greek tragedy quoted at Schrage in footnote 150, p. 291 – Aeschylus, *Supplikes* 434-436; Loeb 1:46.

¹⁵⁵ Importance of mother's imagining: Augustine, *C. Julianum* 5.14.51; *PL* 44:813; *FC* 35:291; Soranus, *Gynaecia* 1.10.39; V. Rose, 204f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 37f. Cf., Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 148-151.

Importance of mother's mental state: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 151; cf., Soranus, *Gynaecia* 1.10.39; V. Rose, 204f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 37f. Cf., a premonition of impairment in the child could be seen in the content of the mother's dream after conception: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 4.67; Pack, 290; White, 213 – Artemidorus adds that the woman was sick at the time of the dream, and that it was her sickness at conception and during pregnancy that resulted in the child's impairment.

¹⁵⁶ Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 2.6, 743a; Loeb 13:220f; cf., *ibid.*, 4.2, 766b-767a; 13:394-401.

¹⁵⁷ *Homilia Clementina* 19.22.6; *GCS* 42:265; *ANF* 8:337. We can compare other ancient associations linking congenital impairment and the moment of conception:

a) What the mother was imagining: Augustine, *C. Julianum* 5.14.51; *PL* 44:813; *FC* 35:291f (the *FC* footnote *ad loc.* refers also to Augustine, *Retractiones* 2.62); cf., Soranus, *Gynaecia* 1.10.39; V. Rose, 204f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 37f.

b) The content of her dream following conception: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 4.67; Pack, 290; White, 213.

c) The specific arrangement of the constellations at that moment: Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12; Loeb 316-333.

Those who attempted to regulate for an ideal state took into account the supposed influence of heredity. Aristotle stated that the lawgiver is to take measures with parents, “that the children produced may have bodily frames suited to the wish of the lawgiver.”¹⁵⁸ Similarly, parents should be not too young or too old; otherwise, “the offspring are born imperfect.”¹⁵⁹ Plato made a similar provision, using the analogy of the prime stock in animal breeding: those with infirmities should be chosen as guardian parents so that they do not “beget in all likelihood similar wretched offspring.”¹⁶⁰ This was set into actual legislation: the Spartan Lycurgus was said to have enacted such laws in order to prevent births of children infirm or diseased.¹⁶¹ The theory of hereditary impairment was spelled out in the Hippocratic writings: “For the seed comes from all parts of the body, healthy seed from healthy parts, diseased seed from diseased parts.”¹⁶² The heredity theory was, however, disputed. It was explicitly refuted from observable facts: “Such features are few, and in most cases they do not occur but the children of defective parents are completely sound.”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Politica* 7.14.1, 1334b; Loeb 21:616f.

¹⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Politica* 7.14.4, 1335a; Loeb 21:618f; *ibid.*, 7.14.11, 1335b; Loeb 21:624f; cf., Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 9 (7).1.582a; Loeb 11:422f.

¹⁶⁰ Plato, *Respublica* 5.8, 458e-5.10, 461e; Loeb 5:458-469. Cf., Plato, *Respublica* 3.15, 407d; Loeb 5:278f.

¹⁶¹ Plutarch, *Vit., Lycurgus* 15.8-16.2; Loeb 1:252-255.

¹⁶² Hippocrates, *Aer.* 14; Loeb 1:110f; cf., *Morb. sacr.* 5.13-15; Loeb 2:150f; Cf., Some forms of arthritis “appear to have been transmitted from the patient’s forefathers” Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases*, 2.12; Adams, 235f, 493.

According to Preuss, Jewish traditions interpreted conditions passed “unto the 4th generation” figuratively as “following the example of”: Preuss, 142.

¹⁶³ Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 9 (7).6, 585b Loeb 11:454f; cf., Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 1.17, 721b; Loeb 13:50f; cf., *Digest* 40.2.10; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:426; Pliny, *HN* 7.11.50; Loeb 2:538f. Heredity as the cause of impairment disputed in Jewish tradition: Preuss, 387; cf., Talmud, *Chullin* 69a. Cf., Physiognomics and biological determinism: Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 173-219; Aristotle, *Physiognomonica* 1-6, 805a-814b; Loeb 14:82-137; cf., features of human face: Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 1.8-9, 491b; Loeb 9:38f; Pliny, *HN* 11.114.273-276; Loeb 3:604-607.

This ambivalent attitude towards heredity as a cause of impairment can be seen in an argument of Augustine on causality. He refers to a Carthaginian orator, Fundanius, who lost an eye accidentally, and whose son was also born with one eye: “That which was an accident for the father was natural for the son.” Augustine then mentions Fundanius’ other son, “who, as is usual, was born with two eyes, from a parent who had but one eye. There are numberless children born with sight from blind parents.” Augustine’s remarks demonstrate the ancient observation from familiarity that impairment was on occasions hereditary, but this occurred unusually.¹⁶⁴

Pregnancy was also seen as a time when impairment could be caused. This might include trauma to the bones of the embryo as they were forming, dislocation of limb joints, or “excessive flux” resulting in lesions to the eye or ear. Some cases of epilepsy were understood as having been caused when the normal purging of impurities from the embryo’s brain did not occur.¹⁶⁵ If more than one foetus was being carried, “the numerous offspring which are produced hamper each other’s being brought to perfection and also the movements which effect generation.”¹⁶⁶ The mother’s condition during pregnancy also could cause impairment: if she herself became ill during pregnancy, or if her dietary intake was poor, she could give birth to a child with restricted growth. A diet that included particular foods could cause blindness. Also,

¹⁶⁴ Augustine, *C. Julianum* 6.6.16; *PL* 44:832; *FC* 35:325f - cf., *ibid.*, 6.18.55; *PL* 44:855; *FC* 35:365f.

¹⁶⁵ Bone trauma: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 151f; Garland, “Deformity and Disfigurement,” 45; Grmek, 71. Dislocated joints: Hippocrates, *Art.* 52.59-61; Loeb 3:318f; *ibid.*, 55.28-30; Loeb 3:328f. Eye and ear lesions, and epilepsy: Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 8.1-28; Loeb 2:154-157.

¹⁶⁶ Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 4.4 770b; Loeb 13:426f; cf., Aristotle, *Problemata* 10.12, 392a; Loeb 15:210f.

excesses in the mother's habits might bring about impairment in general for her child.¹⁶⁷ This last may be an element in the biblical prohibition to Samson's mother: "Therefore beware, and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for lo, you shall conceive and bear a son" [Judges 13:4f].

The inadequate nourishment from premature birth accounted for various impairments in babies, including blindness, although it was noted that "many such individuals survive." Premature babies were said to be liable to mobility impairments: human legs being fleshy, not sinewy like animals, "because of their softness they more quickly wither by movement...as they move considerably owing to softness, the extremities are apt to be damaged in the longer time."¹⁶⁸ The circumstances of the birth itself could cause impairment: the baby could be damaged through difficulties in the delivery. It was also said that the arrangements of the constellations at the moment of birth accounted for various forms of impairment.¹⁶⁹

New-born children were seen as vulnerable to acquired impairment. The swaddling of infants was a matter of heated debate. To some, swaddling prevented the distortion of limbs; to others, it caused it.¹⁷⁰ In order to reduce the risk of spinal deformity that could

¹⁶⁷ Condition of mother causing impairment – Illness: Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 6.24, 577b; Loeb 10:330f. Poor diet: Aristotle, *Problemata* 10.12, 892a; Loeb 15:210f; cf., Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 2.8 748b-749a; Loeb 13:260f. Particular diet: Preuss, 269; Habits: Soranus, *Gynaecologia* 1.14.46-47; V. Rose, 211-215; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 45-49.

¹⁶⁸ Premature babies with impairments: Inadequate nourishment: Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 4.6, 774b; Loeb 13:456-459; Soft limbs: Aristotle, *Problemata* 10.41, 895a; Loeb 15:228f. Compare in the blindness of moles, their eyes "get stunted in the process of formation and the skin grows over" – Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 1.9, 491b; Loeb 9:40f; *ibid.*, 4.8, 533a; Loeb 10:60f.

¹⁶⁹ Birth circumstance – Difficulties of delivery: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 151f; Grmek, 71; Arrangements of the constellations: Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12; Loeb, 316-333.

¹⁷⁰ Softness of infants' limbs prompting swaddling debates – Swaddling recommended: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 152; Plato, *Leges* 7, 789e; Loeb 11:6-9: "danger of distorting their legs by over-pressure

occur from the softness of babies' bones, massage to the spine was recommended. Exposing infants to excess cold was seen as risking apoplexy. Their sight could be lost if they were exposed to light that was too bright, or if too little fluid developed in their eyes. Epileptic seizures that occurred at this early stage could damage to the child's veins, and so result in lifelong impairment.¹⁷¹ There was deemed to be a greater risk for boys than for girls: the male, seen as hotter than the female, moves about more "and owing to their moving about they get broken more, since young creatures can easily be destroyed owing to its weakness."¹⁷² It was also observed that attempts at infanticide could result in impairment (not, as modern interpreters assert, that infanticide was practised in order to remove impairment). We see this from the early Jewish tradition that God prevented the birth of any children with impairments to the Egyptians under Hebrew midwives so that there could be no suspicion of attempted infanticide.¹⁷³

Early childhood as a time of vulnerability to impairment is a theme that occurs in the stories of particular characters with impairments. Hephaistus acquired his lameness at this early age, "by his fall when Zeus threw him out of heaven."¹⁷⁴ In Jewish tradition,

while they are still young." Swaddling process described: Soranus, *Gynaecia* 2.9.14-15 (2.29.83-84); V. Rose, 253-256; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 84-87; *ibid.*, 2.19.42 (2.39.111); V. Rose, 285f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 114f. Swaddling forbidden: limbs of infants to be "subject to as many movements as practicable with children of that age" – Aristotle, *Politica* 7.15.1-2, 1336a; Loeb 21:626f.

¹⁷¹ Spinal massage: exercises of the spine of newborns to prevent deformity of spine – Soranus, *Gynaecia* 2.16.31-33 (2.36.100-102); V. Rose, 275-277; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 105-107. Excess cold causing apoplexy in infants: Soranus, *Gynaecia* 2.8.12 (2.28.81); V. Rose, 251f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 82. Sight loss: a) Excess light: Soranus, *Gynaecia* 2.17.37 (2.37.106); V. Rose, 280f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 109f; cf., Preuss, 233. b) Deficient fluid: Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 5.1, 780a; Loeb 13:498-501. Lifelong impairment from early epileptic seizures: Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 11.12-21 Loeb 2:162f.

¹⁷² Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 4.6, 785a; Loeb 13:458f.

¹⁷³ Hebrew midwives in Egypt: *LOTJ* 2:253. Cf., Oedipus named as "Swollen Foot" from his injury at exposure – Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1032-1036; Jebb, 136-139; see also, Hyginus, *Fabulae* 66; P. K. Marshall, 65; M. Grant, 65 – the injury is how the shepherd recognises Oedipus.

¹⁷⁴ Lucian, *De sacrificiis* 6; Loeb 3:160f. Cf., Athanasius, *C. gentes* 12.17; *PG* 25:25, 28; *NPNF* ii 4:10.

it was as an infant that Moses acquired the speech impairment identified at Exodus 4:10f. The infant Moses was being tested by the Egyptians under suspicion that he would be the future leader of the Israelites: a crown and hot coals were set before him. On the prompting of Gabriel, Moses chose the coals; he put them to his tongue, thereby causing his speech impairment, but also saving his life. It was through an accident at the age of four, perhaps a fall, that the scholar Didymus of Alexandria lost his sight.¹⁷⁵ Again, it was a fall that caused the impairment of Mephibosheth: at the age of five years, he was dropped by his nurse in her haste to flee on hearing the news of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan [2 Samuel 4:4].

2.3 Occupational Hazards

For people in certain occupations, the risks of impairment were great: medical writers refer to specific impairing conditions characteristic of slaves, manual workers, and farmers.¹⁷⁶ A particular example is building workers, as we saw above in the tradition of impaired Israelites led out of Egypt by Moses. In an Egyptian text satirising different trades, and in Egyptian funerary sculpture, building workers are identified as blinded

Contrast other traditions concerning Hephaistus: he fell because he was thrown by Hera, his mother, not causing his impairment, but because of his impairment: Homer, *Iliad* 18.395f; Loeb 2:316f; cf., Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 29; Homer, *Odyssey* 8.310f; Loeb 1:280f; cf., *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 316-318; Loeb, 346f.

¹⁷⁵ *LOTJ* 2:274. Didymus' loss of sight, apparently through injury: ὁ ἀπο ὀμμάτων γενόμενος - Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 4.1-4; Bartelink 26, 28; *ACW* 34:35 - cf., "Captus...oculis": Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 109; *PL* 23:706; *NPNF* ii 3:381.

¹⁷⁶ Medical writers on occupational impairments of slaves and manual workers: hand paralysis – Hippocrates, *Epid.* 4.50; Loeb 7:144f; spinal curvature – Hippocrates, *Art.* 47.1-16; Loeb 3:294-297; lameness – Hippocrates, *Epid.* 6.3.9; Loeb 7:238f.
Farmers: Grmek, 39; cf., Longrigg, 38f; cf., Roberts and Manchester, 99-123; Filer, 25f

and impaired by injuries in the course of their work. Workers building the Cnidian canal were blinded through splinters of breaking stones. Plutarch recorded the incident of an Acropolis worker who fell from the scaffolding and became paralysed. Jerome mentioned a similar incident that happened to a builder, Maiomites: “While quarrying building stones on the shore not far from the monastery he was helplessly paralysed.”¹⁷⁷

There was also the hazard to slaves of being injured by their owners. Legislation in several cultures made specific reference to compensation to a slave for impairment resulting from injury by their owner. There are references to slaves of small stature being kept in small cages in order to restrict their growth, and to exposed children reared and deliberately deformed for the purpose of more effective begging. Scythians were said to blind all their slaves as a matter of course, to prevent them stealing milk. For eunuchs too, blindness was an occupational hazard: castration was believed to cause loss of sight. Slaves could be victims of their master’s curiosity: Psammetichus wanted to identify the original human language, so he entrusted infants to the care of a nurse who had had her tongue cut out.¹⁷⁸

Impairments of manual workers in general: Roberts and Manchester, 99-123; Podzorski, 37, 86; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 22, 31; Talmud, *Gittin*, 12b.

¹⁷⁷ Egyptian building workers: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 100f – with pensions for those maimed; cf., satire of the trades: Dasen, *ibid.*, 101; R. L. Miller, 1-24; Filer, 26.

Injuries of Israelites: limbs and eyes – *LOTJ* 3:212; “vast majority of Israelites” in Egypt afflicted with injuries from building operations: hands cut off, limbs broken, eyes damaged by beams / clay – *Numbers R.* 7.1, 13.8. Cnidian canal builders: Herodotus, 1.174; Loeb 1:118f. Athenian acropolis worker: Plutarch, *Vit.*, *Pericles*, 13.7-8; Loeb 3:42-45. Maiomites’ paralysing injury: Jerome, *Vita sancti Hilarionis* 19; Bastiaensen, 96; *NPNF ii* 6:307.

¹⁷⁸ Owner injuries and compensation to slaves: Preuss, 204, 276, 290f; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.35.195-197; Loeb 7:596-598; Yonge, 614; Talmud, *Kethuboth* 38a, *Kiddushim* 24b, *Baba Kama* 26b, 91a, 98a, *Shevu’oth* 36b. Compensation for maimed slave: Aristophanes, *Ranae* 623f; Loeb 2:352f; SHA, *Commodus Antoninus* 8.9; Loeb 1:286f; *ibid.*, 10.6; Loeb 1:290f. Slaves’ restricted growth: – [Longinus], *Subl.* 44.5; Loeb 23:248f. Exposed children reared and impaired deliberately: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 39; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 247f; Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 10.4.1-25; Loeb 2:420-449. Scythians blinding their slaves: Herodotus, 4.2; Loeb 2:198-201. Castration

Evidence from both archaeology and written material demonstrates clearly the great number of impairments sustained through battlefield injuries. In addition to mobility and dexterity impairments from shattered limbs and consequent amputations, blindness, paralysis, deafness and muteness are referred to as having been caused by wounds in battle.¹⁷⁹ Impairment was sometimes the objective of a particular battle tactic, such as millstones being rolled into the enemy's ranks, or leg sinews being cut in close combat to render the enemy permanently incapable.¹⁸⁰ Sociological studies of the Graeco-Roman world show that although very little state provision was made for people with impairments, an exception was the city state of Athens, which provided a pension for disabled war veterans unable to support themselves.¹⁸¹

and blindness: *Song of Songs R.* 1.2. Psammetichus' experiment: Tertullian, *Ad nationes*, 1.8; *CCL* 1:21f; *ANF* 3:116f.

¹⁷⁹ Battlefield impairments in general: "vast number" – Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 22f; cf., *ibid.*, 38, 78; Garland, "Deformity and Disfigurement," 40; Schrage, 271; Grmek, 27-33; R. Jackson, 68, 112-137; Scarborough, *Roman Medicine*, 66-75; EMI, 109, 115; Roberts and Manchester, 89-91; Pharaoh's soldiers with Israelites – *LOTJ* 3:10. Limbs paralysed from wounds: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 9.21.4; Loeb 5:362f. Spurius Carvilius – "lame from a wound received on national service, and for that reason shy of walking about" – Cicero, *De oratore* 2.61.249; Loeb 3:382-385; cf., Herodotus, 6.26, 6.117; Loeb 3:172f, 270f; "Their limbs paralysed by reason of the multitude of their wounds" Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 9.21.4; Loeb 5:362f; Polybius, 1.58.9; Loeb 1:160f; *ibid.*, 16.5.7; Loeb 5:14f.

Arm paralysed from wounds – Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 6:66; Loeb 3:394; Whiston, 730. Hand paralysis from excessive fighting: Preuss, 308.

Amputation: "A hero lost his hands in war" – Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 1.4; Loeb 1:104f; cf., the war hero Sergius who lost his hand in battle, and returned to distinguished military service with an iron prosthesis, a "debiles miles": Pliny (the Elder), *HN* 7:29; Loeb 2:574f.

Blindness: Caesar, *Bellum Civile* 5.53; Loeb 2:272f: "four centurions out of one cohort lost their eyes"; cf., Herodotus, 3.78; Loeb 2:102f; cf., War as blind: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Amatorius* 757b; Loeb 9:352f.

Mute and deaf from battle injury – *Digest* 29.1.4; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:867; Preuss, 290f.

Compare the responsibility of army physicians to certify those unfit to continue in military service: Nutton, "Medicine and the Roman Army," 262; see also, *Digest* 29.1.4; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:867.

¹⁸⁰ Impairment tactics – Millstones rolled onto attackers: "Many of the assailants under the walls were thus crushed" – ("pars subeuntium obruti") – Tacitus, *Historiae* 2.22; Loeb 2:196f; (cf., Hippocrates, *Art.* 48.1-2 Loeb 3:302f – spinal injury from impact of heavy weight).

Sinews cut to render enemies incapable (also, as punishment) – Preuss, 237f; Diodorus Siculus, 18.101; Loeb 9:100f; cf., cutting the sinews of war animals: elephants – Diodorus Siculus, 3.26.2-4; Loeb 2:154-157; cavalry horses – Herodotus, 8.28; Loeb 4:28f.

¹⁸¹ Athenian provision for disabled war veterans: Hands, 100, 202; cf., Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 212f; cf., Lysias, "On the refusal of a pension to an invalid"; Loeb, 516-533. Compare,

Amongst those who received impairments in battle were a number of celebrated military leaders: Hannibal, Horatius, and Philip the father of Alexander the Great, each lost an eye. Philip himself had several impairments: “contending for empire and supremacy, [he] had endured the loss of his eye, the fracture of his collar bone, the mutilation of his hand and his leg.” Homeric heroes also suffered impairment in battle: the hip bones of Aeneas were crushed at the joint, and Teucer’s neck injury resulted in his losing sensation in and use of his arm and hand. Even the war god Ares suffered temporary paralysis when his neck was injured.¹⁸²

Once battle or seige were over, there was the additional hazard for those taken prisoner of being mutilated by the victors. Zedekiah was blinded on the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians [Jeremiah 39:7]. This mutilation of a defeated enemy usually took the

Lucian’s ironic treatment of Dandamis and his friend Amizoces: the first made blind, and the second blinded himself as he “could not bear to have sight when Dandamis was blind...and now both of them sit idle, maintained with every show of honour at public expense by the Scythian folk” - Lucian, *Toxaris* 41; Loeb 5:170f.

On the lack of provision for people with impairments in the ancient world: Hands, *passim*. Despite this lack, there are many examples of feigned impairment: Preuss, 307f, cf., 230, 270f, 290f; Talmud, *Kethuboth* 88a; cf., Euripides, *Cyclops* 636-639; Loeb 2:580f; Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 4.10; Loeb 1:364f: “an old mendicant artfully blinking his eyes as if blind”; cf., Curculio claims he lost his eye “struck by a catapult in Sicyon” but then lets on it was knocked out when a pot of cinders was cracked on his head - Plautus, *Curculio* 93f; Loeb 2:232f; Can be detected: Pliny, *HN* 36.34.142; Loeb 10:114f; Flatterers imitate impairments of those they flatter – Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* 9, 53c-f; Loeb 1:286-289: including – the stoop of Plato, the lisp of Aristotle, Alexander’s twisted neck, deafness and dim-sight: “just as the flatterers of Dionysius, whose sight was failing, used to bump against one another and upset the dishes at dinner” – τὸ ἐπίκρυτον τὸν τραυλισμόν.

¹⁸² Hannibal (along with Sertorius and Civilis as other barbarians with an eye lost in battle): Tacitus, *Historiae* 4.13; Loeb 3:22f. Horatius: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Parallela Graeca et Romana* 307d; Loeb 4:268-271. Philip: Demosthenes, *De corona* 76; Loeb 2:58-61; Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Parallela Graeca et Romana* 307d; Loeb 4:268-271; Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 9.4, 739b; Loeb 9:238f. Aeneas: Homer, *Iliad* 5.305-310; Loeb 1:216f. Teucer: Homer, *Iliad* 8.324-329; Loeb 1:362f. Other Homeric heroes: Eurypylos / Sons of Tydeus / Euryalus: mobility impairment as injury / wound – Homer, *Iliad* 11.810f; Loeb 1:540f; *ibid.*, 19.47-49; Loeb 2:338-341; *ibid.*, 23.696; Loeb 2:544f. Ares’ battle injury: Homer, *Iliad* 21.406; Loeb 2:436f.

The blinding of Polyphemus by Odysseus (Homer, *Odyssey* 9.318-402; Loeb 1:324-331) is discussed below at text page 211 and footnote 390.

form of blinding, or of hand or leg amputation. Amputation is much attested in ancient literature, and it can be seen to have occurred for a variety of reasons: in response to infection, in penal codes, and in the treatment of prisoners in war. It may well be the specific mutilation of prisoners in war, as opposed to that of convicted criminals, that Aristotle refers to when he includes mutilations among “the evils for which fortune is responsible.” Ancient medical writers give detailed descriptions of the methods of amputation to be used, confident that even hands or feet could be removed at the joints, “in most cases without danger.”¹⁸³

The particular mutilation of prisoners taken in war is recorded as having been done for different reasons: as a means of distinguishing prisoners from deserters, as a threat to others who were still fighting, as a way to render the enemy incapable for future warfare, or as a method of paying ransom.¹⁸⁴ Sometimes the mutilation was adapted appropriately to a particular victim, such as the captured orator who had his tongue cut out. Medical writers discuss ways of making the effects of prisoners’ mutilation less unsightly – an effect clearly intended by mutilation, as we see from the reaction of the

¹⁸³ Discussions of mutilation in general: Schrage, 271f, 284; Buxton, 27f; Ghalioungui, 65; Ackernecht, “Primitive Surgery,” 643f; Roberts and Manchester, 89-91; cf., Zivanovic, 198-202; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 213; Adamson, “Medical Complications,” 317f; Preuss, 234, 296; Livy in Julius Obsequens 20; Loeb 14:252f; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 6.5.1.69-70; Loeb 5:200; Whiston, 157. Some doubts among paleopathologists: Wells, 58f, 95f: “often suspected but seldom proved” – *ibid.*, 58.

On differences in penal and medical amputation, and Hebrew terms for amputees: Preuss, 234.

Medical writers on amputation: “in most cases without danger” – Hippocrates, *Art.* 68.1-17; Loeb 3:360f; *Mochlicon* 34.1-5; Loeb 3:432f. Compare Jewish law that stated that finding the limb of someone lost at sea did not mean that they could be regarded as dead – it was possible they could still survive: Preuss, 235f.

Aristotle defines such amputation as the permanent loss of a limb’s extremity: “such as cannot grow again when completely removed” – *Metaphysica* 5.27.4, 1024a; Loeb 17:282f.

¹⁸⁴ To distinguish prisoners from deserters: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.11.2.455; Loeb 3:342; Whiston, 720. To threaten others: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.11.5.474-476; Loeb 3:348; Whiston, 721f. To render the enemy incapable: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 6.5.1.69-70; Loeb 5:200; Whiston, 157. As

Greek soldiers who were mutilated as prisoners and years later were reluctant to return home because of their appearance.¹⁸⁵ While mutilation was an expected hazard of military defeat, there were limits to its practice: excesses in the mutilation of prisoners indicated unacceptable cruelty. An example is the tyrant Dionysus of Sicily, who blinded his prisoners by suddenly exposing them to an over-bright light after keeping them for long periods in total darkness.¹⁸⁶

2.4 Penal Mutilation

Penal mutilation is a feature of several surviving international treaties. Those who break the treaty are to be punished with blinding or amputation; correspondingly, those who sign up to the treaty will have any future punishment of mutilation commuted. Amongst the early Jewish interpretations of the blinding of king Zedekiah at Jeremiah 39:7, was a tradition that it was a punishment for having broken a treaty.¹⁸⁷ Plato

ransom payment: Lucian, *Toxaris* 41; Loeb 5:170f. On Josephus' own mutilation of his prisoners: "a heathen war practice which the Jewish generals imitated": Preuss, 234.

¹⁸⁵ Orator prisoner has tongue cut out: Plutarch, *Vit., Demosthenes* 28.4; Loeb 7:70f.

Fortune as responsible for mutilation: Medical writers on making mutilation less unsightly: Celsus, *De medicina* 7.9.1-3; Loeb 3:362-365; see also, Polybius, 1.80.11-13; Loeb 1:216f; *ibid.*, 1.81.4; Loeb 1:218f; *ibid.*, 5.54.10; Loeb 3:134f. In the victory parade, the impairments of prisoners hidden by adornments: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 7.5.5.138; Loeb 3:546; Whiston, 757. Greek ex-prisoners: Diodorus Siculus, 17.69.6; Loeb 8:316f; see also: Curtius Rufus, 5.5-24; Loeb 1:370-379; discussed by Preuss, 272f.

¹⁸⁶ Excesses in the mutilation of prisoners: Galen recorded in Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, 80f on the tyrant Dionysus of Sicily; cf., Diodorus Siculus, 25.3; Loeb 11:146f; *ibid.*, 33.14.2-3, 33.15.1; Loeb 12:28, 31; *ibid.*, 34/35.8; Loeb 12:96f.

Similarly in martyrdom literature, excesses of mutilation show the cruelty of persecutors and the endurance of martyrs: see below pages 287-291.

¹⁸⁷ Penal impairment in Syrian and Assyrian treaty: *ANET*, 531, 533, 534, 538, 540; cf., extradition treaty of Egyptians and Hittites (mutilation commuted): *ANET*, 201; & other examples of impairment in treaty curses – e.g. Hittite: *ANET*, 353, 354; Assyrian law: *Ahiqar* 155-158; *OTPs* 2:505). Zedekiah's blindness in relation to treaty violation: *Leviticus R.* 6.5; *Lamentations R.* 1.51; *LOTJ* 4:294; His blinding "most

records that someone who attempted to make himself despot had his eyes burnt out, and the emperor Augustus ordered that someone who took a bribe should have his legs broken. On another occasion, Augustus tore out the eyes of a suspected assassin “with his own hand.”¹⁸⁸ This penal procedure extended to animals: the horse of an Arabian captain had its legs cut off for throwing him on the way to battle and so preventing him from taking the full part he had intended. Galen records instances of what might be called unintended penal impairment: people who “survived hanging but suffered complete motor and sensory paralysis of the limbs.”¹⁸⁹

There was also a widespread association of impairment with the *lex talio*: impairment as punishment for injury that had caused impairment – ‘eye for an eye’. This law was interpreted both bodily, and also in financial terms through compensation. Physicians, for instance, who caused impairment through their treatment were in some cases liable to talionic mutilation.¹⁹⁰ Under this law, people with impairments raised a number of

likely formed part of a written treaty between Nebuchadnezzar and Zedekiah”: Milgrom, 348. Penal blinding by a governor used to describe God’s blinding of Isaac: *Exodus R.* 30.11.

Mutilated hands at Gargas: Wildgoose *et al.*, passim; Hooper, passim; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 106, 114f, 120-124; Wells, 32-34.

¹⁸⁸ Plato, *Gorgias* 473c; Loeb 3:348f. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 67.2; Loeb 1:228f; *ibid.*, 27.4; Loeb 2:162.

On the impairing of martyrs, see discussion below pages 287-291.

Jewish martyrs: Mutilation of Jews in Alexandria – Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 19.131; Loeb 10:66; Yonge, 769;

The 7 brothers: limbs, spine, eyes, tongue mutilated: “gladly we allow” – 4 *Maccabees* 9-14; *OTPs* 2:554-559; Irony – Kingdom of Caesar without Jews as kingdom impaired: Talmud, *Avodah Zorah* 10b, 11b; Rabbi blinded by Herod – Schrage, 284; *EJ*, 4:1090f; Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 4a.

Christian martyrs: Maimed and blinded martyrs: Augustine, *Epist.* 88; *CSEL* 32.2:415, 418f; *NPNF i* 1:372f; cf., *ibid.*, 102; *CSEL* 34.2:566f; *NPNF i* 1:421; cf., *ibid.*, 139; *CSEL* 44:148; *NPNF i* 1:488; *ibid.*, 209; *CSEL* 57:348; *NPNF i* 1:560; cf., Cyprian, *Ad Fortunatum* 11.115-135; *CCL* 3:164; *ANF* 5:504; *Apocalypse of Elijah* 4.20-23; *OTPs* 1:748.

¹⁸⁹ Horse mutilated: Herodotus, 7.88; Loeb 3:392-395. Galen on unintended penal mutilation: Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 240.

¹⁹⁰ Literal interpretation of *lex talio*: Schrage, 272; Assyrian: *ANET*, 181, 288; Hittite: *ANET*, 188f, 193, 203; Egyptian: *ANET*, 215, 221; Middle Assyrian: *ANET*, 180-185; Sumerian: *ANET*, 524, 573; Indians: Strabo 15.1.54; Loeb 7:90f. In Jewish law: Preuss, 234f; Martinez, 176; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.35.195-197; Loeb 7:596, 598; Yonge, 614.

issues for legal experts, such as whether it was right to blind a one-eyed person and so take away their sight completely, and whether someone who had blinded a one-eyed person should have both their eyes put out.¹⁹¹ We see discussion about the interpretation of talionic mutilation in the New Testament [Matthew 5:38-42]. In these ancient discussions, some believed that a convicted person's penalty should be adapted to fit their crime:

To the end that the offender, being punished in respect of those members of his body that were the instruments of his wrongdoing, should himself keep until death his irreparable misfortune.¹⁹²

The permanent nature of the punishment was itself significant, as we see in miscarriages of justice. Evenius the watchman was blinded by the Apollonians for sleeping while at work, but it became clear from the oracle that this had been an excessive response, and he was to be compensated at public expense.¹⁹³ Interestingly, legal philosophers did not include penal mutilation in their idealised legal systems. When they do refer to penal mutilation they do so not in bodily terms: according to Cicero, blindness as a punishment was “wholly...blindness of the understanding.”¹⁹⁴ In early Jewish and

Financial interpretation: Preuss, 235; cf., *EJ* 15:741f; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 4.8.35.280; Loeb 4:610; Yonge, 122; Babylonian: *ANET*, 161, 163; Hittite: *ANET*, 192; Talmud, *Baba Kama* 84a, 85a. Code of Hammurabi (lex talio both literally and financially applied): Preuss, 208f, 233 (including physicians); *ANET*, 175f.

Physician's treatment causing blindness: Hippocrates, *Morb.* 1.8; Loeb 5:116f. Physician's medication caused impairment of body and mind for Arrhidaeus, son of Philip – Plutarch, *Vit., Alexander* 77.7-8 Loeb 7:436-439. Debates re iatrogenic impairment – Talmud, *Baba Kama* 85a. Physician taking too long to arrive: Preuss, 22, 167. Delay in calling physician - Hippocrates, *De arte* 11; Loeb 2:210f. Physicians not blamed for impairment resulting from treatment: Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 5.33; Loeb 8:330; Yonge, 667.

¹⁹¹ Talmud, *Baba Kama* 84a. See also, Diogenes Laertius, *Solon* 1.57; Loeb 1:56f: “the penalty for depriving a one-eyed man of his single eye should be the loss of the offender's two eyes”; cf., the law of the Locrians: Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 140-141; Loeb 3:462-465; cf.,

¹⁹² Diodorus Siculus, 1.78.3; Loeb 1:268f.

¹⁹³ Herodotus, 9.93-94; Loeb 4:268-271.

¹⁹⁴ Plato, *Leges* 9.874e-882c; Loeb 11:270-295; Cicero, *De domo sua* 40.105; Loeb 11:258-261.

Christian traditions, penal blinding was discussed but only justified in preference to the death penalty.¹⁹⁵

Penal mutilation was also a feature of ancient myth. In Egyptian tradition, the eclipse of the moon was understood to be Horus' eye being snatched out and swallowed as a punishment for cutting off his mother's head. In the Oedipus cycle, the self-blinding of Oedipus has many layers of association, not least a link to the common thread in Graeco-Roman myth of blinding and sexual activity. With perhaps a similar association, in Jewish tradition, Joseph is threatened with blinding by Potiphar's wife for refusing her advances to him. So too with Samson: his blinding was understood as appropriate to his relationship with Delilah that brought about his downfall: "He who went astray after his eyes, lost his eyes."¹⁹⁶

Mutilation was also used descriptively. Caesar's empire without the Jews was described as being like a body mutilated – with irony, given the mutilation that occurred during the persecutions. Similarly, Creon is said to mutilate Oedipus by snatching Antigone from him: "You villain, who have snatched from me by violence the beloved

¹⁹⁵ Talmud, *Kethuboth* 38a, *Sanhedrin* 27a. Mutilation contrary to Jewish Law: Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.37.204; Loeb 7:216; Yonge, 553.

Mutilation as a penalty for crime rare until the mid 7th century C.E. – and supported by the Church only in preference to the death penalty: Bruce, "Penal Blinding" 369-371.

¹⁹⁶ Horus: Horus punished by having eyes removed – *ANET* 14; contrast Graeco-Roman tradition: Horus' eye snatched out and swallowed (at the eclipse of the moon) – Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De Iside et Osiride* 373e; Loeb 5:134f. Oedipus: Oedipus – Schrage, 272; Devereux, *passim*. Compare: Polymestor – Euripides, *Hecuba* 1034; Loeb 1:328f. Traditions of blinding and sexual activity in Graeco-Roman myth: Devereux, 40-49. Compare: Orion – Ps-Eratosthenes, fr. 32 in Hesiod, *Fr. Astronomy* 4; Loeb, 70f: blinded by Oenopion for outraging his daughter Merope. Joseph and Zuleika: *LOTJ* Joseph, 2:48; Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 27a; Potiphar's wife and Joseph: "I will blind you" *Genesis R.* 87.10; Talmud, *Yoma* 35b; Samson: *LOTJ* 4:48.

eye I had, gone like the eyes I had already lost.” The death of Alexander was similarly said to cause his army to wander aimlessly, like a blinded Cyclops.¹⁹⁷

2.5 Injury

Blows to the body that caused impairment are widely identified in the studies of human remains from the ancient world. These injuries have been described by paleopathologists as “one of the most common pathological conditions.”¹⁹⁸ A wealth of ancient written material, from many genres, supports this view. There were particular activities high in risk: impairment is recorded as the consequence of boxing and wrestling, of political debate getting out of hand, of attacks by robbers or wild animals, even of traffic accidents such as carriages overturning and crushing the occupants.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Figurative uses of mutilation: Kingdom of Caesar without Jews as kingdom impaired: Talmud, *Avodah Zorah* 55a. Creon mutilates Oedipus: Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 866f; Loeb 2:512f. The Macedonian army after the death of Alexander: Plutarch, *Vit., Galba* 1.4; Loeb 11:208f; cf., Plutarch, *Mor., De fortuna Alexandri* 4.336f; Loeb 4:440f. Cf., Defacing an image as blinding an eye: Talmud, *Avodah Zorah* 43b;

¹⁹⁸ Roberts and Manchester, 65; cf., *ibid.*, 65-98; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 122-126; Zivanoic, 156-184; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 25-37; Filer, 82-93; Preuss, 49, 191-257; Talmud, *Kethuboth* 77a.

Fractures resulting in permanent impairment: Celsus, *De medicina* 8.10.5b; Loeb 3:548f

¹⁹⁹ Impairment from boxing and wrestling: *Greek Anthology* 11.81.5f; Loeb 4:112f; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.149; Loeb, 322f; Jerome, *Epist.* 69.2; *CSEL* 54:681; *NPNF ii* 6:142f.

Impairment from political debates: Lycurgus’ eye put out by Alcander wielding staff at assembly – Plutarch, *Vit., Lycurgus* 11.1-2; Loeb 1:234f; Plutarch, *Mor., Apophthegmata Laconica* 7.227a-b; Loeb 3:358f.

Impairment from attacks – by robbers and wild animals: Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.149; Loeb, 322f.

Crocodile bite: Nunn, 190; Filer, 26; Noah’s injury from the lion he forgot to feed – *LOTJ* 1:665f; *Genesis R.* 30.6, *Leviticus R.* 20.1.

Carriages overturning and crushing their occupants: *Leviticus R.* 31.4; Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 5.66; Pack, 316f; White, 238.

Animals also receive impairments: Shepherd blinds wild animal – *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Judah* 2.7; *OTPs* 1:796; *ibid.*, *Gad* 1.3; *OTPs* 1:814. Horses lamed in chariot races – Plato, *Phaedrus* 248b; Loeb 1:478f.

Compare other incidents of blows to the body causing impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 35.12; *PG* 61.303; *NPNF i* 12:213 - cf., Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.34.57; *CSEL* 42:315; *NPNF i* 5:307. Esau’s eyes knocked out of their sockets by Hushim – *LOTJ* 2:154. Blow to the head – paralysis, blindness and muteness result – Hippocrates, *Epid.* 5.50; Loeb 7:190f. Celsus on hardening

We see this cause of impairment occurring in biblical texts too: “Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer” [Psalm 10:15]. Priests with fractured limbs are included with other priests who had impairments in the listed restrictions on priestly activity [Leviticus 21:19].

In medical and historical writings, dislocations were a particular cause of impairment, often permanently so if the correct medical procedures were not followed. Withered hands and feet were understood to result from such dislocations. Deliberate dislocation in order to cause impairment is also recorded. The Amazons were said to

dislocate the joints of their male offspring early in infancy (some at the knees and some at the hips), that they may, so it is said, become lame, and the males be incapable of plotting against the females. They are supposed to use them as artisans in all kinds of leather or copper work, or some other sedentary occupation.²⁰⁰

Again, extant human remains similarly demonstrate that joint dislocation leading to impairment was a common experience – though not on the comprehensive scale of the Amazons!²⁰¹

humour that develops in eye “from disease or blow” – *De medicina* 7.7.14a; Loeb 3:348f. Muteness and deafness from injury: *Digest* 28.1.6, 25; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:815, 818. Ears damaged, and blood flow into ear – Talmud, *Baba Kama* 39b, 85b, 86a, 98a. Lightning – Schrage, 271; Celsus, *De medicina* 3.26; Loeb 1:344f. Pharaoh injured as he sat on Solomon’s throne – *LOTJ* 4:283, 6:452; *Leviticus R.* 20:1. Sight lost during sleep – Pliny, *HN* 7.50.166; Loeb 2:616f.

Damage by eyelashes: Wallis Budge 2:84; Ebell, 101f; Preuss, 264 (Leah); Preuss, 69f; cf., Celsus on damage to the eyes from eyelashes: Celsus, *De medicina* 7.7.8a-h; Loeb 3:336-343. Why God prevents 2 eyelashes growing in the same groove – Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 16a, *Nidah* 52b.

²⁰⁰ Dislocations: Celsus, *De medicina* 8.11.1-8.25.5; Loeb 3:558-587; Tacitus, *Historiae* 4.81; Loeb 3:160f; Hippocrates – *Art.* 52-67; Loeb 3:316-361; Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* passim; Loeb 3:399-449; cf., Preuss, 236-238.

Withered hands and feet from dislocations: Hippocrates – *Epid.* 6.12; Loeb 7:222f; Hippocrates, *Art.* 53.10-81; Loeb 3:320-325.

Amazons dislocating their male offspring: Hippocrates, *Art.* 53.1-8; Loeb 3:320f. Compare similar Nordic tradition of blacksmith deliberately lamed by dislocation (cf., Hephaestus): Preuss, 237f

²⁰¹ Wells, 66f; Podzorski, 22f; Preuss, 49 on Job;

Injury to the brain and the spine were identified as leading to impairment. There was especially a risk of impairment when a person fell from a great height, as we saw above with building workers. Mobility impairment, blindness, paralysis, spinal curvature, and muteness were each identified as having being caused from a long fall. It was perhaps a spinal injury that caused Mephibosheth's mobility impairment [2 Samuel 4:4]. In the comedy of Aristophanes, the claim that Euripides was for ever introducing "lame heroes" into his plays, was explained as inevitable given that Euripides used to write his plays at a window or ledge high above the ground.²⁰² Brain and spinal injuries were carefully studied by ancient medical writers, and these writers achieved remarkable accuracy in pinpointing particular impairments to specific places of injury.²⁰³ Galen for

²⁰² Impairment from a fall: Hippocrates, *Art.* 42.1-20; Loeb 3:282-285; *ibid.*, 47.1-16; Loeb 3:294-297; *ibid.*, 48.1-2; Loeb 3:302f; Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 37.1-28 Loeb 3:434-437; Hippocrates, *Epid.* 6.9; Loeb 7:238f;

The god Hephaistus: Lucian, *De sacrificiis* 6; Loeb 3:160f; cf., Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 62f.

Eyes lost after fall: EMI, 95, cf., Talmud, *Kethuboth* 77a.

Muteness from falling from a cliff: Hippocrates, *Epid.* 5.55; Loeb 7:192f; *ibid.*, 7.77; Loeb 7:374f;

Impairments from a fall predicted at the time of birth by the constellations: Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.151; Loeb, 326f.

Aristophanes on Euripides' "lame heroes" – impaired because of Euripides' habit of writing at a great height: *Acharnenses* 411; Loeb 1:42f; cf., Bellerophon – *ibid.*, 427, Loeb 1:44f. *χολοποιός* as epithet of Euripides: Aristophanes, *Ranae* 846; Loeb 2:372f; Aristophanes, *Pax* 147, Loeb 2:16f; Loeb footnote at Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae* 24; Loeb 3:132f.

²⁰³ Ancient writers on impairment from brain injury:

a) Paralysis: paralysis, blindness and muteness result – Hippocrates, *Epid.* 5.50; Loeb 7:190f; Wallis Budge 2:124-127, 2:133-143; nerves damaged at an injury from blow against the wall: blind / deaf – Talmud, *Kiddushim* 24b; Galen, *De usu partium* 8.10; Helmreich 481; M. T. May 413; Celsus, *De medicina* 8.4.1; Loeb 3:504f.

b) Blindness: Wallis Budge 2:74-84; blow to head – clot – blindness: Celsus, *De medicina* 8.4.7; Loeb 3:508f.

c) Muteness: Wallis Budge 2:105-108, 2:195-198; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 13.5.8.117; Loeb 7:282; Whiston, 342. Damage to particular nerve in neck (e.g. at cut or imprecise removal of goitre) resulted in loss of speech but perception of taste remained intact – Galen: Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, 163 – connections made to specific areas of the brain; cf., Galen – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 162, 247f; Celsus, *De medicina* 8.4.1; Loeb 3:504f.

d) Deafness: Wallis Budge 2:110f; Galen – damage to "the area of the brain where auditory nerves originated or to acoustic nerve" – Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, 137f; damage to particular nerves, area of brain, or ear itself result in loss of speech / hearing – connections made to specific areas of the brain – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 162

e) Apoplexy: Wallis Budge 2:4, 40, 128-131; Galen on damage to the brain – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 235-239: i) "the cranial nerves actually proved to him the cerebral origin of the stroke; it was supposedly brought on by accumulation of heavy humours in the ducts and cavities of the brain" (*ibid.*,

instance correctly identified ten out of the twelve cranial nerves in the spine, and the specific effects of damage to each.²⁰⁴

Impairment was also seen to result from toxic substances. Trajan suspected that his stroke and paralysis had been caused by someone trying to poison him. Particular plants were identified as dangerous: “If drops of this juice struck an eye of any creature, they always blinded it.” Poison from snakes could cause both lameness, as in a tradition relating to Samson, and also blindness: “The Libyan asp, I am told, blinds the sight of the one who faces its breath.” Other animals could also cause impairment. God was said to have sent hornets against the Canaanites in order to blind them. The blood of particular animals spilled into a person’s eye would cause blindness. For Tobit, it was

237); ii) “Galen attributed stroke mainly to damage of the substance of the brain but epilepsy to an obstruction of the flow of pneuma through its cavities” (ibid., 239).

f) Epilepsy: epilepsy as brain disease: Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 6-20; Loeb 2:152-181; different types and their causes identified by Galen as overstimulation or inactivity of the brain: excess of stagnation of humours – Siegel, *Galen’s System*, 1:308-315; see also, Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 245-247.

Paleopathology and impairment from brain injury: Longrigg, 211-214; Roberts and Manchester, 80f; Nunn, 179; Wells, 68f;

Ancient writers on impairment from spinal injury:

Spinal injury from fall: Hippocrates, *Art.* 42.1-20; Loeb 3:282-285; ibid., 47.1-16; Loeb 3:294-297; ibid., 48.1-2; Loeb 3:302f; Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 37.1-28; Loeb 3:434-437. Hippocrates, *Art.* 48.1-2; Loeb 3:302f – spinal injury from impact of heavy weight. Spine: disease and injury – Wallis Budge 2:197; Bourke, passim; Rowling, 272-278; Nunn, 171, 180f; Filer, 61f; Wells, 56f; “relatively high frequency” Podzorski, 86, cf., 22f, 37-44; Preuss, 132, 310. Dislocation of spinal vertebrae – arm paralysis and loss of hearing: Celsus, *De medicina* 8.14.1-2; Loeb 3:566f. Spinal curvature – Soranus classifies causes of 4 different forms of spinal curvature: *De spinae vertebrae* 2.88; Cocchio, 152f.

Galen on damage to spinal cord and peripheral nerves – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 239-244: detailed effects from spinal cord (motor / sensory loss) – inflamed / compressed by tumour or trauma / fracture of vertebrae / severe deformities of spine (e.g. extreme scoliosis or kyphosis).

Nervous system: senses and mobility – Longrigg, 173, 192-195. Apoplexy as “loss of all mental and peripheral nerve functions of the body” – Siegel, *Galen’s System*, 304-307. Nerves compressed – Wallis Budge 2:123. Mobility and perception loss as a result of damage to different nerves running through the spine: Galen identifies 10/12 of the cranial nerves, and the particular effects of their damage: – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 242; M. T. May 2.438. Paralysis / apoplexy / *anaesthesia* in Galen as imbalance in humours resulting from damage to nerves in spine or parts of brain from which perception / mobility nerves proceed – Siegel, *Galen’s System*, 304-307. Paleopathology and impairment from spinal injury – Wallis Budge 2:197; Bourke, passim; Rowling, 272-278; Nunn, 171, 180f; Filer, 61f; Wells, 56f; “relatively high frequency” Podzorski, 86, cf., 22f, 37-44; Preuss, 132, 310.

²⁰⁴ Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 242; cf., ibid., 235-239.

fresh sparrow droppings falling into his eyes that caused him to go blind [Tobit 2:10].
The torpedo fish caused paralysis and loss of perception.²⁰⁵

Self-impairment was not unheard of, and it was used by writers both physically and figuratively to demonstrate an extreme action or quality. To show their courage, the soldiers of Bar Kochba's army each cut off one of their fingers. Amizoces "could not bear to have sight" when his friend Dandamis became blind, so he put out both his own eyes. In Jewish tradition, in order to be unable to perform "the Lord's song in a foreign land", the Israelites bit off their own thumbs – an interpretation of the image at Psalm 137:5: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be withered." The philosopher Demodocus blinded himself to avoid distraction from mental sight, and Philo records the views and activities of those who saw self mutilation preferable to seeing, hearing, or speaking anything ignoble. Herodotus highly praised Hegesistratus, who cut off his foot to escape captivity: "a plan of such hardihood as we have never known."²⁰⁶ This

²⁰⁵ Trajan: Dio Cassius, *Epitome of Book 68*, 33.2-3; Loeb 8:422f. Cf., Plato's legislation against poisoners who caused bodily injury: Plato, *Leges* 11, 932e-933e; Loeb 11:452-457.
Plant juice: Strabo, 15.2.7; Loeb 7:138f; cf., a plant both blinds and heals blindness – *Leviticus R.* 22.4.
Samson: Talmud, *Sotah* 10a, *Sanhedrin* 105a, 106b.
The Libyan asp: Aelian, *De natura animalium* 3.33; Loeb 1:195; Cananites: *LOTJ* 3:347; *Song of Songs R.* 1.2; Talmud, *Sotah* 36a;
Ass blood makes those with jaundice go blind: Talmud, *Shabbath* 110b; Woodcock's blood (cure for migraine) into the eye makes blind: Talmud, *Gittin* 68b; Demotic spell - *PDM* xiv.741; Betz, *GMP*, 234: "If you put a nightjar's blood to his eye, he is blinded".
Eyepaint causing blindness: Talmud, *Nidah* 55b; cf., tempter blinded by rouge – Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 64a.
Compare Tobit's blindness from bird droppings falling into his eyes: Tobit 2:9-10 – see also Papayannopoulos, Laskaratos, and Marketos, 181-186.
Torpedo fish: Galen in Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, 183; causes numbness in fish it hunts, and in humans too: Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 8 (9).37, 620b; Loeb 11:310-312; cf., Plato, *Meno* 80a; Loeb 2:296f; *ibid.*, 80c; Loeb 2:298f; *ibid.*, 84b; Loeb 2:312f; *ibid.*, 84c; Loeb 2:314f.
Impairment from poisons in general: Schrage, 271, 284; Nunn, 187; Preuss, 145, 271f.
²⁰⁶ Self-inflicted mutilation: Bar Kochba's army – Preuss, 235f; Amizoces: Lucian, *Toxaris* 41; Loeb 5:170f; the Israelites in exile: Preuss, 52, 235; the image of Psalm 137:5 - כָּשָׁח - is an image of maiming: VanGemeren 2:733.
Demodocus: Aulus Gellius, 10.17; Loeb 2:258-261; the story not believed – "That story about Democritus is false, that he deliberately destroyed his sight": Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De curiositate* 521d; Loeb 6:506f. Better to choose self-mutilation than to see, hear or speak what is in seemly or unholy: Philo, *Leg.*

was not always the reaction to self-mutilation from onlookers. The horror of Oedipus' crime is reflected in the horror of his self-mutilation: "Man of dread deeds, how couldst thou in such wise quench thy vision?" In myth, as ever, what humans accomplish with the utmost difficulty, immortals can do with comical ease: Lamia was said when wanting to sleep simply to put out her eyes and place them in a jar.²⁰⁷

Figurative self-inflicted impairment was applied both negatively and positively. On the one hand, deafness was used of refusal or disobedience, such as the magistrate who makes himself deaf to the pleading of plaintiffs. On the other hand, making oneself impaired in refusal is a sign of obedience, such as blinding one's eye so as not to see wrongdoing, or to render one's appetites mute by using reason.²⁰⁸ A biblical example of self-mutilation used positively, if with some irony, comes in the words of Jesus:

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away...and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go to hell [Matthew 6:29f].²⁰⁹

Gai. 31.224; Loeb 10:116; Yonge, 778; Philo, *Det. Pot. Ins.* 48.175; Loeb 2:316; Yonge, 131. Cf., *Numbers R.* 19.14. There are more grievous experiences than to be impaired – impairment is preferable to these: Philo, *Dec.* 14.67-69; Loeb 7:40; Yonge, 524. Hegesistratus: Herodotus, 9.37; Loeb 4:202-205: ἀνδρηιότατον ἔργον.

²⁰⁷ Oedipus: Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1327f; Jebb, 175; cf., *ibid.*, 1302-1304; Jebb, 170f. Lamia: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De curiositate* 515f-516a; Loeb 6:476f.

²⁰⁸ Self-inflicted impairment as refusal and disobedience: *AEL* 2:54, 2:56, 3:88; Neo-Assyrian – *ANET*, 116; cf., magistrate making oneself deaf to pleader: Egypt – *ANET*, 328; people as blind or deaf sheep – *I Enoch* 89.32-90.26; *OTPs* 1:66-71; "Israel... smitten in breast and heart with an evil craze, not seeing with their eyes more blind than blind rats" – *Sibylline Oracles*, 1.365-370; *OTPs* 1:343. Self-inflicted impairment as refusal and obedience: – to prevent evil done / said / heard: Preuss, 77f; blinding eye as refusing to see wrongdoing – *Jubilees* 30:15-16; *OTPs* 2:113; seal mouth – *Life of Adam and Eve* 39.1-2; *OTPs* 2:274; appetites muzzled by reason – *4 Maccabees* 1.35; *OTPs* 2:545. Feigned self-impairment: Joshua's scheme with the spies sent into Jericho: "Make yourselves as mutes, and you will discover their secrets" – *Ruth R.* 11.1.

²⁰⁹ Jesus' words here were interpreted as meaning the need to cut off those close to oneself who threaten to harm the health of one's soul: e.g. Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 13.24-13.25; *GCS* 40:245-249; *ANF* 10:489f; see also below on the use of impairment to illustrate priority of the soul over the body, pages 340-342.

2.6 Diseases and Disease Models

The causation of impairment was also understood in terms of disease or models of disease. The first disease model we look at here is of obstructive matter interfering with or blocking perception or mobility. This might be understood externally in terms of foreign bodies or blockage in the eye or ear themselves, or internally as the interruption of the flow of *pneuma* or *dunamis* through the nerves of mobility and perception.²¹⁰ Foreign bodies in the eye were identified as causing blindness, whether sand, dust, rocks ground into powder, or, in the case of Isaac, the smoke from incense burnt by Rebekah before idols. The loss of sight in old age was said to be due to the skin over the eye thickening and blocking vision, and in blinding disease the skin was said to become opaque, or even turn black.²¹¹ In a similar way, when the ear was injured, the flow of blood was into the ear and blocked it causing deafness. Hearing was also lost “when there has been ulceration and the ear becomes filled up by scarring, that there is no passage in the ear and so it cannot hear.”²¹²

²¹⁰ Obstruction of flow in general disease aetiology: Longrigg, 36f; Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 85-91.

²¹¹ Blockage and the process of perception – Longrigg, 78f; Phillips, 21; R. Jackson, 85; Wallis Budge 2:111; R. L. Miller, 19.

Foreign bodies – Nunn, 200f; sand in the eyes: Preuss, 267; dust: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.11.6.487; Loeb 3:352; Whiston, 722; rocks ground into powder used to blind the Ninevites – *LOTJ* 1:406; blindness of Isaac from the incense Rebekah burnt before idols – *LOTJ* 1:328; tears blind – from smoke: Talmud, *Shabbath* 151b; eyes damaged by beams / clay – *Numbers R.* 7.1, 13.8. We can compare in NT Matthew 7:3-5: inability to see from obstacles in the eye. Eye blinded but sight would return “if the obstacles were removed” – Tacitus, *Historiae* 4.81; Loeb 3:160f.

Eye skin blocks – in old age: Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 5.1, 780a; Loeb 13:498-501; with disease: Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 5.1, 780a; Loeb 13:498-501; cf., Skin over the pupil – Talmud, *Beitzah* 27a. Why God prevents 2 eyelashes growing in the same groove – Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 16a, *Nidah* 52b.

²¹² Blood flow into ear: Talmud, *Baba Kama* 39b, 85b, 86a, 98a, .

Internally of the organs of perception, impairment would result when the passages in the brain and around the body became blocked, so that *pneuma*, *dunamis*, or breaths - αἱ φῦσαι - could not pass through. Such a blockage might be caused by a blow to the head resulting in a clot, or by excess heat, whether from the environment or from bodily disease. This would cause the brain and the vessels surrounding the brain to swell up and fill the cavities, bringing about blindness or deafness.²¹³ Similarly, in sudden loss of speech or the muteness of people in extreme hunger, the channel of breaths was said to be blocked by excess fluid from the collection of heat. The excess fluid - τὰ ρέυματα - might be phlegm, or chilled and sluggish blood, causing speechlessness, paralysis, epilepsy or, if there was a total blockage, apoplexy. This understanding was also non-bodily: Plutarch uses the image of blindness for the blocking of sound when it “strikes a large number of particles collected in a mass” – τυφλοῦται παντάπασιν.²¹⁴ We can compare the image from Isaiah 35:5: “The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.”²¹⁵

Scarring that blocks: Celsus, *De medicina* 7.8.1; Loeb 3:358f; cf., blocking lesions: Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 8.1-28; Loeb 2:154-157.

²¹³ Impairment from blocked *pneuma*, *dunamis*, or ‘breaths’: Hippocrates, *Acut.* (Appendix), 7; Loeb 2:268f; Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 7.1-12; Loeb 2:154f; *ibid.*, 8.1-28; Loeb 2:154-157; cf., Hippocrates, *Flat.* 13; Loeb 2:246-249; cf., Aristotle, *De audibilibus* 801b.2-9; Loeb 14:58f; Longrigg, 175; Wallis Budge 2:128-131, 2:195-198.

Galen’s refinements of the obstruction scheme of impairment: paralysis and apoplexy in Galen as “an impaired flow of the cerebral *pneuma* due to the accumulation of heavy phlegm...[that] obstructs the flow of *pneuma* which he regarded as the carrier of mental activities and all other functions of the brain” – Siegel, *Galen’s System*, 306. “The cranial nerves actually proved to him the cerebral origin of the stroke; it was supposedly brought on by accumulation of heavy humours in the ducts and cavities of the brain” – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 237. “Galen attributed stroke mainly to damage of the substance of the brain but epilepsy to an obstruction of the flow of *pneuma* through its cavities” – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 239. “In the mixed motor and sensory nerves the motor loss occasionally developed earlier, because active innervation required a more copious flow of cerebral *pneuma* through the spinal nerve than did sensory perception” – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 242f.

Breaths as “the most active of agents during all diseases”: Hippocrates, *Flat.* 15; Loeb 2:252f.

Clot: Celsus, *De medicina* 8.4.7; Loeb 3:508f.

Excess heat: Hippocrates, *Morb.* 2.4; Loeb 5:194-197; *ibid.*, 2.8; Loeb 5:200-203.

Compare: Impairment from small animals inhaled from swamps: Preuss, 140; Fingers in ears to block “something unfit to be heard”: Preuss, 78.

²¹⁴ Muteness that accompanies famine: Aristotle, *Problemata* 8.9, 888a; Loeb 15:182f.

Sudden muteness: Hippocrates, *Acut.* (Appendix) 6; Loeb 6:266f.

Excess phlegm: Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 10.1-54; Loeb 2:156-163.

The Early Church made use of the same theme. “Like as the dust blindeth the eyes, so too doth the pride of power bedim the eyes of understanding”; “Wickedness is rightfully compared to smoke which obscures one’s vision with the darkness of this world.”

When Jesus uses dust to heal the blind man, John Cassian points out that “clay would actually hinder the sight of those who could see.” This paradox was seen as evidence of Jesus’ divine power, “which is able to fashion new things out of their opposites.”

Ambrose describes in the creation of the human eye and ear the inclusion of safeguards to prevent dust, sand and other objects from hindering sight and hearing. Medical terms for coverings over the eye that develop through disease were used also for the causes of non-bodily blindness:

As when a filmy defluxion on the eye prevents one from beholding the light of the sun, thus also do iniquities, O humankind, involve you in darkness, so that you cannot see God.²¹⁶

This theme of obstruction causing impairment is seen too in Augustine’s remark about the rending heretics mute: “Those unhappy ones who will not receive into their hearts the sweetness of the truth must feel its force as a gag in their mouths.” Similarly, the veil used by Moses to protect him from the radiance of God’s face was applied to the Jewish people in their persistent inability to recognise the Christ: for them in their blindness, “the truth is still hidden under Moses’ veil.” Preuss points out that in the

Sluggish blood: causing epilepsy - Hippocrates, *Flat.* 14; Loeb 2:248-253; causing apoplexy - Dio Cassius, *Epitome of Book 68* 33.2-3; Loeb 8:422f.

Epilepsy as incomplete obstruction of brain cavities; apoplexy as complete obstruction – Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates*, 3.32; Westerink, 188; *ibid.*, 2.43; Westerink, 234-236. Sound “blinded” by a solid: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 8.3, 721b; Loeb 9:134f.

²¹⁵ Isaiah 35:5: תִּפְקְחֵנָּה – the stem פִּקַּח has the image of closing by blocking: VanGemeren 3:716-718; cf., אֵלֶּיךָ – VanGemeren 1:412 (for example: Isaiah 35:6, Psalm 38:14, Ezekiel 3:26, Isaiah 53:7).

²¹⁶ Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.2.6; *PTS* 43-44:17; *ANF* 2:89 - cf., medical blindness terms applied figuratively elsewhere: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 4.14; *SC* 50:190; *ACW* 31:72; Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis* 11; *SC* 381:164; *NPNF ii* 12:7.

language of the Samaritans, the same word is used for the veil of Moses as for blindness.²¹⁷

A second ancient model of disease provided a range of themes for interpreting impairment's causes – imbalance.

The human body has in itself blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile; these make up the nature of the body, and through these a person feels pain or enjoys health. Now a person enjoys the most perfect health when these elements are duly proportioned to one another...and when they are perfectly mingled.²¹⁸

This scheme was specifically applied to impairment. Paralysis and loss of perception were understood to be caused by an imbalance in humours, such as excess bile,

²¹⁷ Construction of eye and ear to reduce obstruction: Ambrose, *Exameron* 6.9.57-62; *CSEL* 32.1:248-253; *FC* 42:271-274.

Blinding dust: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Col.* 7; *PG* 62:347; *NPNF i* 13:290 - cf., Ambrose, *Exameron* 4.11; *CSEL* 32.1:110; *FC* 42:125f; Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 2.7-8; *CCL* 36:15-16; *NPNF i* 7:15f.

Blinding smoke: Ambrose, *De Cain et Abel* 2.1.5; *CSEL* 32.1:381; *FC* 42:405 - cf., Ambrose, *De fuga saeculi* 5.25; *CSEL* 32.2:185; *FC* 65:301; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 17.9; *PG* 63:134; *NPNF i* 14:450; Jerome, *Liber tertius adversus libros Rufini* 30; *CCL* 79:101; *NPNF ii* 3:534.

Jesus' use of dust to remove blindness: John Cassian, *De incarnatione Domini* 7.3; *CSEL* 17:357; *NPNF ii* 11:605f - cf., Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 2.16; *CCL* 36:19; *NPNF i* 7:18.

Gagged mouths: Augustine, *C. Faustum* 22.94; *CSEL* 25:700f; *NPNF i* 4:310 - cf., John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 2.6; *PG* 49:36; *NPNF i* 9:346.

Moses' veil: Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 5.11; *CSEL* 20:613; *ANF* 3:453f; cf., John Cassian, *De institutis* 5.34; *CSEL* 17:107; *NPNF ii* 11:245. See also in NT Paul's use of Moses' veil to describe the inability to see: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18. Samaritan word for Moses' veil and blindness: Preuss, 265.

²¹⁸ Hippocrates, *Nat. Hom.* 4; Loeb 4:10f. Cf., Health / Disease as body and soul matched / not matched "as friend set beside friend" – Plato, *Timaeus* 87d-88e; Loeb 9:236-243. "Now all our diseases arise either from things inside the body, bile and phlegm, or from things outside it: from exertions and wounds, and from heat that makes it too hot, and cold that makes it too cold": Hippocrates, *Morb.* 1.2; Loeb 5:100-103; cf., Hippocrates, *Acut.* 1.2.35-40, 59-61; Loeb 4:228-231; Hippocrates, *Nat. Hom.* 4; Loeb 4:10f; Hippocrates, *Aph.* 2.22; Loeb 4:112f; *ibid.*, 6.56; Loeb 4:192f.

See also: Grmek, 284-304; Nutton, "The Rise of Medicine," 53-64; Longrigg, 42-44, 52f, 66, 68, 71, 73, 76, 86, 90-92, 105f, 109-113, 116f, 136, 142-146, 148, 151-158, 178, 162, 173, 178; Phillips, 74f; E. Clarke, 308-312; Wallis Budge 2:29-40, 2:79f, 2:80f, 2:111, 2:123, 2:127f, 2:196; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 27-66; Nutton, "Humoralism," 281-291; Preuss, 142. See also, "Galen on the Causes of Disease" – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 220-230; Siegel, *Galen's System*, 196-215: "The Humoural Doctrine: Its Application in Health and Disease"; Siegel, *Galen's System*, 216-236: "Basic Properties of the Humours".

Onset of disease – "the cause of this is the structure of our bodies, which varies from time to time in the combination of its elements"/ "change in our way of life": Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 8.9, 733d; Loeb 9:198f; *ibid.*, 8.9, 734c; Loeb 9:202f.

Environmental imbalance also causes disease: "A man must observe the risings and settings of stars, that he may know how to watch for change and excess in food, drink, wind and the whole universe, from which diseases exist among men": Hippocrates, *Acut.* 1.2; Loeb 4:228f.

resulting from damage to nerves in the spine or parts of the brain from which the nerves of perception and mobility proceed. Similarly, the paralysis and loss of perception from the torpedo fish occurred because “an unknown quality emanating from the fish inactivated their nervous system by changing the balance of its constituent qualities.”²¹⁹ In Early Church writings too, excess bodily substance collected in one place was identified as a cause of infirmity in general. Speechlessness and paralysis in particular were said to result from excess bile, “as soon as ever the membrane that encloses it bursts, and there is nothing to hinder its being at once dispersed over the whole system.”²²⁰

Specific excesses or imbalances were seen to result in particular impairments. Excess cold or heat were said to cause (either in itself or in conjunction with other factors such as age or prior disposition) apoplexy in young children, epileptic seizures, paralysis,

²¹⁹ Specifically of perception – Longrigg, 58, 60, 68, 78; Phillips, 74; E. Clarke, 308-312; Buxton, 30; Wallis Budge 2:29-40, 2:79f, 2:80f, 2:111, 2:123, 2:127f, 2:196.

Nerve damage from humour imbalance: Siegel, *Galen's System*, 304-307. Torpedo fish: Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, 183.

Excess bile: causes eye disease: Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates*, 3.18; Westerink, 112; causes epilepsy: Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates*, 3.32; Westerink, 188; causes apoplexy and numbness: Aristotle, *Problemata* 30.1, 954a-954b; Loeb 16:160-165.

Cf., the different forms of epilepsy caused by overstimulation or inactivity of the brain, with an excess of stagnation of the humours - Siegel, *Galen's System*, 308-315

Excess and extremes in environmental conditions causing impairment– Longrigg, 38; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 150; E. Clarke, 308f; Roberts and Manchester, 10-14, 15-29, 201f; cf., Preuss, 140-142;

Hippocrates, *Aer.* passim; Loeb 1:65-137; Hippocrates, *Hum.* 12; Loeb 4:82-85. Loss of hearing from South wind – Celsus, *De medicina* 2.1.11; Loeb 1:90f; cf., Hippocrates, *Hum.* 14; Loeb 4:86-89: “South winds cause deafness, dimness of vision.” Paralysis from wet weather – Celsus, *De medicina* 2.1.12;

Loeb 1:90-93. Children born in winter and spring – debilitating effects on the children – Hippocrates, *Aer.* 10; Loeb 1:100f. Eye disease – greater incidence among the bilious in summer and autumn – Hippocrates, *Aer.* 10; Loeb 1:102f. Bandy-legs – in soft-skinned animals who live in holes – Aristotle, *De progressionem animalium* 16-17, 713b; Loeb 12:534-537 – βλαισότης...βλαισοῦται

²²⁰ Excess bodily substance as cause of impairment: Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.20; *CCL* 48:841; *NPNF* i 2:499. Inordinate bile: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 15; *PG* 62:106; *NPNF* i 13:122.

Compare too Timothy's infirmity explained as resulting from “excessive austerity, and intense fasting” - John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.8; *PG* 49:19; *NPNF* i 9:333.

arthritis, blindness, loss of hearing, and loss of speech.²²¹ The mobility impairment arising from the bow-shaped legs said to be characteristic of particular nations was attributed to excessive heat in their environment, as planks are warped in the sun. Democritus the philosopher was said to have blinded himself also through an excess of heat, “by fixing his eyes on a red-hot mirror and allowing its heat to be reflected onto his sight.”²²² Excess fluid and dryness were said to cause arthritis and blindness.²²³ Hearing was said to be lost in a similar way: “Excess of sound makes people deaf and stunned.” In Egyptian tradition, too much noise was understood to harm the body, even to the point of illness. People living near the Nile’s waterfalls no longer noticed the waters’ roar, being deafened by its great noise. Similarly, no one notices the turning of the constellations in the heavens because the constant noise of it has made all people deaf to their music. In a similar way, Augustine explained his inability to hear God in his early life: “I was become deaf by the rattling of the chains of my mortality.”²²⁴

²²¹ Apoplexy in children: Soranus, *Gynaecia* 2.8.12 (2.28.81); V. Rose, 251f; Temkin, *Soranus’ Gynecology*, 81.

Epilepsy: Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 1.4; Adams, 54f, 297; cf., Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 245f; Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 13; Loeb 2:164-169; *ibid.*, 16; Loeb 2:170-173.

Paralysis: Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases*, 1.7; Adams, 65, 307f;

Hippocrates, *Epid.* 2.8; Loeb 7:200-203; Hippocrates, *Aer.* 3; Loeb 1:76f; Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 3.5.652d-e; Loeb 8:240f.

Arthritis: Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 2.12; Adams, 118-123, 362-365.

Blindness: Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.149; Loeb, 323; Celsus, *De medicina* 1.9.5; Loeb 1:76-78.

Loss of hearing: Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 1.4; Adams, 54f, 297; Celsus, *De medicina* 6.7.8a-b; Loeb 2:238-241.

Loss of speech: Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 13; Loeb 2:164-169; *ibid.*, 16; Loeb 2:170-173; cf., the frogs of Seriphus: Aelian, *De natura animalium* 3.37; Loeb 1:199. Old age “is a form of chilling” – Aristotle, *Problemata* 30.1, 955a; Loeb 16:166f; cf., Apoplexy in old people: congealed moisture from “the weakness of their natural heat” – Aristotle, *Problemata* 1.9, 860a; Loeb 15:8f.

²²² Excess heat and impairments: Hippocrates, *Aer.* 3; Loeb 1:76f; Pliny, *HN* 7.50.168-169; Loeb 2:618f; Aristotle, *Problemata* 11.60, 905b; Loeb 15:292f. Legs deformed by heat like planks: Aristotle, *Problemata* 14.4, 909a; Loeb 15:316-319. Democritus: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De curiositate* 521c-d; Loeb 6:506f.

²²³ Arthritis: Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* 3.18; Westerink, 112-114.

Loss of eye fluid: Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 5.1, 780a; Loeb 13:498-501; Hippocrates, *Epid.* 6.13; Loeb 7:222f. Cf., Excess moisture “dulls sight and hearing”: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De defectu oraculorum* 41, 432f-433a; Loeb 5:470f.

²²⁴ Excess noise deafens: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 19; *PG* 60:153; *NPNF i* 11:123f.

Looking directly at the sun was understood to cause blindness, and the theme of excess light causing impairment was commonly used, both literally and figuratively. In Jewish tradition, those who were blind were known ironically as “rich in light.”²²⁵ In a version of the Democritus blinding, the philosopher was said to have used the rising sun to make himself blind. In order to ensure keen eyesight, the eagle was said to make its two young look at the sun’s light, and whichever of the fledglings sheds tears first is killed as unfit “for the role of regal dominion over all birds.” Soldiers in Xenophon’s army were blinded by overexposure to snow, and the tyrant Dionysus of Sicily blinded prisoners by suddenly exposing them to overbright light after long periods of darkness.²²⁶ Saul was blinded on the Damascus road by “a light from heaven, brighter than the sun” [Acts 26:13; cf., Acts 9:3, 22:6]. There was believed, however, to be a tribe in India so hardy from exposure to the sun that their sages could stare at the sun all day and not go blind. Aristotle had an explanation for this process of blinding by excess

Egyptian tradition re too much noise: *AEL* 3:253. Deafening Nile and constellations: Ambrose, *Exameron* 2.2.7; *CSEL* 32.1:45; *FC* 42:50f - cf., *ibid.*, 6.9.62; *CSEL* 32.1:252; *FC* 42:274. Deafening chains: “obsurdueram stridore catenae mortalitatis meae” - Augustine, *Confess.* 2.2; *CCL* 27:18; *NPNF* 1:1:55. Cf., deafening noise of worldly cares: Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 23.20; *CCL* 143B: 1172; Marriatt, *et al.*, 3:32 - cf., *ibid.*, 30.5; *CCL* 143B:1505; Marriatt, *et al.*, 4:377f.

Qumran community on noise that deafens: Martinez, 101; Other Jewish traditions of deafening noise: Preuss, 290f; Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.11.6.487; Loeb 3:352; Whiston, 722. Cf., Sirach 38:28 - “The sound of the hammers deafens his ears”.

²²⁵ *Leviticus R.* 34.13; cf., the blind also known as having “too much light” - Talmud, *Pesachim* 3a. Over-exposure to the sun’s light causes blindness: Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 84a; Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De curiositate* 517b; Loeb 6:482f; cf., Schrage, 271; Wallis Budge 2:79f; *EJ* 4:1090. Cf., looking at sun directly at eclipse leads to blindness: Plato, *Phaedo* 48, 99d-e; Loeb 1:342f.

Eyes of newborn vulnerable to damage from injury or excess light: Soranus, *Gynaecologia* 2.17.37(2.37.106); V. Rose, 280f; Temkin, *Soranus’ Gynecology*, 109f.

Cf., “The very moon was blinded by morning and deserted the stars and her heavenly path” - *Greek Anthology* 7.241; Loeb 2:136f; see also: the sun and moon blinded by the God’s brilliance - *LOTJ* 1:25; *Leviticus R.* 31.9.

²²⁶ Democritus: Aulus Gellius, 10.17.4; Loeb 2:260f.

Eagle and young: Ambrose, *Exameron* 5.18.60; *CSEL* 32.1:186; *FC* 42:209; Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 8 (9).34, 620a; Loeb 11:304f.

Soldiers blinded by snow: Xenophon, *Anabasis* 4.5.12; Loeb 3:302f; Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, 80f. Prisoners blinded by sudden exposure to bright light: Siegel, *Galen on Sense Perception*, 80f.

light: “The movement which is already present in their eyes is so strong that it precludes the movement which comes from without.”²²⁷ Cicero explained loss of concentration in a similar way:

The same experience as often comes from gazing intently at the setting sun, that is of losing entirely the sense of sight; in the same way the mind’s vision, in gazing upon itself sometimes waxes dim, and for that reason we relax the steadiness of contemplation.²²⁸

Pliny, on the other hand, claimed the opposite, that over-thinking results in loss of sight: it “blinds the eyes by withdrawing the vision inward.”²²⁹

Excess darkness, as much as excess light, was understood to cause blindness. In Plato’s extended parable of the prisoners in the cave in the *Republic*, when the prisoners were released and start to walk about, they were so dazzled when they come into the sun’s light that they are unable to see, and when they return to the cave, the effect is the same: the excess darkness also blinds them. In a similar way, when Noah emerged after the rains into the light, John Chrysostom asks, “How could it be that in...raising his eyes to the sight of heaven he was not blinded and did not lose the sight of his eyes?” On the other hand, Noah and his family were also in darkness inside the ark for a whole year, so Chrysostom asks the corresponding question: “How did they not lose the sight of their eyes after living in this fashion for so long?”²³⁰ Augustine explains this

²²⁷ Indian tribe: Pliny, *HN* 7.2.22, Loeb 2:520f;

Aristotle’s explanation: Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 5.1, 780a; Loeb 13:498-501.

²²⁸ Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 1.30.73; Loeb 18:86f.

²²⁹ Pliny, *HN* 11.54.146; Loeb 3:522-525.

²³⁰ Blinding darkness: Schrage, 292; Wallis Budge 2:79f; night dims eyesight – Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 34b; lamps blinded by darkness – Aeschylus, *Choephoroe* 536f; Loeb 2:212f; “mine eyes the night makes dim” Euripides, *Rhesus* 736f; Loeb 1:221f; cf., Plato, *Respublica* 6.19, 508c; Loeb 6:102f. Plato’s prisoners in the cave: Plato, *Respublica* – 7.1, 515c; Loeb 6:122f; *ibid.*, 7.2, 516a; Loeb 6:124f; *ibid.*, 7.2, 516e-517a; Loeb 6:128f; *ibid.*, 7.3, 517c-518b; Loeb 6:130-133.

Noah: dazzled by light - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesis* 26.15; *PG* 53:235; *FC* 82:155; blinded by darkness - *ibid.*, 25.14; *PG* 53:224; *FC* 82:134.

phenomenon of blinding darkness in some detail: “The eyes, deprived of their food (for they feed on light), become wearied and weakened...they are quenched, and the very sense of sight dies as it were in them.”²³¹ In the New Testament too, darkness is said to cause blindness: “He who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” [1 John 2:11].

As before, the same impairment theme was applied in imagery. Ignorance, error, and wrong behaviour were frequently described in terms of a darkness that brings about blindness. Adam describes the moment of his sin: “our hearts were darkened...darkness fell over our eyes.” Similarly, too much exposure to the fear of death is a darkness that blinds: “Just as darkness, when it has been beheld too long, destroys the sight of the beholder, so death...is fatal to and deadens the sight that has beheld it, blinding it.”²³² It is perhaps in the sense of a blinding darkness that sight is said to be lost through looking at evil.²³³

²³¹ Augustine’s explanation: *Tractatus in Jo.* 13.5; *CCL* 36:132f; *NPNF i* 7:88.

²³² Adam’s moment of sin as darkness of heart and eyes: *Apocalypse of Adam* 1.12, 2.6; *OTPs* 1:712f. Cf., ignorance, error and wrong behaviour as blinding darkness: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 8.8; *SC* 50:252; *ACW* 31:122 – cf., Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 2.25.160f; *SC* 120:314; *FC* 80:137f; Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu sancto* 16.38; F. H. Johnson, 82; *NPNF ii* 8:24; Cyprian, *De opere* 13-14; *CCL* 3A:63f; *ANF* 5:479; *Acta Apost of Thomas* 28, *NTA* 2:350. Cf., Ignorance and deceit “darken their vision”: Lucian, *Timon* 27; Loeb 2:356f. Fear of death as blinding darkness: Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 20.49.376; *SC* 290:338; *FC* 89:282f. At the end times, “Everything will be blackened, there will be darkness throughout the earth, and people blind” – *Sibylline Oracles* 5.349-350; *OTPs* 1:401; cf., *ibid.*, 8.203; *OTPs* 1:423: “the sun, seeing dimly”; *Apocalypse of Adam* 5.10; *OTPs* 1:715.

²³³ Looking at evil – Jacob went blind from too much looking at Esau – *LOTJ* 5:281; cf., Talmud, *Megilah* 15a, 28a; of child / disciple: *LOTJ* 5:282. No dim sight in old age if not looked at unrighteousness – Talmud, *Megilah* 28a. Cf., Graeco-Roman traditions re sexuality and blindness – Buxton, 30-35, cf., 23, 26-28 (both physical and figurative blindness); cf., R. Parker, 235-256.

In Jewish tradition, righteousness and truth were said to blind like a dazzling light. Samael, for instance, was blinded by the brilliance shining from Moses' face, and objects associated with distinguished rabbis blind those who look on them. Truth was said to have other impairing effects, such as muzzling opponents or rendering them mute or deaf.²³⁴ In several traditions, divine lustre causes blindness in humans. The sun and the moon themselves, blinded by the divine brilliance in the heavens, are led through the sky by shining arrows. A person can be made blind even by looking at objects that reflect the glory or honour of God, such as a rainbow, a prince, or priests.²³⁵

²³⁴ Samael blinded at the brilliance shining from Moses' face – *LOTJ* 3:471; *Deuteronomy R.* 11.10. "The light of Truth hath shone forth again, and blunts the eyes of the false teachers" *Greek Anthology* 1.106; Loeb 1:44f. Scholar blinded by lustre from righteous scholar's chariot – *LOTJ* 6:330; Talmud, *Baba Mitzia* 85b; Rabbi blinded at seeing the steps of rabbi's heavenly throne – *Ecclesiastes R.* 9.9; Lost book of genealogies renders Sages' sight dim – Talmud, *Pesachim* 62b. Aseneth at the appearance of Joseph – *Joseph and Aseneth* 6.1; *OTPs* 2:208; cf., the similar reaction of Pharaoh's son: *ibid.*, 23.15-16; *OTPs* 2:241.

Compare the reaction to truth – opponents muzzled: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* Praefatio 5.16; Loeb 2:10; Whiston, 544; cf., Dogmatists "remain muzzled as regards each of these objections" – Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. mathematicos* 2.275; Loeb 2:382f; rendered mute at opponents' speech: Plato, *Symposium* 198c; Loeb 3:162f. Mute at the appearance of wisdom / virtue – Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.*, 3.29; Loeb Supplement 1:216; cf., *The Sentences of the Syriac Menander* 2.31-33; *OTPs* 2:593; *ibid.*, 2:311-313; *OTPs* 2:601; Talmud, *Gittin* 88a; at Socrates' discourses – "we were all astounded" – ἐκπεπληγμένοι ἔσμεν - Plato, *Symposium* 215d; Loeb 3:220f. Effects of Torah discourse – all become mute: Talmud, *Chagigah* 14c. Becoming deaf at learned discussion in Sanhedrin – Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 38a.

Blindness caused by too much looking in an Egyptian text: *ANET*, 429; cf., blindness from sensitiveness of perception: Wallis Budge 2:111.

²³⁵ Blinding brilliance of deity – Akkadian: *ANET*, 110; Assyrian: *ANET*, 113, 294, 300f; In Jewish trads – Schrage, 283; God's dazzling face: Ambrose, *De bono mortis* 11.49; *CSEL* 32.1:746; *FC* 65:106. Isaac blinded at looking at *Shekinah* – *LOTJ* 5:281; at Isaac's sacrifice, Abraham looked up and saw *Shekinah*, but as God was Abraham's friend, He did not kill Abraham, but made his son Isaac blind – *Genesis R.* 65.10.

Sun and moon blinded by brilliance in the heavens – *LOTJ* 1:25; *Leviticus R.* 31.9.

Too much looking at a rainbow / prince / priests renders dim sighted (also with the brilliant glory / honour / Name of God) – Talmud, *Chagigah* 16a; Preuss, 270f. However, the theme was also used (in the context of divine brilliance and impairment of the soul) that it was not excess light that caused blindness but the inability of the organs of perception to perceive the light: e.g., John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 2.4; *PG* 49:261; *NPNF i* 9:189.

Similarly, it was those incapable of seeing who were blind to Christ: "Jesus, accordingly, wished to show that His power was divine to each one who was capable of seeing it, and according to the measure of his capability" – Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.67; *SC* 132:442-444; *ANF* 4:458.

Human inability to endure the sight of God was expressed as a blindness at God's brilliance – even thinking about God can have the same effect.²³⁶

Drawing on the same disease model of imbalance, excesses in habits or behaviour were said to cause impairment. Too much alcohol was said to cause blindness, in the drinker themselves, or, in the case of pregnant mothers, in their child. This was explained in terms of the liquid making the body over-moist. Parallels were drawn between extreme drunkenness and paralysis: “for most people drunkenness ends in paralysis, when wine has completely beaten out and quenched the heat.” Over-eating and over-indulgence in sexual activity were seen to have similar results.²³⁷ Pindar described satiety in general

²³⁶ Eyes of multitude not strong enough to endure the sight of the divine – Plato, *Sophista* 39, 254a-b; Loeb 7:402f. Cf., Balaam: Talmud, *Nidah* 31a.

A phrase from Exodus 33:20 (“Who shall see my face and live?”), is interpreted as God's face in a similar way dazzling mortals: “For our eyes cannot bear the sun's rays and whoever turns too long in its direction is generally blinded”.

Blinding effect of God on human thought: Novatian, *De Trinitate* 2.51; *CCL* 4:14f; *ANF* 5:613; Hilary, *De Trinitate* 2.5; *CCL* 62:41f; *NPNF ii* 9:53.

Like a sunrise after darkness introduces light in stages to prevent blindness at the brilliance of full daylight, so humankind avoids injury by becoming accustomed to the Son as a stage towards looking directly at the Father – Novatian, *De Trinitate* 18.4-6; *CCL* 4:44; *ANF* 5:628.

Muteness as a reaction to God in Qumranic texts: Martinez, 203, 233, 281; Eve not worthy to entreat God – *Life of Adam and Eve* 8.2; *OTPs* 2:260; Moses speaks the name of God into the ear of Pharaoh – become mute: *Artapanus* 3.27.25; *OTPs* 2:901 (cf., “[Hear me, lord, whose secret name is unspeakable] at whose [name, when] the daimons [hear it, even they are terrified]” *PGM XXI.1f*; Betz, *GMP*, 259); all creation – Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 7b.

²³⁷ Excess alcohol – Schrage, 271; E. Clarke, 311f; apoplexy, with fear – Preuss, 306f. At drinking parties – Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 2.14; Loeb 10:10; Yonge, 758. Excess wine given deliberately to diminish perception: Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a (interpreting Proverbs 31:6).

Overmoist body of drunk mother at conception – Soranus, *Gynaecia* 1.10.39; V. Rose, 204f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 37f.

“Eye venom” of Phryx, the one-eyed drinker, warned by his doctor, “Beware of drinking; if you drink wine you will not see at all” – Martial, 6.78; Loeb 2:408f; cf., Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 3.5.15, 1114a; Loeb 19:148f.

Drinking and paralysis: Plutarch, *Mor., Quaestiones convivales* 3.5, 652d-e; Loeb 8:240f. Excess wine causes impairment of body and soul: John Chrysostom, *Adv. Judaeos* 8.1.1-5; *PG* 48:927-928; *FC* 68:206f.

Excess wine to infants causes diseases – Aristotle, *Politica* 7.15, 1336a; Loeb 21:626f. Cf., Spartan infants tested with wine: “For it is said that epileptic and sickly infants are thrown into convulsions by the strong wine” – Plutarch, *Vit., Lycurgus* 15.8-16.2; Loeb 1:252-5.

with an image of blindness, that it “dims the eagerness of expectation” – ἀμβλύνει.²³⁸

The proverbial association of blindness with wealth emerges within the same model:

Someone dreamt that he was carrying a large amount of shining gold on his shoulders. The man went blind because of the gold’s lustre. For it naturally dazzled the eyes of the man carrying it.²³⁹

Self-control and incontinence were understood in terms of health and “infirmity close to death” respectively – interestingly, total abstinence was included in the second category, and is described in the Talmud in terms of impairment. In general terms, impairment was understood in some circumstances to result from some deviation from a normal regimen of behaviour and health.²⁴⁰

Excess emotions also were seen to be the cause of impairment, sometimes bodily, as with excess pain causing spinal curvature, and sometimes in terms of impairment of the soul, as with passions such as rage: “From almost every cause the emotion of wrath

Excess eating: “increases the production of phlegm and thus makes the disease [epilepsy] incurable”: Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* 2.44; Westerink, 238; Brings “a numerous train of diseases”: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 7.5; Loeb 9:48f.

Over-eating as a cause of impairment in Early Church writers: physically - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Cor.* 39.16; *PG* 61:345; *NPNF i* 12:242; figuratively - Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.1.14.4; *SC* 108:36; *ANF* 2:241.

Excess sexual activity: Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 3.5.15, 1114a; Loeb 19:148f; Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 7.5; Loeb 9:48f.

²³⁸ Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 1.160f; Loeb 2:164f.

²³⁹ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 5.90; Pack, 323; White 242; Aulus Gellius, 10.17.4; Loeb 2:260f. Cf., traditions of blindness and wealth – Schrage, 277f. Cf., “King Uzziah, blinded by success and prosperity” – *LOTJ* 4:262. Luxury blinds: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 5.17-18; *SC* 50:209; *ACW* 31:87.

²⁴⁰ Abstinence – sexuality impaired at overlong discussions / denial of needs – Talmud, *Yevamoth* 62b. Self-restraint / incontinence as health / infirmity close to death – Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 14.106-107; Loeb 10:52; Yonge, 766.

Cf., Excess causing impairment: Graeco-Roman traditions re overstepping limit: Buxton, 30-35, cf., 23, 26-28 (both physical and figurative blindness); cf., R. Parker, 235-256. Oedipus’s temporary insanity as a blindness: Devereux, 39f.

Cf., the blindness of impiety – *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Levi* 13.7-8; *OTPs* 1:793. Blinded by sin: *ibid.*, *Joseph* 7.5; *OTPs* 1:821. Blinded by the spirit of jealousy – *LOTJ* 2:192. War – Schrage, 279 (cf., injuries of war). Blinded by corruption – Schrage, 285f; Egyptian – *ANET*, 410; cf., *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Benjamin* 4.2; *OTPs* 1:826. Blinded by treachery – Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.13.7.572; Loeb 3:376; Whiston, 726.

boils over, and blinds the eye of the soul.”²⁴¹ The blindness of a lover was “a commonplace” in the ancient world, but love was shown to have other impairing effects, including loss of speech and of hearing, numbness, and the smashing of limbs.²⁴² The emotion of great expectation is described in terms of loss of sight: “My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God” [Psalm 69:3; cf., Psalm 119:82]. The literal / figurative distinction is by no means a clear one, however. Medical writers included among the causes of bodily paralysis, “the vehement affections of the soul, such as astonishment, fear, dejection of spirits...great and unexpected joy...unrestrained laughter.” For these ancient writers, this was not the modern ‘hysterical paralysis’ often used by modern interpreters to explain Jesus’ healing of those with paralysis in the Gospels. Rather, ancient writers understood excess emotion as an “ultimate and vital cause” of physical impairment in the same terms as other causes of impairment, that is

Impairment a result of deviation from normal regimen of health: Preuss, 142.

²⁴¹ Pain – causes spinal curvature – Hippocrates, *Art.* 47.1-16; Loeb 3:294-297. Excessive anger causes blindness: John Cassian, *De institutis* 8.6; *CSEL* 17:155; *NPNF ii* 11:259 - cf., Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 50.14; *CCL* 36:439; *NPNF i* 7:283, *De sermone Domini in monte* 1.20.65; *CCL* 35:75; *NPNF i* 6:28; Origen, *C. Celsum* 4.74; *SC* 136:366f; *ANF* 4:530; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 17; *PG* 60:139; *NPNF i* 11:110f. Sudden rage: “per commotionis subitam caecitatem” - John Cassian, *Collationes* 19.14; *CSEL* 13:549; *NPNF ii* 11:495. Athanasius was said to behave unusually, for on his return from exile, he “was not like those who are blinded by unrestrained passion”: Gregory of Nazianzen, *Orat.* 21.30; *PG* 35:1117; *NPNF ii* 7:278. Egyptian text: *AEL* 1:121; cf., passions: of Romans – Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 6.2.6.138; Loeb 3:414-416; Whiston, 734; of Egyptian historians – Josephus, *C. Apionem* 1.25.226; Loeb 1:254; Whiston, 787; Apion – Josephus, *C. Apionem* 2.12.132; Loeb 1:344; Whiston, 801; cf., *ibid.*, 2.14.142; Loeb 1:348; Whiston, 802; cf., *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Dan 2.4; OTPs* 1:808; *LOTJ* 2:207; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 5.4; *SC* 50:202-203; *ACW* 31:82.

²⁴² Lovers as blind “a commonplace”: Gow, 198f. Cf., Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 1; Schrage, 277, 278f, 286; Plato, *Leges* 5, 731e; Loeb 10:338f; Herod – Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 1.23.3.438; Loeb 2:206; Whiston, 578. Love blinds, deafens, and breaks limbs – Grmek, 43f. Love has impairing effects (like an incurable disease): including speech impairment, loss of vision, helplessness and stupor – Demetrius, *De elocutione* 38.4; Loeb 22:92-95. See also: Gow on Theocritus’ *Idylls* – Love as a blind god “highly unusual in antiquity” and a few references given / in contrast: lover as blind “a commonplace” / also, Tyche “is similarly and unusually represented as blind and deaf” – Gow, 198f. Cf., Envy – “What an evil is envy! But it has something good in it; for it wastes away the eyes and heart of the envious” *Greek Anthology* 11.193; Loeb 4:162f.

as deviation from the natural balance, such as “refrigeration of the vital heat...humidity or dryness.”²⁴³

With some emotions, there is no clear distinction in the image between impairment from excess and impairment from injury. The sudden impact of shame or embarrassment is described in terms of paralysis and loss of speech. The effect is similar when the emotion is astonishment or shock: “the numbness of his whole body at the sight of so unexpected a scandal...the dimness of his eyes, his faintness, the paralysis of all his limbs.”²⁴⁴ When Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers, astonishment renders them mute [Genesis 45:3; cf., Micah 7:16]. In several ancient Near Eastern traditions, there is a stock pattern of the experience of fear at impending bad news: immobility, numbness and loss of speech. Ambrose says of the reaction to a lion’s roar: “Many animals who could outrun him will quail on hearing it, as if struck mute by some strange force.”²⁴⁵ Jeremiah uses a similar image to describe the effects

²⁴³ Excess emotions of various kinds as the cause of paralysis: Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 1.7; Adams, 65, 307f. We can compare Claudius’ inability to walk on the news that he was to be emperor – a mixture of excess fear and excess joy: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 19.3.1.220; Loeb 9:316; Whiston, 515.

²⁴⁴ Effect of shame: paralysis - Jerome, *Epist.* 147.6; *CSEL* 56:321; *NPNF ii* 6:292; speechlessness - Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 1.8; *CCL* 1:22; *ANF* 3:117; cf., Talmud, *Mo’ed Katan* 25b. Astonishment / Shock – Scandal: Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 1.4.7; Loeb 1:112f; Wrongful arrest: Polybius, 20.10.9; Loeb 5:228f; cf., Plato, *Gorgias* 486a-b; Loeb 3:392f; cf., *ibid.*, 527a; Loeb 3:528f: “you would be all dizzy and agape without a word to say.” Cf., other examples of the impairing effects of shock: Herodotus, 1.116; Loeb 1:150f; *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 281-282; Loeb, 308f; Callimachus, *Hymn to Athena* 83; Loeb, 118f; Dio Chrysostom, 62.16.5; Loeb 5:112f; Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 731; Loeb 2:322f; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 14.11.6.292; Loeb 7:604; Whiston, 384; cf., *ibid.*, 6.14.3.337; Loeb 5:336; Whiston, 177; Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 6.3.4.210; Loeb 3:436; Whiston, 737; cf., *ibid.*, 7.6.4.199; Loeb 3:562; Whiston, 760; Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 32.238; Loeb 10:124; Yonge, 779; cf., *ibid.*, 35.266-267; Loeb 10:136; Yonge, 781; *Testament of Job* 25.10; *OTPs* 1:850; *LOTJ* 4:437; *Exodus R.* 42.4; *Genesis R.* 97 (footnote 1). Compare the Qumranic texts in which evil done or said has such an effect on those who see or hear that bones are fractured, or they are made blind or deaf: Martinez, 342, 347 (contrast, however, *ibid.*, 376). Cf., Akkadian: *ANET*, 110, 111, 439; Assyrian: *ANET*, 113; Ugaritic: *ANET*, 136; Egyptian: *ANET*, 439; Sumerian: *ANET*, 613; Jewish:

²⁴⁵ Fear at impending bad news: Egyptian – *ANET*, 19, 21, 236f, 244, 434; Akkadian – *ANET*, 79, 82; Ugaritic – *ANET*, 132, 136f, 154, 147; Sumerian – *ANET*, 652; cf., Atossa’s reaction of grief: Aeschylus, *Persae* 206; Loeb 1:124f. Sudden fear as reaction to sound or sight of wild animal: Ambrose, *Exameron*

of God's message to him: "My heart is shattered within me, all my bones shake... because of the Lord and because of His holy words" [Jeremiah 23:9]. Even a curving of the spine, as well as loss of hearing and sight, are said to be caused by such emotions: "I am bowed down so that I cannot hear, I am dismayed so that I cannot see" [Isaiah 21:3; cf., Deuteronomy 28:65f; Jeremiah 8:21; Psalm 35:14]. Again, the literal / figurative distinction is not helpful. Medical writers used the disease model of imbalance to explain physical impairment from shock: a sudden drop in breaths, a hardening of the brain, the blood becoming still, and phlegm separating away and flowing in excessive amounts.²⁴⁶

With sorrow and grief, several images were used in association: the sudden blow of emotion, emotion in excess, and the effect of excess fluid in the eyes. It is an image used several times in the Hebrew Bible: "My eye grows dim through sorrow" [Psalm 89:3; cf., Psalm 6:7; Psalm 77:4; 1 Samuel 2:33; Job 17:7; Lamentations 5:17].

Through his extreme grief at the loss of Joseph, Jacob was said to have lost both his physical and prophetic sight. On one tradition, Zedekiah was blinded, not by the instruments of the Babylonians, but through excessive weeping at the fate of his children. Greek tradition was similar: "The father's mourning eyes drenched with tears

6.3.14; *CSEL* 32.1:212; *FC* 42:235 – *ibid.*, 6.4.26-27; *CSEL* 32.1:222f; *FC* 42:244f. Cf., John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio*, 6.12, 13; *SC* 272:348, 350, 356; *NPNF* i 9:81, 82 – cf., *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 9:39; Festugiere, *Historia*, 73; *LDF* 81.

Other examples of fear causing impairment: - Muteness and Paralysis: Homer, *Iliad* 10.374-376; Loeb 1:462f; Plutarch, *Vit.*, *Sulla* 26.4; Loeb 4:408f; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 2.6.8.139; Loeb 4:226; Whiston, 62; cf., Preuss, 302f; Schrage, 277; *AEL* 1:86, 1:189; - Blindness: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 6.2.6.138; Loeb 3:414-416; Whiston, 734; Livy, 44.6.17; Loeb 13:110f; - Lameness: Preuss, 237; Homer, *Iliad* 3.33-35; Loeb 1:118f; - Clubfoot: Preuss, 233. Cf., Plutarch describes superstition as "a fear which utterly humbles and crushes a person": Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De superstitione* 2, 165b; Loeb 2:456f.

ἐκταπεινοῦντος καὶ συντρίβοντος.

have lost their sight.” Isaac was said to have lost his sight from the tears of the angels that fell into his eyes as Abraham was about to sacrifice him. In Jewish tradition, it was for this reason that tears were created salty, to prevent this blindness from excess weeping.²⁴⁷

Just as excess was used for the cause of impairment on the disease model of imbalance, so deficiency also was used for impairment causation. Too little food was recorded as causing loss of speech – explained by medical writers as excess fluid from the collection of heat blocking “the channel of breath.”²⁴⁸ Deficient food was also said to cause blindness in asses [Jeremiah 14:6]. Applying a similar notion in imagery, a deficiency of human desires such as expectation, memory, and hope were said to blind and deafen a person. Modesty and deficient boldness were also said to have a severe impairing effect - παντᾶ πασιν ἀναπηροῦσθαι. Drawing on the same theme, Plato stated that a soul that has too little contact with the Muse becomes deaf and blind.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Medical explanation of impairment from shock: Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 13; Loeb 2:164-169; *ibid.*, 16; Loeb 2:170-173; Cf., ἀφασια as a technical term for loss of speech from fear or perplexity – *LSJ*, 287; Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 247.

²⁴⁷ Zedekiah and his children: *LOTJ* 4:293. Jacob and the loss of Joseph: *LOTJ* 2:80. Father’s grief: *Greek Anthology* 7.389.5f; Loeb 2:208f; cf., “The wife’s weeping blinded her”: Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 7.4; Loeb 2:86f. Cf, other traditions of impairment from grief: Babylonian: *BWL*, 36; Canaanite: Gibson, 73 (impaired in heart); Akkadian: *ANET*, 597; Pompey’s wife: Plutarch, *Vit., Pompeius* 74.2; Loeb 5:308-311. Jewish traditions – Schrage, 271; Martinez, 339, 348, 368; Vermes, 206, 216, 220, 235f; Preuss, 267; Preuss, 70f; Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.1.5.32; Loeb 3:208, 210; Whiston, 698; *Lamentations R.* 5.17. Cf., depression causing muteness – Hippocrates, *Epid.* 7.89; Loeb 7:388f.

Isaac blind in old age as eyes weakened from tears of angels at his sacrifice – *LOTJ* 1:328; *Genesis R.* 65.10. Tears are salty to prevent blindness from constant weeping – *Numbers R.* 18.22; cf., Talmud, *Shabbath* 151b.

²⁴⁸ Dietary deficiencies as cause of impairment: “I am speechless for want” – Theognis, 669f; Loeb 1:310f; medical explanation: Aristotle, *Problemata* 8.9, 888a; Loeb 15:182f. Cf., dietary deficiency currently as the major cause of impairment in developing countries: Coleridge, 64-66, 99-109.

²⁴⁹ Taking away expectation / memory / hope / desire / fear / grief / attention: blinds and deafens – Plutarch, *Mor., Brut. anim.* 960f-961a; Loeb 12:328-331. Modesty – and deficient courage / boldness after several generations has the effect of impairment: Plato, *Politicus* 310d-e; Loeb 8:192f - παντᾶ πασιν ἀναπηροῦσθαι. Too little contact with the Muse – the soul becomes feeble, deaf and blind: Plato, *Respublica* 3.18, 411d; Loeb 5:292f.

The causation of impairment was not only understood in terms of disease models but was also identified with specific diseases. This fits with current analysis of human remains from the ancient world: the occurrence of impairment resulting from disease was “frequent.” Paleopathologists have identified a wide range of diseases that caused impairment of perception and mobility, such as metabolic disorders, dietary deficiencies, rheumatic and joint diseases, and tumours affecting organs and bones.²⁵⁰ Also, congenital conditions of impairment were widespread, and many people with these conditions survived into adulthood. Ancient medical writers understood congenital impairment in terms of the seminal material: “The disease was inherent in the seed itself at the moment of conception.” Congenital deafness was understood necessarily to result in muteness.²⁵¹ An example from written ancient material of

A deficiency in one’s opponents described in terms of impairment – possibly deficiency on the imbalance disease model or mutilation: non-philosophers: Schrage, 277f, 286; cf., Grmek, 40-42; cf., non-religious elite: Martinez, 6f, 18, 33, 47f, 253; Vermes, 335; non-continent: Schrage, 285f; idolaters: Schrage, 286; Vermes, 333.

²⁵⁰ Impairment from metabolic disorders: Grmek, 75; Sandison and Wells, 521-531; Roberts and Manchester, 180-183, 184f; Filer, 77f; Hydrocephaly – Nunn, 79f and Filer, 66 (with similar effects as a stroke; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 156-158. Impairment from dietary deficiencies: Stringer and Gamble, 94f; Nunn, 83; Grmek, 75-77; Longrigg, 216f; R. Jackson, 80; Roberts and Manchester, 164, 167-180; Filer, 18-21; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 158-160; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 64-67; Wells, 115-121; Impairment as consequence of dietary deficiencies: Coleridge, 64-66, 99-109. Impairment from rheumatic and joint disorders: Grmek, 77-85; cf., 245-248; Bourke, “Review of the paleopathology,” 352-370; Salib, 600f; Filer, 78-81; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 143-145; Zivanoic, 142-155; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 75-89. Impairment from tumours: Sight lost through eye cancer – Grmek, 72; cf., Aristophanes, *Plutus* 581; Loeb 3:416f; Rogers, 64f; Loss of speech from calcified larynx – Grmek, 74; Tumours on the tongue – Wallis Budge 2:107f; Tumours in ear – Wallis Budge 2:111; Bones – Roberts and Manchester, 187-189; Filer, 75f; Zivanoic, 135-141. Galen on damage to spinal cord and peripheral nerves from tumours: Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 239-244.

²⁵¹ Congenital impairment in the writings of paleopathologists and medical historians: Grmek, 69: “Genetic instability is very pronounced in ancient skeletons [in Greece]”; Brothwell, “Major Congenital Abnormalities,” 423-443: various congenital anomalies of skeleton – people survived with these conditions; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 161-168; Brothwell and Powers, 173-203; Roberts and Manchester, 30-43; Filer, 53-66; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 47-55; Congenital dislocations of limbs: Grmek, 71; Clubfoot – Grmek, 71; Salib, 599f; Nunn, 79; Filer, 63f; Dwarfs – Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, passim – little written Egyptian evidence re congenital impairments: *ibid.*, 101; Brothwell, “Major Congenital Abnormalities,” 432-435; Nunn, 78f; Filer, 53-61; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 158, 162f, 165f, 170-172; Preuss, 201. Impairment “inherent in the seed”: Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* 2.44; Westerink, 236. Congenital muteness and deafness

someone with an identified congenital impairment is the grandson of Caesar's great friend Quintus Pedius; born mute, he was encouraged by Augustus to take up painting.²⁵² Such conditions occur frequently in the discussions of ancient medical writers. In Jewish tradition, as we saw above, God temporarily suspended the birth of infants with congenital impairments so that the Egyptians would not be able to accuse the Hebrew midwives from attempting infanticide. There are also the traditions in Graeco-Roman myth of Hephaistus and Horus having congenital impairments.²⁵³

Another cause of impairment related to disease that ancient writers discussed in detail is infection. It was clearly understood that wound infection ran a high risk of amputation. Medical writers describe in detail techniques for limb amputation. Philosophers refer to amputation as a praiseworthy example of putting what is profitable before what is

together: *Digest* 29.2.5; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:875; *ibid.*, 40.2.10; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:426; *ibid.*, 40.9.1; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:470; Talmud, *Yevamoth* 39a; Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 4.9, 536b; Loeb 10:80f. On occasions, congenital impairment can be removed: Cicero, *De divinatione* 2.46.96; Loeb 20:478f.

²⁵² Few identified people with congenital impairments: grandson of Caesar's friend: Pliny, *HN* 35.7.21; Loeb 7:274-277; Child with a single hand: Livy in Julius Obsequens, 52; Loeb 14:286f. Cf., Ethiopian tribes whose mouths are sealed / have no tongue – who communicate by gestures: Pliny, *HN* 6.35.188; Loeb 2:478f.

²⁵³ Medical writers on congenital impairment:

- a) Ankylosis – Hippocrates, *Art.* 21; Loeb 3:246f.
- b) Dislocation – Hippocrates: *Art.* 53.51f; Loeb 3:322f; *ibid.*, 55.28; Loeb 3:328f; *ibid.*, 56.1-2; Loeb 3:330f; Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 5.18; Loeb 3:406f; *ibid.*, 18.1-4; Loeb 3:416f; *ibid.*, 20.8; Loeb 3:418f; *ibid.*, 21.13f; Loeb 3:418f; *ibid.*, 23.26-28; Loeb 3:422f; *ibid.*, 24.16f; Loeb 3:424f.
- c) Clubfoot – Hippocrates: *Art.* 62.1-8; Loeb 3:346f; Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 32.1-7; Loeb 3:428-431.
- d) Muteness: Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 1.11, 492b; Loeb 9:46f.
- e) Deafness: Celsus, *De medicina* 7.8.1; Loeb 3:358f.

Impairments that develop in childhood:

- a) Paralysis: Celsus, *De medicina* 2.8.14; Loeb 1:136-139; Pliny, *HN* 7.16.76; Loeb 2:554f.
- b) Kyphosis: Celsus, *De medicina* 2.1.19; Loeb 1:94f.
- c) Congenital blindness and deafness in animals – Aulus Gellius, 6.6; Loeb 2:36f; cf., Pliny, *HN* 11.50.139-140; Loeb 3:518-521.

Other examples of congenital impairments - Dwarfism: Talmud, *Bechorath* 45b; *Song of Songs R.* 11.44; Muteness: Pliny, *HN* 6.35.188; Loeb 2:478f; In general: *LOTJ* 2:253; *Exodus R.* 1:15. The phrase "blind from birth" - τὸν ἐκ γενετῆς τυφλόν - used in the Gospels appears to have been widely used in various genres, for example: Pausanias, 4.12.10; Loeb 2:240f; Pliny, *HN* 11.55.149; Loeb 3:524-527.

pleasant. It is possible that there was some level of narcosis available for medical amputation (apparently denied in penal amputation). Medically amputated limbs were sometimes buried, along with abortions and miscarriages, in burial mounds close to cemeteries.²⁵⁴ When applied in imagery, mutilation and amputation are both encouraged and discouraged. In the Early Church, following Matthew 5:29-30, the eye or a hand causing sin that is to be plucked out or cut off are explained as referring to friends, family, spouses, particular clergy or members of congregations. Elsewhere, following Paul's body image of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, it was urged that those who are less able and less important are to not to be discarded: "For when they are cut off, the whole body is destroyed."²⁵⁵

Human remains illustrate the frequency and severe consequences of eye infection:

"There is no doubt that eye diseases were amongst the most common afflictions of the time." Many individuals were identified as having become blind from an eye infection,

God prevents any impaired children being born under Hebrew midwives: *LOTJ* 2:253. Hephaistus: Homer, *Iliad* 18.395f; Loeb 2:316f; Horus: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De Iside et Osiride* 373c; Loeb 5:132f - ἀνάτηρον.

²⁵⁴ Wound infection and amputation: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 134f; R. Jackson, 68, 112-137; Ghalioungui, 65; Ackernecht, "Primitive Surgery," 640f; Roberts and Manchester, 89-91; Wells, 93-96; Preuss, 12, 233f, 346.

Technique of amputation: Celsus, *De medicina* 7.33.1-2; Loeb 3:468-471; *ibid.*, 8.2.1- 8.3.11; Loeb 3:492-503; amputation because of gangrene – "the majority of such patients survive" – Hippocrates, *Art.* 69.1-76; Loeb 3:360-367; *cf.*, Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 35.1-28; Loeb 3:432-435; *ibid.*, 42; Loeb 3:448f; *Exodus R.* 1.15; Talmud, *Shabbath* 66a, 66b (above and below knee amputation).

Medical amputation as praiseworthy: putting what is profitable before what is pleasant – Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 5.33-35; Loeb 8:330-332; Yonge, 667; Philo, *Aet. Mund.* 9.48-51; Loeb 9:216-218; Yonge, 712. Possible narcosis with medical amputation, in contrast to penal: Preuss, 234.

Burial of amputated limbs: Preuss, 195.

²⁵⁵ Mutilation - encouraged: Jerome, *Hom. in Matt.* 85; *CCL* 78:503-506; *FC* 57:196-8 - *cf.*, Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 21.9.13; *CCL* 48:774; *NPNF i* 2:460f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 57.3; *PG* 59:314; *NPNF i* 14:206; prohibited: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.1-6; *PG* 61:257-262; *NPNF i* 12:181-184; *cf.*, the mutilating effects of envy: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Gal.* 3; *PG* 61:648; *NPNF i* 13:24.

including Homer, and the topic was copiously discussed by ancient medical writers.²⁵⁶

Again, writers made use of this theme figuratively. Blind poets were said to be imitating Homer: “They do not believe it possible to become a poet otherwise... Their poets caught from Homer, as it were, a case of sore eyes.”

Despite difficulties in interpreting the evidence, paleopathologists agree that there was also a “high incidence” of other impairments caused by infection, including deafness, spinal curvature and paralysis. Ancient medical texts discuss various impairing effects of infectious diseases (and legal texts make reference to impairment from disease). For example, certain fevers brought limb paralysis that did not disappear once the fever left, infection in organs of perception (indicated by the accumulation of pus) could leave permanent damage, and when it came to joint dislocation, disease was identified as the “the principal cause”: Hippocrates remarks, “such things often happen.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Blindness from disease: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 100; Schrage, 271; Grmek, 25-27; “There is no doubt that eye diseases were amongst the most common afflictions of the time” R. Jackson, 82f, cf., 84, 121-123, 161; cf., Preuss, 270; cf., *EJ* 4:1088-1090; Wallis Budge 2:74-84; cf., Ebell, 94-106; ABD 6:12. Cf., Sandison, “Diseases of the Eye,” 457-463: “More abundant and more readily interpreted than that concerning other organs or systems” (p. 457);... “conclusive evidence that ophthalmic diseases were common... that these diseases often resulted in blindness is evidenced by the frequency with which the condition is mentioned in the literature and portrayed artistically” (p. 462).

Sight lost from eye infection: Wallis Budge 2:81-83; Nunn, 197-202; Filer, 13f: eye infection “often led to blindness”; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 119; Wells, 32, 114; Preuss, 267-270. Homer went blind from eye infection – (as did Thamyris): Pausanias, 4.33.7; Loeb 2:356f. Examples of blind poets in Pausanias – Thamyris and Homer: 4.33.7; Loeb 2:356f; Phalysius: 10.38.13; Loeb 4:604f; Phormio: 7.5.7; Loeb 3:194f. Figurative eye infection used of poets imitating Homer: Dio Chrysostom, 36.10f; Loeb 3:430f. Medical writers on blindness from eye infection: Celsus: *De medicina* 6.6.1a-1m; Loeb 2:184-193; *ibid.*, 6.6.32; Loeb 2:220f; *ibid.*, 6.6.37-38; Loeb 2:224-227; Hippocrates: *Epid.* 1.12; Loeb 1:164f; *ibid.*, 2.5; Loeb 7:76f; *ibid.*, 5.82; Loeb 7:206f; *ibid.*, 6.7; Loeb 7:268-271; *ibid.*, 7.26; Loeb 7:332f; *ibid.*, 7.45; Loeb 7:348-351; *ibid.*, 7.57; Loeb 7:360-363; *ibid.*, 7.87; Loeb 7:388f; Hippocrates, *Morb.* 2.8; Loeb 5:200-203; Pus in eyes – Wallis Budge 2:81-83; Skin of the eye goes black – Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 5.1, 780a; Loeb 13:498-501. Ptolemy – *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.149; Loeb, 323 – if Saturn in aspect at birth, blindness will come as a result of glaucoma.

²⁵⁷ “Such things often happen” – Hippocrates, *Art.* 55.31-33; Loeb 3:328f; cf., *ibid.*, 56.1-2; Loeb 3:338f. Paleopathologists on impairment from infection (not eye disease) – In general: R. Jackson, 180-184; Deafness – “very high” incidence – Roberts and Manchester, 131f, cf., *ibid.*, 127, 131-133. Diseases of ear (ear infection) causing deafness: Sandison, “Pathological Changes,” 225; Nunn, 94; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 134; Hippocrates, *Epid.* 2.5; Loeb 7:74f; *ibid.*, 5.24; Loeb 7:174f; *ibid.*, 5.66; Loeb

2.7 Ageing

It was a commonplace in many genres of ancient literature that age was a cause of impairment: over time, the body “crumbles and grows faint and weak with age.”²⁵⁸ We

7:198f; *ibid.*, 7.63; Loeb 7:366f; Pus in ears causing deafness: Wallis Budge 2:111; cf., Ebell, 107-111. See also, McKenzie and Brothwell, 464-473 – but difficulties in interpreting the evidence: *ibid.*, 472. Effects of T.B. on bones and spine (hunchback) – Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 127f; Grmek, 177-197; Morse, 249-271, 241; cf., T.B. as φθίσις - Pease, *passim* & Meinecke, *passim* (?cf., Preuss, 309); Celsus, *De medicina* 3.22.3-14; Loeb 1:324-333; external pressure from T.B. on the spine: Rowling, 272-278; Roberts and Manchester, 126f, 135, 137-142, 150-159 (high incidence); Nunn, 73f, 93; Filer, 67-72; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 135f; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 98-102; Effects of parasite (affecting joints): Nunn, 70f; Filer, 11f. Poliomyelitis: Salib, 599f; Roberts and Manchester, 124f, 129f, 134f; Nunn, 76f; Filer, 74f; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 111-113. Impairment resulting from Athenian plague: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 3; Phillips, 20; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 155f. Impairment from leprosy: Grmek, 133-151, 198-244; Moller-Christensen, 295-306; Roberts and Manchester, 142-150; Nunn, 74f; Filer, 73f; Brothwell, *Digging Up Bones*, 137f. Impairment from Syphilis: Grmek, 152-176; Janssens, *Paleopathology*, 51, 103-110. Ancient medical texts – Muteness - Pus in tongue: Wallis Budge 2:107f, 196f; Hippocrates, *Morb.* 2.6; Loeb 5:198f; Hippocrates, *Acut.* (Appendix), 28; Loeb 6:292f. Lameness: Hippocrates, *Epid.* 7.87; Loeb 7:388f. Spinal curvature: Hippocrates, *Epid.* 7.71; Loeb 7:372f; Hippocrates, *Art.* 41.1-65; Loeb 3:278-283. Paralysis: Hippocrates, *Epid.* 1.12; Loeb 1:164f; *ibid.*, 2.2; Loeb 7:42-45; *ibid.*, 5.82; Loeb 7:206f; *ibid.*, 6.7; Loeb 7:268-271; *ibid.*, 7.8; Loeb 7:310f; Hippocrates, *Morb.* 2.6; Loeb 5:198f; *ibid.*, 2.7; Loeb 5:200f; *ibid.*, 2.8; Loeb 5:200-203. On dislocations: “disease is the principal cause” – Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 21.13f; Loeb 3:418f; cf., *ibid.*, 23.26-28; Loeb 3:422f. Limb paralysis from mental disturbance at fever – does not disappear when fever goes: Celsus, *De medicina* 2.4.7; Loeb 1:104f. Permanent disabilities arising from disease: paralysis, muteness, lameness, blindness, deafness – Hippocrates, *Morb.* 1.3; Loeb 5:104f. Legal references to muteness and deafness from infectious disease: *Digest* 28.1.6; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:815; cf., *ibid.*, 28.1.25; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:818.²⁵⁸ In old age, the body “crumbles and grows faint and weak with age” – Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 5.832; Loeb, 398f; cf., “Bereft of all their senses by lapse of time” – Diodorus Siculus, 20.72.2; Loeb 10:334f. Cf., Animals that become maimed in time – Talmud, *Bechoroth* 61a (in contrast to animals deliberately maimed to prevent tithing – Talmud, *Bechoroth* 35b). But: older people not necessarily impaired – Plutarch, *Mor.*, *An seni respublica gerenda sit* 15-17, 791d-792f; Loeb 10:120-129. Compare: Blindness of old age from the deterioration of the body, not of the soul – Aristotle, *De anima* 1.4, 408b; Loeb 8:48f; cf., with blindness of old age comes increased insight into God – Isaac: Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.* 4.196; Loeb Supplement 1:484-486. Contrast: on losing his sight, Isaac also lost his insight – *Genesis R.* 97. Ancient writers on the impairments of age – In general: *ANET*, 483; *AEL* 1:62f; 1:229, 3:204; *ANET*, 12, 412; 4 *Maccabees* 7.13-15; *OTPs* 2:552f; Celsus, *De medicina* 6.6.32, 34; Loeb 2:220f; *ibid.*, 2.1.22; Loeb 1:96f; *Homeric* (Epigrams), 12.3f; Loeb, 427f; Pliny, *HN* 7.50.168-169; Loeb 2:618f; Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 610f; Loeb 2:484f; “the disabilities of age” (“imbecillum aetate”) – Tacitus, *Annales* 1.56; Loeb 3:338f. General characteristics of old age: include arthritis, apoplexy, loss of sight and hearing - Hippocrates, *Aph.* 3.31; Loeb 4:132-135. Particular impairments associated with old age:

have the biblical examples of Isaac, Jacob, Eli and Ahijah [Genesis 27:1, 48:10; 1 Samuel 3:2, 4:15; 1 Kings 14:4]. Impairment from old age applied to all living things: in early Jewish tradition, while the giants of the former age may have been much longer lived than humans, their bodies still decayed and withered. Similarly, in mocking the Israelites, the heathen Haman stated that he could attack them with impunity, for their deity was clearly of such a great age that He would be unable to see what happened to them, and certainly be incapable of defending them.²⁵⁹ This theme was applied in many ways: with tragic effect when describing the elderly and infirm Nestor visiting Achilles to retrieve his son's body, comically in the plays of Aristophanes, and with theological irony when the immortal and ever-in her prime Athene disguises the mortal Odysseus with impaired eyesight.²⁶⁰

Paleopathology supports this widespread theme of impairment from old age.²⁶¹ The impairments of ageing were explained by ancient medical writers as due to the fact that

a) Blindness: *AEL* 1:62f; Preuss, 73; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 1.18.5.267; Loeb 4:444-446; Whiston, 46; *Testament of Isaac* 4.8; *OTPs* 1:907; *Testament of Jacob* 2.1-4, 4.10; *OTPs* 1:914, 915f; *Jubilees* 26.1, 27.6; *OTPs* 2:106, 108; Talmud, *Gittin* 19b; Euripides, *Ion* 744; Loeb 4:74f; Augustus: "in his old age he could not see very well with his left eye" – Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 79.2; Loeb 2:244f; Timoleon in old age went blind: Plutarch, *Vit., Timoleon* 37.7-10; Loeb 6:350f.

b) Deafness: *AEL* 1:62f; Preuss, 78.

c) Mobility problems – Finlay, 406f; *AEL* 1:62f; lame from age – Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 3.125d; Loeb 2:80f; Euripides, *Ion* 739f; Loeb 4:74f; Odysseus' nurse – *Odyssey*, 23.1-3; Loeb 2:374f.

d) Paralysis – loss of movement in limbs: "senis ita perdit morbo" – Pliny, *Epist.* 8.18; Loeb 2:150f.

d) Hunchback – Hippocrates, *Art.* 47.1-16; Loeb 3:294-297.

e) Hand tremor – *Greek Anthology* 6.5.1f, 6.25.3; Loeb 1:300f, 310f.

Increased vulnerability to impairment in old age: old man gone blind at being struck: *The Sentences of the Syriac Menander* 2.79-81; *OTPs* 2:594; cf., increased age increases risk of paralysis – Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases*, 1.7; Adams, 64f, 307f. 63rd year of life – particular risk of disaster, including serious illness or impairment: Aulus Gellius, 15.7.1; Loeb 3:76-79.

²⁵⁹ Long-living giants: *LOTJ* 3:270. Haman on the ancient God of the Israelites: *LOTJ* 4:408.

²⁶⁰ Nestor: Homer, *Iliad* 23.623-629; Loeb 2:540f. Aristophanes: *Acharnenses* 703; Loeb 1:68f.

Odysseus: Homer, *Odyssey* 13.431-433; Loeb 2:32f.

²⁶¹ Paleopathological evidence of widespread impairment in old age: Longrigg, 64, 66; Neugebauer, passim; Nunn, 95; *EJ* 2:343; cf., *ibid.*, 4:1088-1090; Schrage, 271, 284; Finlay, 406f; E. Clarke, 308; Grmek, 70f, 85.

old age is “a form of chilling” and a “weakness of their natural heat.”²⁶² In non-medical genres, there were other theories for the onset of impairment in old age, such as impairment being a consequence of witnessing a lifetime of suffering: “cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs.” In early Jewish tradition, the loss of a person’s eyesight after many years of grief was described as “the clouds after the rain.” The theme was also applied in a more light-hearted way: older people were advised to make good use of their impairment, and turn their dim eyes and deaf ears to the behaviour of their children.²⁶³

In the Early Church too, disease and old age were recognised as causing impairment, and they were applied with both bodily and non-bodily senses in two key ways: disease that causes impairment is passed on “by a kind of contagion,” and impairment develops from disease over a long period of time. Sickness was said to spread from one part of

²⁶² Medical explanations: Impairment in old age because old age is “a form of chilling” – Aristotle, *Problemata* 30.1, 955a; Loeb 16:166f; cf., Aristotle, *De iuventute et de longaevitate* 1-6, 467b-470b; Loeb 8:412-427; cf., Hippocrates, *Epid.* 1.12; Loeb 1:164f. Cf., blindness and paralysis have greater effects on those in old age: “and those whose natural heat is failing” – Hippocrates, *Epid.* 1.12; Loeb 1:164f; Skin over the eyes becomes wrinkled and thicker – Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 5.1, 780a; Loeb 13:498-501; “When they are more than fifty years old, they are paralyzed by catarrhs supervening from the brain, when the sun suddenly strikes their head or they are chilled” – Hippocrates, *Aer.* 3; Loeb 1:76f; cf., *ibid.*, 10; Loeb 1:100f; Apoplexy: congealed moisture from “the weakness of their natural heat” – Aristotle, *Problemata* 1.9, 860a; Loeb 15:8f; Epilepsy – damage to the veins from epileptic seizures can cause permanent impairment for those who are old – Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 12.9-11; Loeb 2:164f.

²⁶³ Explanations in non-medical texts: blindness & deafness in old age after life of lewd acts: *Ecclesiastes R.* 11.8; Sufferings of a long life – strength impaired in old age: *Genesis R.* 97; cumulative weeping at troubles: “the clouds after the rain” – Talmud, *Shabbath* 151b; “cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs” – Hesiod, *Opera et Dies* 66; Loeb 6f. When supported by deity, age does not have its impairing effects – Assyrian: *ANET*, 312; cf., *Jubilees* 35.7-8; *OTPs* 2:122; *Joseph and Aseneth* 22.13; *OTPs* 2:239; Moses – *Deuteronomy R.* 9.5, 11.3; cf., Talmud, *Yevamoth* 49b, *Sotah* 13b (Moses greater than Adam); cf., no dim sight in old age if not looked at unrighteousness – Talmud, *Megilah* 28a. Figurative use of theme: Applying one’s impairments to the behaviour of one’s children: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De liberis educandis* 18, 13e; Loeb 1:64f; Long life: “has blinded then to their mortality” – *Genesis R.* 26.6

The effects of impairments through age discussed: Priests – disputes re age infirmities / blemishes: Talmud, *Chullin* 24a; priests unable to put forward 2 fingers at blessing – Talmud, *Yoma* 22a; cf., Talmud, *Sotah* 46a.

the body to another - it both impairs, and needs to be cut out: “In the case of our limbs, we cut off that which is rotten and incurable, fearing lest the rest of the body should catch the same disease.”²⁶⁴ Someone at the final stage of their illness shows a cluster of impairments, and in a similar way, impairment is linked to the degeneration that comes with old age: of the centenarian Abbot Chaeremon, John Cassian writes,

His back bowed with age and constant prayer, so that, as if he were once more in his childhood he crawled with his hands hanging down and resting on the ground...all his limbs had already failed and were dead.²⁶⁵

Both these themes were applied by the Early Church to impairment of the soul.

Impairment was said to result from the contagious company of heretics, or from the mutilating effect of envy as it spreads across a Christian community, the Body.

Impairment was also used to describe the effect of habits and behaviour that persist over long periods of time, such as long-standing attendance at spectacles and the festering wound of jealousy.²⁶⁶ The context of these impairment images is certainly wrong-doing, but the points of comparison in the images is not that wrong-doing causes bodily

²⁶⁴ Impairment resulting from disease passed on as contagion: “quodam operante contagio” - Augustine, *C. Julianum* 6.18.55; *PL* 44:855; *FC* 35:365f - cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 57.3; *PG* 59:314; *NPNF i* 14:206; cf., *Hom. in I Tim.* 7; *PG* 42:642; *NPNF i* 13:504; Cyprian, *De mortalitate* 12; *CCL* 3A:23; *ANF* 5:472. Impairment as a long term result of disease: Gregory of Nazianzen, *Orat.* 8.22; *PG* 35:813; *NPNF ii* 7:244; cf., Ambrose, *De Cain et Abel* 2.9.35; *CSEL* 32.1:406; *FC* 42:434; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 5.25; *SC* 50:212-213; *ACW* 31:91; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 8.8; *PG* 53:72; *FC* 74:109f.

²⁶⁵ Impairment associated with the degeneration of old age - Abbot Chaeremon: John Cassian, *Collationes* 11.4; *CSEL* 13:316; *NPNF ii* 11:416; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Cor.* 15.10; *PG* 61:127; 15.10, *NPNF i* 12:87; Augustine, *De diversis quaestionibus lxxxiii* 9; *CCL* 44A:16f; *FC* 70:41; Jerome, *Prologus Hiezecihelis prophetae* 7; Weber, 1266; *NPNF ii* 6:500; Jerome, *Epist.* 4.1; *CSEL* 54:20; *NPNF ii* 6:6; Augustine, *Epist.* 269; *CSEL* 57:654; *NPNF i* 1:593.

²⁶⁶ Figurative impairment –

a) passed as a contagion: heretics infect each other making themselves deaf to the truth - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Gal.* 1; *PG* 61:616; *NPNF i* 13:3; mutilating envy spreading across parts of the Body - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Cor.* 31.3-7; *PG* 61:259-264; *NPNF i* 12:182-185.

b) caused over time: destructive habit - Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 18.11; *CCL* 36:187; *NPNF i* 7:121f; persistent exposure to lewd spectacles - Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 1.32; *CCL* 47:32; *NPNF i* 2:20f; festering wound of jealousy - Cyprian, *De zelo et livore* 3; *CCL* 3A:76; *ANF* 5:492;

impairment, but that wrong-doing is like disease or old age: it results in impairment of the soul, just as age or some diseases result in impairment of the body. As with the contexts of impairment caused by disease, these uses of impairment imagery in the context of wrong-doing do not support the view that impairment was routinely believed to result from wrong-doing. On the contrary, the impairment images used in these contexts were drawn from established themes and were being used imaginatively to convey sudden and shocking impact, or painful and damaging loss.

At the end of this first section of the chapter, we can see how misleading is the emphasis in modern commentary on sin as the generally accepted cause of impairment in the ancient world. To the ancients, impairment was a natural part of human life – a hazard from conception to birth, present throughout childhood and adult life, and growing ever more pressing with the progress into old age. These understandings about impairment's causes have been collected from a wide range of ancient material; many of them occur also in biblical texts. These themes were clearly familiar, and, applied to both bodily impairment and impairment of the soul, were much used in the rhetorical dynamic of implied author and reader. While an actual reader might not appropriate for themselves all of the particular themes so far identified, there is much material to engage with, especially in the more general notion that impairment was seen as a natural and expected aspect of being human. The range of understanding was certainly much wider than is suggested by the uncritical modern assertion that, to the ancients, impairment was routinely understood in terms of punishment for sin.

3.0 *Demons and the Causes of Impairment*

It is regularly stated by modern commentators that disease in general, and impairment in particular, were frequently understood to be caused by demons or due to the activity of Satan.²⁶⁷ This interpretation also has its damaging legacy for people with impairments, who find themselves treated as demon-possessed.²⁶⁸ While the New Testament does refer to demons in the context of impairment, by investigating here a broader range of ancient perspectives in relation to demons and impairment, we see that this modern interpretation is misleading: it again takes no account of the range of themes that were present in the rhetorical dynamic of ancient texts.

3.1 *Demons and Impairment*

There were many shades of view about demons in the ancient world, both what they were, and to what extent they influenced human affairs.²⁶⁹ The New Testament differs

²⁶⁷ For the links made between disease and demons in the early Church and Biblical periods, see: Page passim; ABD 2:138-142; Frost, 206-210; Stol, 121-124; Schrage, 293; Wiseman, 18; Hemer, 45; Browne, 120; Sims, 165-190; Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*, 24-26, 75-79, 135-140; Amundsen and Ferngren, "The Early Christian Tradition," 54; Edelstein, 218-216; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 124.

²⁶⁸ A few examples: "The highly specific demon with a particular job function to cause a particular condition such as arthritis, cancer, paralysis etc": Horrobin, 146; "Bind and cast out the spirit of blindness. Command healing to the eyes and perfect sight to be restored. Command a creative miracle to the nerves, eye structures and brain" – Hunter and Hunter, *Handbook*, 117. Compare: Sandford and Sandford, passim; Wimber and Springer, *Power Healing*, 111-138; Wimber and Springer, *Power Evangelism*, 166-172; Howard, 79-97. For the effects of this view on a person with an impairment: Lay, *Seeking Signs*, 80-83.

²⁶⁹ Many shades of views as analyses of demons in the Bible demonstrate: for example, ABD 2:138-142, 4:464-471; Page, passim; C. Brown, *New International Dictionary* 3:362f, 4:47f; Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*, 25f, 68, 75-79; Sims, 165-190; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 375-377; M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, passim; Neusner and Green 1:162; *EJ* 5:1521-1533; Preuss, 139-141; *EEC* 1:226f. Cf., Hull,

from the Hebrew Bible in the understandings expressed of demons and their activity. This has been explained in terms of Babylonian influence on Jewish thought following the exile.²⁷⁰ Any transmission of beliefs relating to demons is not, however, straightforward. It is a commonplace in modern commentary that magic and medicine were “inseparable” in all cultures of the ancient world. Magic played such an important role in everyday life because the gods themselves were perceived as being “capricious...and dangerous”, while human beings were “inescapably at the whim of the forces of the universe.” A magician therefore was seen

as a crisis manager...a necessity to the lives of ordinary people...the magician could give people the feeling that he could make things work in a world where nothing seemed to work...[providing] the illusion of security to the insecure.²⁷¹

Disease was understood as one of these many forces at play in human life, and documents identifying demons as causing disease arise from the second century BCE. The belief that demons cause disease occurred in many cultures, not only those of the Ancient Near East.²⁷² Whatever the unprecedented application of rationality in Greek

Hellenistic Magic, 1-4, 22-72; Yamauchi, 89-183; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 21-26; Frost, 206-210.

²⁷⁰ This belief emerging with strength in Jewish thought after the Babylonian exile: Vermes, 61f, 65-69; Nickelsburg, 17f; Russell, 78; Yamauchi, 117-119; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 375-377; Joyce, 129; cf., *EJ* 5:1521-1533. Alternatively, strong Jewish association already with magic: Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 30-37; *ABD* 2:138-142. Particular aspects of the NT demonic tradition identified as having their origins in the East, e.g. the notion of demon possession: Stol, 52f.

²⁷¹ Magic and medicine in the ancient world: “inseparable”- Nunn, 112. See also, *ibid.*, 96-112; Preuss, 139-150; Temkin, *Falling Sick*, 3-27; R. Porter, “What is Disease?,” 83; Edelstein, 205-246; Scarborough, *Roman Medicine*, 143-148, 119f; R. Jackson, 138-169; Parker, 207-234; Dawson, “Egyptian Medical Papyri,” 106-110; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 1-8, 122-127; Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 20-44.

Relation of magic and religion: Betz, *GMP*, xli-lxiii; daily importance: *ibid.*, xli; gods as capricious: *ibid.*, xlv; humans at the mercy of forces of nature: *ibid.*, xlvii; role of magician as crisis manager and provider of illusion of security: *ibid.*, xlviii. See also: Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 99-107; *ABD* 4:464-471; Lane Fox, 36-38, 117, 143, 151; Faraone, 165-220.

²⁷² Demons as the cause of disease - Mesopotamia: Stol, 1-53; *ANET*, 435; Yamauchi, 99-103; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 128-139.

medicine, Graeco-Roman studies emphasise that here too “magical beliefs and practices can hardly be overestimated in their importance for the daily life of the people.” Greek medical writers may have denied any role to demons and magic in disease aetiology, but most people had no access to rationally based medicine.²⁷³ Even so, the view of some modern commentators that “demon aetiology of diseases was generally true for antiquity, including as a matter of course the biblical writers” overtips the balance, and the assertion that ancients held demon aetiology “as a matter of course” is inaccurate. There were many aspects of what people believed to be causing disease: some aspects of their belief systems may have included a role played by demons; other aspects clearly did not. Anthropologists have identified this variety of aetiology: “Rarely do communities have only a single theory of illness.”²⁷⁴

Egypt: Nunn, 96f, 103f; Yamauchi, 104-110; J. H. Johnson, lv-lviii; Ghalioungui, 52-58. Israel: Yamauchi, 115-119, 120-122; Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 38-41; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 21-26. Quoted dating of this belief: Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 21f. *PGM* 13.802; Betz, *GMP*, 191: “giving me health no magic can harm”; *PDM* xiv 690; Betz, *GMP*, 232: “Come to me and go and strike down him with chills and fever. That very person has wronged me”; prescriptions to cause / against “evil sleep” [interpreted at footnote *ad loc.* as catalepsy]: *PDM* xiv.675; Betz, *GMP*, 232; *PDM* xiv.706; Betz, *GMP*, 233; *PDM* xiv.711; Betz, *GMP*, 233; *PDM* xiv.716; Betz, *GMP*, 234f; *PDM* xiv.724; Betz, *GMP*, 234; *PDM* xiv.727; Betz, *GMP*, 234; *PDM* xiv.737; Betz, *GMP*, 234; *PDM* xiv.739; Betz, *GMP*, 234; *PDM* xiv.741; Betz, *GMP*, 234; *PDM* xiv.742; Betz, *GMP*, 235; *PDM* xiv.743; Betz, *GMP*, 235; *PDM* xiv.911; Betz, *GMP*, 241; *PDM* xiv.917; Betz, *GMP*, 241; To make someone mad: *PDM* xiv.1182; Betz, *GMP*, 249; “Charm to inflict illness” – *PGM* CXXIV.5; Betz, *GMP*, 321 (footnote *ad loc.*: κατακλυτικόν - 7 similar references); To make someone have insomnia: *PGM* LII.20; Betz, *GMP*, 284; Demons and disease in Hebrew / Rabbinic traditions: Yamauchi, 115-121, 121-124; Preuss, 139f, 144-150; ABD, 4:661f; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 375-377; cf., in HB, Job and his boils: Job 1:6-12. For a 20th Century appropriation: Greig and Springer, 118-120, 232-243, 413-420.

²⁷³ Unique rationality of Greek medicine: for the 1st time “emancipation of medicine from superstition” - Longrigg, 1; cf., 6-14, 26, 30f, 44-46. See also: Phillips, 75; Neusner and Green 1:162; Edelstein, 205-24 (esp. 219-226) – examples in medical texts of denial of any role of demons or magic in disease. Daily importance of magic: Betz, *GMP*, xli. An example of legislation against those who use sorcery to cause damage: Plato, *Leges* 11.932e-933e; Loeb 11:452-457.

Graeco-Roman traditions re disease and magic: Yamauchi, 110-115; “irrational elements not completely eradicated” – Longrigg, 3; cf., *ibid.*, 184f; Parker, 207-234; Stol, 1-3, 23, 38-41, 46, 49-53, 121-130; Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 3; Loeb 2:144-151; Schrage, 279; Garland, “Deformity and Disfigurement,” 39. Suppression of magical texts – Betz, *GMP* xlii; M. Smith, 1-7; Yamauchi, 117f.

Rational medicine beyond the reach of most people: Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 63f.

²⁷⁴ Modern “pan-demonological” views of disease and demons in the ancient world: Yamauchi, 92f; cf., *ibid.*, 93-98.

Impairment was understood to have associations with demons in a few quite specific respects. The first is the link made with epilepsy: “Protect her, O lord, [from all] evil acts [and from every] demonic visitation...[and from every] epileptic fit [and from all] epilepsy.” The association of demons with epilepsy has been recently studied in some detail. Certainly, the belief was common in several ancient cultures that demons caused epilepsy, along with any impairments that might result from an epileptic seizure. However, demons were not thought to cause impairments in general. This is borne out by an analysis of the magical texts themselves. While these texts show the belief outlined above that incantations and attempts at demon control could cause certain diseases, very few incantations make any direct reference to impairment (apart from epilepsy). As we shall see in Chapter 4, there is a similar absence of magical material, even of folklore in general, in relation to the removal of impairment. In this respect also, impairment is in marked contrast to disease.²⁷⁵

Several aspects to belief systems of the causes of disease, with and without demons: e.g., Yamauchi, 98-127, 142; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 73-88, 142-221;

²⁷⁵ Protection from epilepsy: *PGM CXIV.1-9*; Betz, *GMP*, 313. Demons and epilepsy: Temkin, *Falling Sickness*, 3-81; Stol, 1-53; Yamauchi, 101, 112-114; Epilepsy: from demons or the moon – Preuss, 299f; *Keteb* demon – *Numbers R. 12.3*; amulet allowed for those who fear epilepsy attack – Talmud, *Shabbath* 61a, *Kethuboth* 77a (footnote 1). Demons causing other impairments occurring within seizure - Paralysis: Stol, 25, 55, 74-81; Yamauchi, 101; Blindness: Stol, 126f. Epilepsy contrasted with other impairments in demon causation: Paralysis: Yamauchi, 110; Apoplexy: E. Clarke, 309, 314.

Some of the few incantations that do refer to impairment - Blindness – Talmud, *Avodah Zorah* 12b; *ACM*, (19), 20(45), 21(46), 91(192), 134(316); *PDM xiv.741*; Betz, *GMP*, 234: “If you put a nightjar’s blood to his eye, he is blinded”; cf., Nunn, 200; dazzled / blinded by hypnotic stare of serpent – Egypt: *ANET*, 12, cf., *ibid.*, 475; Muteness: *ACM*, 209, 198f; “Spell to silence” - *φίμωτικόν* - *PGM XLVI.4*; Betz, *GMP*, 282; “To make one bend down and not get up” – *PGM CXXVII.1*; Betz, *GMP*, 322.

An example of a general reference to demon-caused impairment: *ANET*, 435. Cf., this protection incantation: “I am the one who is in his [two sound] eyes, who protected his limbs in the soundness daily” – *PDM* supplement 65; Betz, *GMP*, 325. Anthropology on variety of belief systems concerning illness: Last, 644; cf., *ibid.*, 634-660.

A second association between impairment and demons was the theme that certain demons themselves had impairments. A Sumerian death demon, for instance, was said to have no hands or feet. Some of these demons with impairments were said to cause the same impairment in humans. In rabbinic texts, the demons' impairments caused them to gather at places unhealthy to humans, such as stagnant pools at night, where they entered humans and so brought about impairment in their hosts. As we saw above with other early Jewish traditions, theories of impairment causation were used to promote particular social behaviours; in this case, it appears that demonic activity was used to encourage personal hygiene.²⁷⁶ Links were made too to other impairment themes: the demon Sammael, whose own name is 'Blindness', was dazzled by the excess of divine light shining from the face of Moses. Another link was between demons and non-bodily impairment. Demons were said to lead people astray: they blind human minds with error or with passions of jealousy or anger. In this double sense of both blind and blinding guide, they were referred to as spirits of error.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Sumerian death demon: *ANET*, 51. Demons both with and causing impairment: Stol, 122; *PMG* CXIV.1-14; Betz, *GMP*, 313. See also: *ACM*, 46, 316; *The Lives of the Prophets* 4.10-11; *OTPs* 2:390. Demons causing impairment in these respects understood in terms of rational medicine: Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 40.

Rabbinic links to hygienic behaviour: Talmud, *Shabbath* 109a (footnote 3), *Avodah Zorah* 12b, *Gittin* 69a, *Pesachim* 112a; Preuss, 54, 71, 271, 269; Talmud, *Eiruvin* 17b, *Shabbath* 109a, 151b, *Nedarim* 81a, *Chullin* 105b.

See also: specific examples of demons as the cause of impairments: *Testament of Solomon* 12.2, 13.4; *OTPs* 1:973, 974; *ibid.*, 18.7, 9, 11, 17, 19; *OTPs* 1:978f. In the NT, see Matthew 9:27-34; Matthew 12:22-24; Luke 11:14.

There was also an association of impairment as the fulfilment of a curse, both with and without reference to magic, but without any explicit involvement of demons: Curse of Abimelech and Jacob's blindness: *LOTJ* 5:281f; *Genesis R.* 52.15 (with footnote *ad loc.* 6); Talmud, *Megilah* 15a, 28a, *Baba Kama* 93a; cf., Schrage, 283, 288. Enemy to be as idols – with organs or perception and speech, but without perception or speech: e.g. *ACM* 199-202; "May your eyes fall out": 5Qcurses (5Q14); Martinez, 403; cf., *ACM*, 201; Martinez, 403.

²⁷⁷ Jewish demons called "Blindness": *Shabrir* – *EJ* 5:1521-1533; *Sammael* – *LOTJ* 3:471; *Deuteronomy R.* 11.10; cf., Gnostics' use of Sammael: Layton, 36, 68, 74 – in each of these references, the name of blindness is either referred to explicitly, or made use of in the context. The etymology of Sammael is discussed further by P. Alexander in the Introduction to 3 Enoch at *OTPs* 1:236f; cf., *3 Baruch* 9.7; *OTPs*, 1:673. See also, Holden, 356.

3.2 Demons and Impairment in the Early Church

While Early Church writers rejected as unnecessary and futile the widespread attempt to control demons through the use of magic, they did make use of culturally familiar themes of impairment and demons for their own purposes. The particular link with epilepsy was used to discredit demons, specifically their deceptive nature. For example, the use in the Hellenistic world of *σεληνιαζομαι* for an attack of epilepsy, with its apparent link to the moon, *σελήνη*, was presented as evidence of the far-reaching success of this impairment demon's deceit. The "mute and deaf demon" was said to time his epilepsy attacks, as at Mark 9:25, with great care:

With the view of slandering the creation of God...this impure spirit watches certain configurations of the moon, and so makes it appear from observation of men suffering at such and such a phase of the moon, that the cause of so great an evil is not the deaf and mute demon, but the great light in

Demons lead astray / blind the grandchildren of Noah – *Jubilees* 10.1-2; *OTPs* 2:75; Spirits of error: Martinez, 7; Vermes, 74; Schrage, 285, 293; Angel of Darkness: Martinez, 6f; Prince of error blinds the mind – *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Simeon* 2.7; *OTPs* 1:785; cf., Ruler of deception – *LOTJ* 2:201; Spirit of jealousy – *LOTJ* 2:192; Spirit of anger – *LOTJ* 2:207. On one tradition, Satan's blindness shows his partial power – in the time to come, he will have no power: *LOTJ* 6:450. Compare reference to Evil Eye in the context of impairment: Preuss, 141; David's evil eye blinds Goliath – *LOTJ* 4:87f; Evil Eye injures body and mind – Plutarch, *Mor., Quaestiones convivales* 5.7, 680c-683b; Loeb 8:416-433. No sickness or mutilation associated with angels – *History of the Rechabites* 14.1; *OTPs* 2:458; But – Jacob was made lame by the angel who wrestled with him: Genesis 32:24-32. Prediction of impairment through Numbers and Astrology – Scarborough, *Roman Medicine*, 119f; Wallis Budge 2:530-655, 2:658-693; Martinez, 456; Vermes, 367f; Preuss, 140f; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.147-154; Loeb, 316-333. Role of the moon: views discussed and rejected by Soranus: *Gynaecia* 1.10.41; V. Rose, 205f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 39f. The moon and epilepsy: Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases*, 1.4; Adams, 55, 297; Stol, 121-130. See also: astronomy and disease – Hippocrates, *Aer.* 2; Loeb 1:72f: "For knowing the changes of the seasons, and the risings and settings of the stars, with the circumstances of each of these phenomena, he will know beforehand the nature of the year that is coming...The contribution of astronomy to medicine is not a very small one but a very great one indeed. For with the seasons men's diseases, like their digestive organs, suffer change." Cf., Stol on seasons associated with impairment: Stol, 115-118; see above re climatic associations with impairment in Hippocratic traditions: footnotes 218, 219, 222.

heaven...which has no power to originate such a disorder among humankind.²⁷⁸

This deceptive nature of demons was a common theme in Early Church writers, and they made much use of the double image of blind and blinding guide in the non-bodily respect of both being in error and leading into error.

We must be on our guard so as never to allow the evil demon any entrance at the outset, lest he cloud our reasoning, blind the sharp vision of our mind...and cause us to fall into the abyss.²⁷⁹

Demons were said to make plentiful use of sorcery, dreams, false prophets, and the altars of idols, in their efforts to lead people astray and make them unable to perceive the light or Word of God, a process described as rendering people deaf and blind.²⁸⁰

Demons were also said to be blinded in their error and by their passions. In their desire to take revenge on Christians, demons were said to be “blinded by sin.” Satan is blind because “he only knows how to discern what is his...he does not know how to recognise the things of Christ.” Satan also cannot perceive that the more he weakens a human body with disease, the more the person’s soul is being strengthened, while his own power is being destroyed: “there is greater grace in the infirmity of the body than in its soundness...for sickness of the body restrains sin, but luxury sets on fire the sins of the

²⁷⁸ The careful timing of epilepsy attacks by the “mute and deaf demon”: Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 13.6; *GCS* 38, 2:193f; *ANF* 10:478f; cf., John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.32; *CSEL* 13:212; *NPNF* ii 11:374.

²⁷⁹ Deceit and injury to the soul as evidence of demons at work: Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.49-51; *SC* 132:394-406; *ANF* 4:451 - cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.2-3; *PG* 61:242-243; *NPNF* i 12:170.

Demons blinding the mind: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.2; *PG* 61:241-242; *NPNF* i 12:170; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 22.12; *PG* 53:191; *FC* 82:78; cf., Augustine, *C. Faustum*, 21.9; *CSEL* 25:579; *NPNF* i 4:268. Cf., impairment used of the bewitched and deceived people of Rome: *Acts of Peter* 8.29 (76); *NTA* 2:309. Inability to hear the Word as deafness from Satan: Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 20.20.164-166; *SC* 290:236-238; *FC* 89:240f.

²⁸⁰ Demons causing similar figurative impairment: through sorcery and dreams - Origen, *C. Celsum* 5.9; *SC* 147:34; *ANF* 4:546; through false prophet - *Kerygmata Petrou*, 3.24.4; *NTA* 2:532; at the altars of idols - *Homilia Clementina* 11.15.4; *GCS* 42:161; *ANF* 8:287; in general - John Cassian, *Collationes*

flesh.”²⁸¹ In a similar way, evil powers are led even into assisting Christians, “for they have become blind through the Holy Spirit, that they may think they are serving those who belong to them when they act for the benefit of the saints.” Drawing also on the theme of dazzling light, baptizands were told that Satan is blinded by the sign of the cross imposed on them at their baptism: “For he does not dare to look you in the face when he sees the lightening flash which leaps forth from it and blinds the eyes.”²⁸²

There are times when demonic aetiology was applied specifically to bodily impairment.

In the *Acts of Pilate*, Satan complains to Hades about Jesus:

He did me much mischief in the world above while he lived among mortal men. For wherever he found my servants, he cast them out, and all those whom I had made to be maimed or blind or leprous or the like, he healed with only a word.²⁸³

According to John Cassian, having thus weakened the body through inflicting impairment, demons are then able to take full possession of the person. However, even where bodily impairment was mentioned, impairment of the soul was closely associated: Tertullian dismissed the use of demons by sorcerers to cause physical

7.32; *CSEL* 13:212; *NPNF ii* 11:374; Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 5.11; *CSEL* 47:612; *ANF* 3:452-5; *Acts of Thomas* 34.151, *NTA* 2:353.

²⁸¹ Demons blinded by sin: Origen, *C. Celsus* 8.44; *SC* 150:268-270; *ANF* 4:655. Satan blind to anything but his own: Ambrose, *De fuga saeculi* 4.23; *CSEL* 32.2:183; *FC* 65:300.

Satan blindly strengthening the soul: Ambrose, *De paenitentia* 1.13; *CSEL* 73:149f; *NPNF ii* 10:339f.

²⁸² Demons blinded by the Spirit to help the saints: *Gospel of Philip* 34, *NTA* 1:192. Satan dazzled: at baptism - John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 2.23; *SC* 50:194; *ACW* 31:52; *ibid.*, 4.5; *SC* 50:185; *ACW* 31:68; *ibid.*, 1.27; *SC* 50:122; *ACW* 31:33f; *ibid.*, 4.22; *SC* 50:194; *ACW* 31:74; by spiritual armour - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 44.26; *PG* 54:413; *FC* 82:468; by the grace of the Spirit - *ibid.*, 4.4; *PG* 53:40; *FC* 74:53; cf., the prayer of Judas, *Acts of Thomas* 148 (258), *NTA* 2:398.

²⁸³ *Acts of Pilate*, 4.20, *NTA* 1:523. Cf., Ambrose, *De paenitentia* 1.13; *CSEL* 73:149f; *NPNF ii* 10:339f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 12.4; *PG* 61:486; *NPNF i* 12:339. Demons cause temporary impairment in their attacks on desert fathers: Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 8; *PG* 26:853; *NPNF ii* 4:198; *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 25.3; Festugiere, *Historia*, 134; *LDF* 116.

blindness as “no difficult matter” as they prey on those “whose mental eye it is so easy to blind.”²⁸⁴

However, even New Testament passages where physical impairment was identified as being caused by demons were interpreted and applied by Early Church writers in relation to non-bodily impairment. At Luke 13:11-16, we see Jesus encountering a woman who was “bent over and could not fully straighten herself...whom Satan bound for eighteen years.” From this encounter with a person whose impairment is explicitly stated to be caused by Satan, four central points in the story were consistently applied by Early Church writers not to bodily impairment but to impairment of the soul. “Bent over” was applied to those who are weighed down by the burden of sin, or those stooping into sin. That the woman “could not fully straighten herself” was applied to those who are unable to look up from the things of the earth towards heavenly things, who have ceased “to take knowledge of things above...they perceive not the hope of future life.” There was also the play on the two meanings of ἀναβλέπω of ‘looking up’ and ‘regaining sight.’ “Bound by Satan” was applied to those who are “prisoners of the earth”, “in bondage to evil”, having their neck bent down by sin or by the burden of sin. “Woman, you are freed from your infirmity” was interpreted as Jesus lifting the burden of sin, and releasing those under the dominion of the devil: “I shall refresh you who are weighted down by sin, He says, and you who are bent down as if under a burden; I shall grant you remission of your sins.”²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Demons taking possession: John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.12; *CSEL* 13:192; *NPNF ii* 11:366. Sorcerers’ use of demons to cause blindness: Tertullian, *De anima* 57; *CCL* 2:866; *ANF* 3:233f.

²⁸⁵ The details of Luke 13:11-16 applied to non-bodily impairment: Origen, *C. Celsus* 8.54; *SC* 150:296f; *ANF* 4:660; Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 13:42.274-284; *SC* 222:178-184; *FC* 89:125f; Jerome, *Tractatus lix in psalmos* Hom. 55 / Ps 145.121-152; *CCL* 78:326f; *FC* 48:396; cf., Jerome, *Epist.* 147.9; *CSEL* 56:324;

These four key details in the encounter at Luke 13 were applied by different Early Church writers with remarkable consistency. However, these themes were not applied to bodily impairment. The Early Church were not understanding the biblical text as describing a cause of physical impairment. By interpreting the biblical text in terms of non-bodily impairment, they extended the application far beyond people with impairments, to all people, anyone bent over by sin or a heavy burden, unable to look up and see the illuminating freedom that is available from God. Early Church writers made use of associations between demons and impairment for their own purposes – and they used themes of demonic causation of impairment to illustrate wrongdoing and error, rather than use wrongdoing and error to illustrate causes of impairment. The elements identified here in the Early Church rhetorical dynamic can release current appropriation of similar biblical impairment texts – the emphasis in modern commentary that such texts demonstrate the common view that demons caused impairment is misleading and deficient: it does no justice to the more imaginative ancients.

4.0 *Divine Causation of Impairment*

NPNF ii 6:293f. Cf., John Chrysostom: *Hom. in Matt.* 88; *PG* 58:778; *NPNF i* 10:522; *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 11.10; *PG* 61:94; *NPNF i* 12:62f; *Hom. in Philipp.* 11; *PG* 62:270; *NPNF i* 13:238; *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1.27; *SC* 50:122; *ACW* 31:33f; Ambrose, *Exameron* 3.12.50; *CSEL* 32.1:93; *FC* 42:105; Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 68.2.8; *CCL* 39:923; Tweed *et al.*, 3:383f; Gregory of Nazianzen, *In sanctum baptisma* 33; *PG* 36:405; *NPNF ii* 7:372. Other examples of play on this double meaning of ἀναβλέπω - Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 2.5.47; *SC* 120:236; *FC* 80:106; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 10.91.2; Marcovich, 135; *ANF* 2:197. Cf., in the NT: Matthew 11:5, Luke 7:22; Mark 16:4, Luke 19:5.

Modern interpretation identifies in ancient texts the theme of divine causation of impairment, and asserts that in the ancient world impairment was generally regarded as a divine punishment.²⁸⁶ Certainly, impairment as a divine punishment for sin was a belief held in the ancient world – but it was one belief relating to divine causation amongst many others. Also, this view that on occasion impairment was the result of sin was one that was held ambivalently: as we see in this chapter, even its proponents were reluctant to apply it to particular people with impairments. These views were not unique to the Early Church: ambivalence and the many reasons for divine causation are themes that can be identified across ancient cultures.²⁸⁷ A problem for current appropriation of ancient impairment texts is the fact that modern commentary overlooks these two key aspects to ancient understandings of divinely caused impairment. This omission is serious – much relevant material is being neglected, and much unnecessary alienation and damage is being done to people currently living impairment.

²⁸⁶ Discussion of divine causation of impairment in modern commentary – with focus on punishment for sin: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 59-61, 99-101, 123f; Schrage, 283f, 290f; Hastings 3:331; Dahood 2:234; Edelstein, 234f; A. A. Anderson 1:88, 2:942; Barrett, *Gospel Accordng to St John*, 356; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 341f; Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*, 139f, 148-150; Dorff, 13f; Amundsen and Ferngren, “The Early Christian Tradition,” 43-47; Govig, 22-28, 43-48, 82f, 92, 99; ABD 4:659f; Greig and Springer, 111-132; R. Porter, “What is Disease?,” 83-90; Coleridge, 71f; R. Porter, “Religion and Medicine,” 1449-1468; Haenchen, *Gospel of John*, 2:37; van der Loos, 255-263; Osman, 193f; F. Graber in C. Brown, *New Internatinal Dictionary* 1:219; see also, Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 33-35, 145f, 243f.

²⁸⁷ For summaries of these two themes relating to divine causes of impairment in the other traditions:

a) Many reasons for divinely-related causation of impairment: Mesopotamian and Egyptian traditions – Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 134-157, 160, 164-168, 226-228; Yamauchi, 98-107; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 156-159, 222-230. Graeco-Roman traditions – Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 73-78, 89-92; Yamauchi, 98f, 110-113; Parker, 235-256. Hebrew and Rabbinic traditions – Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 239-246, 372; Yamauchi, 98f, 115-119, 120-123; Noorda, 217-224.

b) Ambivalence in the notion of impairment as punishment: Mesopotamian and Egyptian traditions – Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 132-139, 160, 164-168, 226-228; *BWL*, 41; Yamauchi, 102f, 106. Graeco-Roman traditions – Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 73-78; Yamauchi, 111-113; Grmek, 35, 39f.

4.1 The Many Reasons for Divine Causation of Impairment

Even when viewing impairment as divinely caused, it was by no means assumed that God caused impairment as a punishment for sin. As creator, God was identified as the one who makes human bodies the way they are; the bodies God fashions, He does so purposefully.²⁸⁸ By the same token, God was seen to have the ability to remove impairment or to prevent impairment from occurring. So when impairment did occur, God was understood to be permitting or working impairment – and doing so “not lightly and to no purpose.”²⁸⁹ To the Early Church, God was seen to cause impairment for

Hebrew and Rabbinic traditions – Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 372-374, 409; Yamauchi, 119f, 120f, 121-127; Preuss, 235.

²⁸⁸ God as creator fashions human bodies:

- a) God fashions purposefully – *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Naphtali 2.2-9; *OTPs* 1:811.
- b) Bodily parts and arrangements are from God – Philo, *Op. Mund.*, 47.138; Loeb 1:108; Yonge, 19.
- c) People with impairments made as God pleases – *Exodus R.* 3.15 (Moses at Exodus 4:10f).
- d) God as the builder of humans, and therefore there is a “moral duty” to look after those with impairments: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 100; cf., *ANET* 6; *AEL*, 2:160.
- e) God makes the body lax or gathered: Egyptian – *ANET*, 368; cf., 369 re eyes and ears; Akkadian: *ANET*, 511; Khunum as the potter of human bodies: *AEL* 3:112; cf Ptah – *AEL* 1:55.
- f) Also fate and fortune in general from the gods: *AEL* 3:196, 3:207, 3:212; Babylonian text: *ANET*, 384. Compare the early Jewish notion that all creatures, however unable, being fashioned by God, “have a vocation to fulfil” – *LOTJ* 1:42; cf., all creatures praise God, even mute fish: *LOTJ* 1:46; God mingles many bad things with a few good – *The Sentences of the Syriac Menander* 2.391-393; *OTPs* 2:603. God afflicts with illness, and determines when: Preuss, 22, 147.

See also: denial in Greek medical tradition of any divine causation of disease: it is in the nature of the gods to purify, not to defile or injure – Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 4; Loeb 2:148f; cf., diseases not from angels: *History of the Rechabites* 14.1; *OTPs* 2:458. Compare the Hippocratic statement that epilepsy has not a divine, but a natural cause: “Its supposed divine origin is due to men’s inexperience, and to their wonder at its peculiar character” – Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 1.3-5; Loeb 2:138f; cf., *ibid.*, 5.1-4; Loeb 2:150f; *ibid.*, 21.1-8; Loeb 2:182f.

²⁸⁹ God able to remove or prevent impairment: John Chrysostom: *Hom. in Genesin* 21.8; *PG* 53:178; *FC* 82:56; cf., *ibid.*, 40.6; *PG* 53:370; *FC* 82:392; *ibid.*, 49.5; *PG* 54:445; *FC* 87:44; cf., *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 23; *PG* 60:183; *NPNF i* 11:154; *Hom. in Jo.* 56.1; *PG* 59:306-307; *NPNF i* 14:200f.

Therefore God permits impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 42; *PG* 60:302; *NPNF i* 11:262f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 8.2; *PG* 61:455; *NPNF i* 12:318; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.8; *PG* 61:247-248; *NPNF i* 12:173f; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.13-28; *PG* 49:23-30; *NPNF i* 9:336-342. God said to work impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 8; *PG* 62:647-648; *NPNF i* 13:507f; that God works impairment denied – “away with the thought!”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 8.2; *PG* 61:455; *NPNF i* 12:318.

God permitting impairment “not lightly and to no purpose”: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.26; *PG* 49:29; *NPNF i* 9:341.

Compare other traditions of divine ability to cause impairment: Jesus as a child causing impairment out of pique to those who crossed him – “And no one after that dared to provoke him, lest he should curse him,

many reasons, including preventing harmful or unwanted things from happening, and making sure required things did happen, bringing about repentance and changed behaviour, teaching discipleship qualities and increasing understanding about Himself and His Son, demonstrating benefits, rewards and promises available to all, responding appropriately to particular sins, and providing a means for sins to be cleansed and forgiven. We shall see that much of the evidence for this range of purposes of impairment from God was drawn by Early Church writers from the encounters in the Gospels between people with impairments and Jesus.

Firstly, God was understood to bring about impairment not in terms of punishing wrongdoing, but to prevent wrongdoing from occurring. A biblical example of God impairing those about to commit an outrage is the men of Sodom, struck with blindness on the verge of raping God's angels [Genesis 19:11]. The builders of the tower of Babel were made blind to prevent them continuing their task, just as Pharaoh's troops were made impaired to prevent them seeing or reporting Moses' hiding place. Josephus records the story of a gentile who wanted to quote the Bible, but was made blind to prevent him doing so. A rabbi whose mind wandered during a funeral eulogy onto thoughts about the hereafter became mute; this happened, it was explained, to prevent him venturing onto a topic inappropriate for human thought. As with Elijah and the

and be maimed": *Infancy Story of Thomas* 5.1-8.2; *NTA* 1:445f; see also: *The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour* 42, 46f, *ANF* 8:413f.

Peter blinded at the transfiguration, "I said to myself, 'Perhaps my Lord willed to bring me here to deprive me of my sight'": *Acts of Peter*, 7.20, *NTA* 2:302. That the disciples were able to cause impairment showing that Jesus had the power to do so, but did not, "For it did not beseem Him to be severe who had come to suffer": Tertullian, *De pudicitia*, 21.14; *CCL* 2:1326; *ANF* 4:98.

Arameans at 2 Kings 6:18, an aspect to this theme of preventative impairment is that it is temporary.²⁹⁰

God was also said to impair an intended victim in order to prevent an outrage taking place. Peter the apostle had a daughter who was paralysed. At her birth, it was predicted that she would “do harm to many souls if her body remains healthy.” Ten years later, as an over-zealous admirer was making advances on her, she became paralysed. In a similar way, teachers and fathers were said to have been made blind to prevent them seeing the wrongdoing of their sons or pupils. One of the many reasons suggested in Jewish tradition for Isaac’s blindness was that, being blind, he would be forced to stay at home, and so he would be spared the shame of being pointed out as the father of Esau. These stories fit with a theme from ancient texts that we see in the next chapter: things happen that are worse than impairment, and God sometimes gives impairment to prevent these worse things happening.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ The men of Sodom: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 43.23; *PG* 54:402; *FC* 82:448.

The builders of the tower of Babel struck blind: *3 Baruch* (Greek), 3.8; *OTPs* 1:665; cf., the deliberate effect of muteness, as it were, of human languages being confused, “As a remedy for sins, in order that humans might not be able to co-operate in common deeds of wickedness through understanding one another” – Philo, *Conf. Ling.* 4.9; Loeb 4:14; Yonge, 235; cf., *ibid.*, 37.189; Loeb 4:112.

Pharaoh’s troops: *LOTJ* 2:282; cf., counsellors before Moses – *Exodus R.* 1.31; cf., *Deuteronomy R.* 2.29, *Song of Songs R.* 7.9; (Exodus 4:10f and Moses used of Pharaoh’s attendants). Compare Elijah’s promise that the troops attacking the widow will be blinded “so that they can do thee no harm”: *LOTJ* 4:242; enemies who attack God’s prophets: *The Lives of the Prophets* 22.15; *OTPs* 2:398; cf., “Let my persecutors become blind” so as not be able to sieze me – *Odes of Solomon* 5.5-6; *OTPs* 2:737.

Gentile wanting to use the Bible: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 12.2.14.113; Loeb 7:56; Whiston, 315. Rabbi with wandering thoughts: *Ecclesiastes R.* 7.10. Cf., Gnostic statement that blindness is sent so that the deity is not recognised: Layton, 49; cf., *ibid.*, 399, 406.

²⁹¹ Peter’s paralysed daughter: *Acts of Peter* 1.128-141, *NTA* 2:285f; cf., Augustine, *C. Adimantum* 17; *CSEL* 25:170. Teacher or father: *LOTJ* 5:282; Schrage, 283f. Isaac staying at home: *Genesis R.* 65.10.

Secondly, God was said to impair in order to make sure something essential and required by Him does happen. The apostle John was made blind to prevent him marrying and to enable his discipleship:

[Thou] didst say to me upon the sea, ‘John, if thou wert not mine, I should have allowed thee to marry’; who didst blind me for two years, letting me be grieved and entreat thee; who in the third year didst open the eyes of my understanding and didst give me back my eyes that are seen.²⁹²

The apostles in general were made blind to the brightness of the transformed body of the risen Christ, so that they would be able to see him and realise that the resurrection had taken place: “For weak human eyesight could not bear it, and it was necessary that they should so look upon Him as to be able to recognise Him.”²⁹³ We see a similar pattern in other ancient traditions. God blinded Isaac to make it turn out that it would indeed be Jacob who received his blessing. The Cnidian builders were blinded to the extent that the oracle would be consulted, and their work stopped. Animals were made mute by God “for all submission and obedience” to humans. God was also said to make people impaired so that He Himself is glorified. In Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal, people and animals throughout the world were made mute so that no sound could be misinterpreted as Baal approaching. In an early interpretation of Exodus 4:10-12, God told Moses that He had intentionally given him the speech impairment that he was complaining about: “I desired to show a wonder through thee.”²⁹⁴

²⁹² *Acts of John* 113, *NTA* 2:203.

²⁹³ The disciples prevented from seeing Christ’s resurrection body: Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.19; *CCL* 48:839; *NPNF i* 2:497f - cf., Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.67; *SC* 132:442f; *ANF* 4:458.

²⁹⁴ Isaac made blind by God, “So that Jacob might receive the blessings”: *Genesis R.* 65.8. Cnidian builders: Herodotus, 1.174; Loeb 1:118f. Animals “made deaf, for all submission and for obedience to humankind”: *2 Enoch* [A] 58.3; *OTPs* 1:185; cf., *2 Enoch* in *Merilo Pravednoe* 58.3; *OTPs* 1:218; *Numbers R.* 20.15, *Ecclesiastes R.*, 10.20. Elijah’s contest with the Baal prophets: *LOTJ* 4:198. Moses: *LOTJ* 2:325, 2:274 – Gabriel makes the infant Moses choose a burning coal; Moses is impaired, but he survives; see also, Tigay, 57-67; Lachs, 249f. Cf., people made to have impairment so that God will be glorified when biblical prophecies are fulfilled: *LOTJ* 1:422. Compare God making the enemies of His people impaired so that His people are victorious – Hornets with blinding stings sent against the

A third reason why God was seen to cause impairment was to bring about change in a person's behaviour. In some examples, this change was expressed as repentance. The most frequently used example by Early Church writers was Paul, whose blinding was presented as having brought him great benefit: "He suffered blindness, but this was an infirmity unto salvation. Yes, that blindness brought him light." Paul's enlightening in body and soul – "a double blindness is removed" – is several times used to identify him as a type for those about to be baptised, the "illuminandi" or φωτιζόμενοι.²⁹⁵ As before, this form of impairment was often temporary: when the intended change in attitude or behaviour has come about, the impairment is removed, as we see with Paul himself on the Damascus road, with Hermippus who attacked Paul, and with Dioscorus the medical scholar who abandoned his faith.²⁹⁶ It is significant that in many examples of this form

Canaanites: *LOTJ* 3:347. Amorites struck with blindness so that they kill each other in confusion: *LOTJ* 4:26, 6:183. When the 7 Israelites are refusing to bow to Baal's altar, those around them are struck blind: *LOTJ* 4:42. With a similar preventative emphasis: "Let lying lips be made mute!" – *Genesis R.* 1.5, *Exodus R.* 52.2.

We can compare the obduracy motif of Isaiah 6:9-10 – discussed in detail by C. A. Evans, *passim*. See also the Ezekiel's muteness: "I will make you to cleave to the roof of your mouth so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them; for they are a rebellious house": Ezekiel 3:26. See Greenberg, "On Ezekiel's Dumbness," 101-105.

A characteristic of this preventative impairment is that it is temporary: Talmud, *Baba Mutzia* 85b; *Genesis R.* 39.12; 2 Kings 6:18-23; Ezekiel 3:27.

²⁹⁵ Paul's blinding to his advantage: "sed haec infirmitas ad salutem, denique illa caecitas lucem adtulit" – Ambrose, *De Joseph* 8.44f; *CSEL* 32.2:103; *FC* 65:218; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 16.7; *PG* 49:166; *NPNF i* 9:448; Augustine, *Epist.* 173.3; *CSEL* 44:641; *NPNF i* 1:544; Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 74.14; *CCL* 39:1035; Tweed *et al.*, 4:16.

Paul's blindness preparing him to receive God's grace: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 1; *PG* 60:22; *NPNF i* 11:7, *ibid.*, 20; *PG* 60:157-160; *NPNF i* 11:129-131; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 47.15f; Bartelink, 234, 236; *ACW* 34:129f; Jerome, *Epist.*, 16.1; *CSEL* 54:68; *NPNF ii* 6:20; *cf.*, John Cassian, *Collationes* 3.5; *CSEL* 13:72; *NPNF ii* 11:321.

Parallels drawn between Paul and those to be baptised: John Chrysostom, , *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 5.19-21; *SC* 50:209-211; *ACW* 31:88, *ibid.*, 4.7-9; *SC* 50:186-187; *ACW* 31:68f; Augustine, *C. litteras Petiliani* 2.21.47; *CSEL* 52:47; *NPNF i* 4:541; Ambrose, *De Joseph* 10.59; *CSEL* 32.2:111; *FC* 65:226; *cf.*, John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:159; *NPNF i* 11:130.

Paul's impairment and baptism as a type for other conversions: king of the Iberians - Theodoret, *HE* 1.24; *GCS* 44:75f; *NPNF ii* 3:59; Elymas - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 28; *PG* 60:209-212; *NPNF i* 11:179-181.

²⁹⁶ Paul's blindness removed: Acts of the Apostles 9:18. Hermippus' blindness leading to his repentance: *Acts of Paul* 4.28-33; *NTA* 2:222f, 2:247f. Dioscorus and his backsliding repentance: Augustine, *Epist.*

of divinely caused impairment, the people whom God impairs in this way are apostles or their relatives. They are portrayed as themselves articulating and interpreting their own experience of impairment: “Know then, O servant of Jesus Christ, that God cares for his own and prepares good for every one of them, although we think that God has forgotten us.”²⁹⁷ In these examples, God was understood as giving the impairment not to punish behaviour of the past, but to bring about behaviour change in the future. It is often to people clearly identified as God’s servants to whom this happens; and they interpret themselves what happens to them in these terms.

In other traditions there are similarities. An inscription at Epidaurus tells of the incident of Hermon of Thasos who was healed of his blindness: “But afterwards when he didn’t bring back the offering, the god made him blind again. Then he came back and slept here, and he restored him to health.” A woman who was warned in a dream to persuade Hadrian not to kill himself when grievously ill, failed to do so and became blind. When she finally did as commanded, she regained her sight. Herodotus records examples of people becoming impaired as a result of some excess in their behaviour, and their impairment being removed when they regret what they have done, usually after consulting the oracle at Delphi. Stesichorus lost his sight through divine anger, but when he recanted his action, his sight was restored. Darius was said to have been blinded by an angel; it was at his healing of this that he promised to allow the exiled

227; *CSEL* 57:482; *NPNF i* 1:576f. Cf., in pagan tradition, Helen “for whose sake Stesichorus was struck blind, because he had cursed her in his verses, but afterwards repenting...he was restored to sight” - Irenaeus, *Adv. haereses* 23.2; *SC* 263:316; *ANF* 1:348; cf., Tertullian, *De anima* 34.8; *CCL* 2:835f; *ANF* 3:215.

²⁹⁷ *Acts of Peter*, 1.139-140; *NTA* 2:286.

Israelites to return home. In a Gnostic text, the Holy Spirit was said to have made the forces of evil blind in order to make them minister to the holy ones.²⁹⁸

A fourth reason seen for God causing impairment was to enable people to learn or to experience things of great importance. Philo points out how infirmity comes upon people, even those who are pure in the law, but that it comes not as an injury, but with purpose:

If some infirmity should befall them it will come not to do them injury but to remind mortals that they are mortal, to humble their over-weening spirit and to improve their moral spirit.²⁹⁹

In Stoic thinking, blindness was not seen as a great evil, and it was understood as coming to people so that they could learn that this was so: “It is God’s purpose, and the wise person’s as well, to show that those things which the ordinary person desires and those which they dread are really neither goods nor evils.” Isaac asked God for infirmity to come upon humans to focus their minds close to death on judgement and to settle their affairs with their children. His prayer was promptly answered: “By thy life, thou hast asked well, and I will commence with thee!” The traditions of self-inflicted impairment identified above link in with this theme: Democritus blinded himself to

²⁹⁸ Healing at Epidaurus: *EMI* B2 (22); LiDonnici, 101. Woman and Hadrian: SHA, Aelius Spartianus, *Hadrian* 25.1-4; Loeb 1:76f. Herodotus – King Pheros: 2.111; Loeb 1:398-401; citizens of Agylla: Herodotus, 1.167; Loeb 1:208f. Stesichorus traditions: Pausanias, 3.19.13; Loeb 2:124f; various trads: *Greek Lyric*, Stesichorus, 192-193; Loeb 3:92-97; cf., Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a-b; Loeb 1:460-463. Darius: *LOTJ* 4:347; cf., Simon’s withered hand: *LOTJ* 2:192; Rabbi who revealed a form of kneeling: *Genesis R.*, 39.12; traditions of illness and the covenant in Qumranic texts: Martinez, 358, 414; Vermes, 183, 223, 251, 296, 344. Gnostics and the Holy Spirit: Layton, 335. Cf., the Israelites return to their state of impairment when they worship the golden calf: *LOTJ* 3:213.

²⁹⁹ Philo on the purposeful nature of infirmity: Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 20.119; Loeb 8:384-386; Yonge, 675; cf., *ibid.*, 28.163; Loeb 8:416-418; Yonge, 680.

have fewer distractions from his philosophy, and rabbis blinded themselves to reduce opportunities for temptation.³⁰⁰

To Early Church writers too, God was said to “educate by afflictions.” This purpose of God was explained as not evidence against God’s providence and love, but as evidence for them both.³⁰¹ In general, the experience of impairment was said to be “great health of the heart”: through impairment, the soul was said to be invigorated, and made useful and fit for all things. In particular, the experience of impairment was given to demonstrate a person’s faith, to bring about greater self-control, and to reduce distraction so that a person could focus on things proper to the soul, such as penitence at their own sin.³⁰² Through the experience of impairment, people were understood to

³⁰⁰ Stoic view on blindness: Seneca (the Younger), *De providentia* 5.1-2; Loeb 1:34f; cf., Plato, *Timaeus* 47b; Loeb 9:106f. Isaac’s request, first granted with his own loss of sight: *Genesis R.*, 65.9. Self-inflicted impairment – Democritus: Aulus Gellius, 10.17; Loeb 2:258-261; Rabbis and temptation: Schrage, 284. Cf., poets like Homer: Dio Chrysostom, 36.10f; Loeb 3:430f. Cf., traditions of Job, tested by God: both God and Job learn the extent of Job’s endurance: e.g., Aristeas, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.25.4; *OTPs* 2:859.

³⁰¹ God’s use of impairment to teach: Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 3.12; *SC* 382:322-332; *NPNF ii* 12:34-36; John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 43.39; *PTS* 12:101; *NPNF ii* 9:42. This understood as evidence of God’s providence and love: Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:675f; *NPNF ii* 6:140f; John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.26; *CSEL* 13:204f; *NPNF ii* 11:371f.

³⁰² Impairment –

a) as great health of the heart: Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 3.12; *SC* 382:328; *NPNF ii* 12:35.

b) as vigour of the soul: “infirmetas corporis sanitas animae est” - Jerome, *Tractatus lix in Psalmos* Hom. 41 / Psalm 119.103f; *CCL* 78:249; *FC* 48:303.

c) as a whetstone that removes rust and makes the soul useful: John Chrysostom - *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 35; *PG* 60:256; *NPNF i* 11:222; cf., *ibid.*, 42; *PG* 60:302; *NPNF i* 11:262f.

d) as proof of faith: Cyprian, *De mortalitate* 14; *CCL* 3A:24; *ANF* 5:472.

e) showing a person’s strength: Cyprian, *De mortalitate* 12; *CCL* 3A:23; *ANF* 5:472.

f) to increase self-control: John Chrysostom, *Adv. Judaeos* 8.2.9-10; *PG* 48:930; *FC* 68:212f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 7.9; *PG* 61:60; *NPNF i* 12:37; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 5; *PG* 51:57; *NPNF i* 9:217.

g) to reduce distraction and recall the mind to its proper objects (ἵνα ἀπερισπάστως ἡ ψυχὴ βλέπῃ ἃ δεῖ): Origen, *C. Celsum* 7.39; *SC* 150:104; *ANF* 4:626; cf., Theodoret, *Eranistes, Dialogue* 3.224; Ettlinger, 191; *NPNF ii* 3:217.

Impairment focusses the mind on what really matters, such as one’s own sin, and penitence: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 19; *PG* 62:131-132; *NPNF i* 13:139-141; cf., impairment teaches sobriety: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 1; *PG* 60:22; *NPNF i* 11:8.

Cf., Satan weakens the body with infirmity, blind to the fact that he strengthens the soul - Ambrose, *De paenitentia* 1.13; *CSEL* 73:149f; *NPNF ii* 10:339f.

learn specific qualities of discipleship, such as endurance, patience, and the ability to trust God. However, God gave impairment in these circumstances only when He saw the potential present for these qualities to be learnt. In this context it was stated, “The father does not instruct his son unless he loves him. The master does not correct his disciple unless he sees in him signs of promise.” For a person with an impairment, as they came to understand why God would cause impairment, the power of Satan and the effects of depressive thoughts were driven away. It was stated that God sees how people could be and, out of providence and love, He gives them the appropriate experience, including impairment, so that they fulfil their potential.³⁰³

A particular aspect of this theme was that through the experience of impairment a fuller understanding is gained about God and His Son. From their own experience, people with impairments were said to have sharper insight into what Jesus himself experienced in his passion: they are able “to consider incessantly how great evils our Redeemer endured from those whom He had created.” Again as a result of their own experience,

³⁰³ Impairment given to teach discipleship qualities:

a) endurance - John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.14-20; *PG* 49:23-28; *NPNF i* 336-340.
 b) patience - John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.13f; *PG* 48:804f; *FC* 72:291; John Cassian, *Collationes* 6.3; *CSEL* 13:157; *NPNF ii* 11:353; - *ibid.*, 18.13; *CSEL* 13:204f; *NPNF ii* 11:485.
 c) trust in God, and not in oneself - Augustine, *De correptione et gratia* 38.12; *PL* 44:939; *NPNF i* 5:487; cf., Augustine, *C. Julianum* 4.11; *PL* 44:742; *FC* 35:175; Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos* 134.22; *CCL* 40:1953f; Tweed *et al.*, 6:145-147; Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 11.6; *PL* 44:969; *NPNF i* 5:503f. Cf., apostles who experience infirmity: “that they may not too easily be exalted into presumption, by the greatness of their good works and miracles” - John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.14; *PG* 49:23; *NPNF i* 9:336f. Cf., giving God thanks and praise in all things - as Job: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.26-28; *PG* 49:29-30; *NPNF i* 9:341f; as Tobias: Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, 10; *CCL* 3A:21f; *ANF* 5:471.
 Teaching impairment given to those with potential to learn the qualities: Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:675f; *NPNF ii* 6:140f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.1-2; *PG* 59:211-213; *NPNF i* 14:131f.
 Satan and depressive thoughts driven away: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 8; *PG* 51:61; *NPNF i* 9:219.
 Infirmity in the flesh is given by God as an experience through which a person “is taught to love the better, by the bitterness of worse”: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 40.5; *CCL* 38:453; *NPNF i* 2:170.

people with impairments were said to be able to understand how in human afflictions, far from abandoning us, God is present with us, bracing and supporting us. This is a theme found in relation to specific characters in scripture and tradition. Through the infirmity experienced by apostles and other biblical figures, it becomes clear that what they achieved was not in their own strength, but through God [2 Corinthians 12:9].³⁰⁴ And Paul's paradoxical statement about the weakness of God, which he applies to the crucified Christ [1 Corinthians 1:25, 2 Corinthians 13:4], was said by Augustine to be understood only by those who experience for themselves inability and weakness:

This is despised as a weak and foolish thing to those who are wise and strong in themselves; yet this is the grace which heals the weak, who do not proudly boast a blessedness of their own, but rather humbly acknowledge their real misery.³⁰⁵

In these ways, with no sense at all of punishment, infirmity was understood as a way of coming to a greater understanding of the paradoxes of God's nature and activity. For this reason, infirmity was even described as a means "to reach the Lord quickly."³⁰⁶

These are lessons and benefits to be learned from the experience of impairment; but there were also seen to be rewards and promises - a sixth reason identified for God causing impairment. God was said to give His honour, grace, approval, praise and

There was ambivalence to this notion, however: Job rebukes Elihu when he says that God, "delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity": Job 36:15. See: Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," 106-123.

³⁰⁴ Impairment leads to greater understanding: - of Christ's passion: Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 3.12; *SC* 382:330-332; *NPNF ii* 12:35; - of God not abandoning us when afflicted: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.*, 8; *PG* 51:61; *NPNF i* 9:219f; - but present with us, bracing us: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 2; *PG* 51:52; *NPNF i* 9:213; *Hom. in Matt.* 14.5; *PG* 57:221; *NPNF i* 10:89. Infirmity of apostles showing that what is achieved is through God: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.14-16; *PG* 49:23; *NPNF i* 9:336f.; cf., in NT: 2 Corinthians 12:9.

³⁰⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 10.28.34; *CCL* 47:303f; *NPNF i* 2:198f.

³⁰⁶ Infirmity brings greater spiritual wisdom: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 8; *PG* 51:61; *NPNF i* 9:219f; a means to reach God quickly: Jerome, *Tractatum in psalmos series altera* Hom. 61 / Psalm 15.204-210; *CCL* 78:370f; *FC* 57:21.

favour on those who learn these lessons from their experience of impairment, giving them also an inheritance and crown beyond price: “It is not by way of deserting them that God lets them experience [impairment], but through desire to crown them, and make them more distinguished.”³⁰⁷ While clearly giving no sense of punishment as a reason for impairment, there is also no idealising or romanticising of impairment here. As we have seen, archaeology confirms the evidence from written material that impairment in ancient life was not remote or sanitised, but ordinary, familiar and commonly known. These statements about impairment are all the more remarkable because they are made from the position of experience.

That the experience of impairment was said to teach these qualities and attributes, and bring these benefits and rewards, was drawn by Early Christian writers largely from the encounters in the Gospels between people with impairments and Jesus. Jesus himself was said to recognise these qualities in the people with impairments that he meets, and his healing of them was presented as foreshadowing the benefits and rewards made available to all people. For this reason, the gospel writers were said to tell the stories in the ways they do, so that the qualities embodied by people with impairments in these encounters can be emulated by all: “These things are recorded, that we too may imitate

³⁰⁷ Rewards and promises:

a) Receiving from God honour, grace, approval, praise, and favour: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.8; *PG* 61:247-248; *NPNF i* 12:173f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 42; *PG* 60:302; *NPNF i* 11:262f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.1-2; *PG* 59:211-213; *NPNF i* 14:131f; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.23; *PG* 49:28; *NPNF i* 9:340; Cyprian, *De mortalite* 10; *CCL* 3A:21f; *ANF* 5:471.

b) God gives a crown: John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 1.8; *PG* 49:256; *NPNF i* 9:185f; *ibid.*, 3.5-7; *PG* 49:270-272; *NPNF i* 9:195-197; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 8; *PG* 62:647; *NPNF i* 13:507f; and an inheritance: Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis*, 3.12; *SC* 382:326; *NPNF ii* 12:35; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.28; *PG* 49:30; *NPNF i* 9:341.

them.”³⁰⁸ The experience of Gospel characters with impairments was presented as being for all people an “ample source of encouragement” in their own affliction. They are described in terms of refuge and healing: “Let us listen carefully...all who live with the weakness of their infirmity... This paralysed man lies before us as a haven open to all, a safe port from human disasters”; “Let the sufferings of that man then be the medicines for our ills, and his most grievous surging sea the harbour of our sufferings.” Identifying these benefits and rewards to people with impairments in general, John Chrysostom makes links to Paul’s image of the body at 1 Corinthians 12:22-5: “though deficient in strength, they have the advantage in utility.”³⁰⁹ These early Christian writers made use of people with impairments in the Bible not as warnings of what can happen when people sin, but as representatives of the benefits and rewards that are available from God for all people.

Whatever benefits and rewards the experience of impairment might bring, it was made clear that impairment was not actively to be sought – this was not how the self-

³⁰⁸ Evidence for these benefits and rewards foreshadowed in people with impairments in the gospels, for example: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.1; *PG* 57:377-378; *NPNF i* 10:210f; *ibid.*, 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:203; *NPNF i* 14:125f; τὰ μελλόντα ἡμῖν ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι καὶ ὑπογράφει. Cf., John Cassian, *Collationes* 6.3; *CSEL* 13:157; *NPNF ii* 11:353; *ibid.*, 18.13; *CSEL* 13:521; *NPNF ii* 11:485. “These then let us emulate” – τούτους δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς ζηλώσωμεν : John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 66.1; *PG* 58:626; *NPNF i* 10:404; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 58.4; *PG* 59:320; *NPNF i* 14:210; John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 1.7; *PG* 49:255; *NPNF i* 9:184f.

³⁰⁹ People with impairments and infirmities in scripture - a haven for us all: John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.13f; *PG* 48:804; *FC* 72:291; - medicine for our ills: John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 3.5-7; *PG* 49:270-272; *NPNF i* 9:195-197; - ample source of consolation: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 8; *PG* 51:81; *NPNF i* 9:219; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 64:465-468; *NPNF i* 13:372-375; John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 3.5-7; *PG* 49:270-272; *NPNF i* 9:195-197. “Even if someone is lame, or their eyes have been torn out, or they be disabled in body, or have fallen into the most extreme weakness, none of these things prevents grace from coming into the soul. For grace seeks out only the soul which is eager to receive it, and ignores all these external things”: John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 2.26; *PG* 49:235; *ACW* 31:181; cf., *ibid.*, 2.29; *PG* 49:236; *ACW* 31:181f. “For neither poverty, nor weakness, nor bodily disability, nor slavery, nor any other such thing could be a hindrance to virtue”.

mutilation encouraged by Jesus at Matthew 5:29f was to be understood. However, if it were God's mind to permit or work impairment for a particular person, these benefits and rewards show that impairment brings no real harm, great though the affliction and suffering may be. Impairment is not to be feared, nor to be understood as God hating or deserting us. Impairment is certainly no evil, as sin is an evil; for God permits and works impairment, and God cannot will evil. Disciples should therefore not be surprised at their own impairment, for many of the great figures from scripture are to be found amongst the afflicted and infirm, not amongst the comfortable and healthy. For these reasons, impairment is to be understood "not as vengeance, then, but healing" and "as a remedy for salvation, not a punishment for condemnation."³¹⁰

It is important to repeat at this point that these reasons explaining why impairment is caused by God were being made by people to whom the experience of impairment was well known. There was no romanticising of impairment: these ancient analyses were based on familiarity and experience.

Paul paraphrased by John Chrysostom: *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.2; *PG* 61:257-259; *NPNF i* 12:182.

³¹⁰ Despite the benefits and rewards, impairment not actively to be sought – "Let us not draw it down willingly upon ourselves": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 42; *PG* 60:302; *NPNF i* 11:263.

Impairment brings no true harm and is not evil (in contrast to sin): John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.1-2; *PG* 59:211-213; *NPNF i* 14:131f; *ibid.*, 56.1; *PG* 59:307; *NPNF i* 14:201; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 14.5; *PG* 57:221; *NPNF i* 10:89; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.8; *PG* 61:247-248; *NPNF i* 12:173f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 19; *PG* 62:131-133; *NPNF i* 13:139-141; *cf.*, John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 8; *PG* 62:647-648; *NPNF i* 13:507f.

Scriptural figures amongst the afflicted and infirm, so infirmity to be expected: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.28; *PG* 49:30; *NPNF i* 9:342. *Cf.*, martyrs' mutilations as honourable in the sight of God and the Church: Athanasius, *Apologia contra Arianos* 15; Opitz, 2.1:98f; *NPNF ii* 4:108; *cf.*, Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 2.12; Opitz 2.1:183f; *NPNF ii* 4:273.

Affliction, including impairment – not vengeance but healing: οὐκ ἄρα τιμωρία ἦν ἀλλ' ἰασις; John Chrysostom, *Hom. In Acta Apost.* 28; *PG* 60:211; *NPNF i* 11:179; *cf.*, John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.1-2; *PG* 59:211-213; *NPNF i* 14:131f; – as a remedy for salvation not a punishment for condemnation: "medicamentum ad salutem non poenam ad damnationem": Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos* 21.2.4; *CCL* 38:124; Tweed *et al.*, 1:152f.

4.2 Impairment and Sin: Ancient Ambivalence

At this point, we come to the cluster of ancient views of divinely caused impairment that relate directly to sin and punishment. As we have seen, this was one theme out of many. There are occasions when physical impairment was said to be caused by sin:

“That bodily ills are caused by the wickedness of the soul, is shown both by him that hath the palsy thirty and eight years, and by him that was let down through the roof.”³¹¹

This belief can be traced in different ancient traditions. It could also surface under particular circumstances: someone stung by an insult made by the father of someone with a spinal deformity responded, “Your son carries heaven’s wrath upon his shoulders.”³¹²

As with other impairment themes that we have identified, this motif was used in different ways. For instance, the process could be reversed: the experience of

³¹¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 14.5; *PG* 57:221; *NPNF i* 10:89; but not all infirmity - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.1-2; *PG* 59:211-213; *NPNF i* 14:131f (punishment and nature distinct: “Methinks that the disease of these [the paralytic] arose from acts of sin, those of the others [the halt and maimed] from natural infirmity”); cf., John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 5; *PG* 51:58; *NPNF i* 9:217 (punishment and nature linked: “For the source and root and mother of all evil is the nature of sin. This it is which enervates our bodies: this it is which brings on disease”); John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 7.9; *PG* 61:60; *NPNF i* 12:37; John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 1.8; *PG* 49:256; *NPNF i* 9:185f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 14.5; *PG* 57:221; *NPNF i* 10:89; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 1; *PG* 60:22; *NPNF i* 11:8. Cf., Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 44.9.1; *CCL* 36:385; *NPNF i* 7:245 (nature and original sin linked in the context of impairment: “For how is it ‘by nature,’ save that through the first man sinning moral evil rooted itself in us as a nature? If evil has so taken root within us, everyone is born mentally blind”).

³¹² On disease in general as punishment for sin within Jewish tradition (a link “hardly discussed outside Judaism”: Schrage, 271) – God afflicts with illness and determines when: Preuss, 22, 147. Association of disease with the sin of Adam: *4th Ezra* 4.21-22; *OTPs* 1:529; *2 Baruch* 56.6; *OTPs* 1:641. With less sin in the world, there will be less impairment: *Song of Songs R.* 4.17. Spinal deformity as heaven’s wrath: Plutarch, *Mor., Quaestiones convivales* 2.1, 633d; Loeb 8:130f.

impairment itself, especially over time, was said to heal and cleanse a person's sins, resulting in their complete forgiveness.

In the case of the man who was infirm thirty and eight years...by that long period of time his sins had been exhausted: for the magnitude of a trial can lighten the load of sins...the penalty of his sins had been already worked out by the long duration of his sickness.³¹³

In an early Jewish tradition, Isaac prayed to God that people's sins be atoned through bodily ailments. God's reply was to make this happen, with Isaac himself being the first to experience this.³¹⁴ That sin was seen both to result in and also to be cleansed by impairment shows ambivalence towards this connection between sin and impairment. In other respects, ancient texts show a similar attitude, not least in the variety of purposes behind impairment as a response to sin. Sometimes it was presented as an appropriate punishment for a specific crime, sometimes as a means of teaching others; sometimes it is done with reluctance or even unwillingly.

Firstly, on occasions, impairment that occurs was interpreted as a specifically appropriate response of punishment. An example is the emperor Maximinus, whose impairment Eusebius describes in these terms:

The stroke of God continued heavy upon him, so that his eyes protruded and fell from their sockets, leaving him quite blind: and thus he suffered, by a most righteous retribution, the very same punishment which he had been the first to devise for the martyrs of God.³¹⁵

³¹³ John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 6; *PG* 51:58; *NPNF i* 9:217f; cf., *ibid.*, 2; *PG* 51:51; *NPNF i* 9:213; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.1-2; 59:211-213; *NPNF i* 14:131f; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.23; *PG* 49:28; *NPNF i* 9:340; Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 3.12; *SC* 382:330; *NPNF ii* 12:35f.

³¹⁴ *LOTJ* 5:281f; cf., *Genesis R.* 65.9.

³¹⁵ Impairment as appropriate punishment: Maximinus - Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.59f; *GCS* 7:46; *NPNF ii* 1:498f; cf., Abbot Paul - John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.26; *CSEL* 13:204f *NPNF ii* 11:371f; the men of Sodom - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 43.23; *PG* 54:402; *FC* 82:448.

In a similar way, those who feign impairment were said to become impaired themselves; as do those who pass by an impaired beggar without giving alms, those who call falsely for divine intervention, and those who misuse their hearing or speaking. As we saw above, the aetiology of impairment was used to promote particular social behaviour. It was appropriate for Samson to become blind: his eyes, as it was pointed out, were what led him astray. Isaac's sight was lost through smoke from incense burnt in his household to idols. In a similar cautionary tale, a man who despised women and abused them finally decided to settle, but he was made blind and deaf, and his attempts to marry were unsuccessful. In the texts of international treaties, too, we find a similar theme: those who break the treaty, referred to as those "whose eyes are turned in a hostile fashion", will be punished by blindness from the gods.³¹⁶

Secondly, impairment as punishment was seen by Early Church writers as having an explicitly didactic purpose. Of Cain, for instance, John Chrysostom wrote: "The sight of Cain's palsied limbs was a lesson for all he met; it served to teach all people and exhort them never to dare what he had done." Zechariah, it was said, was made mute in order to teach the fragility of virtue and the value of not questioning the ways of God.³¹⁷

³¹⁶ Impairment feigners will become impaired: Preuss, 230f; Talmud, *Kethuboth* 68a. Calling on God falsely: Talmud, *Baba Kama* 93a. Passing beggar by: Preuss, 270f; Talmud, *Ta'anith* 21a. God making deaf those who misuse their hearing: Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 13.6; *GCS* 40:193f; *ANF* 10:479; Theodoret, *HE*, 4.22; *GCS* 44:250; *NPNF ii* 3:122; similarly, those who abuse their speaking: Theodoret, *Eranistes*, *Florilegium* 1.84; Ettlinger, 96; *NPNF ii* 3:176 - where Ignatius is quoted: *Epist. ad Trallianos* 9; Loeb 1:220f. Samson: Pseudo-Philo, 43.5-7; *OTPs* 2:357; *LOTJ* 4:48 - cf., Ecclesiastes 6:9. Idol incense: *LOTJ* 1:328. Women despiser unable to marry: *Ecclesiastes R.* 11.8. Oath breaker: *ANET*, 353, 354; cf., Syrian and Assyrian Treaty: *ANET*, 531, 533, 534, 538, 540; cf., blasphemer to have his tongue cut out: *ANET*, 288; cf., Egyptian texts on false witness: *ANET*, 35, 429; see also Canaanite text: Gibson, 119. Cf., Balaam blinded in one eye as a punishment for impure thoughts: *LOTJ* 6:127.

³¹⁷ Impairment as punishment to teach others:

Even the men of Sodom were said to have been blinded in order to teach others a lesson:

Since their mind's eye had been blinded, they suffered loss of sight as well for the reason that you might learn that bodily eyes were of no benefit to them if the eyes of their mind were blinded.³¹⁸

Similarly, the fact that the good suffer infirmity was said to be something God uses for teaching about the afterlife, “in order that He may persuade thee, that there is a resurrection.”³¹⁹

In other traditions too, teaching was the significant component to divine punishment by impairment. There are parallels with penal mutilation, where deterrence was an important factor. For instance, Zedekiah was said to have been blinded for breaking his oath, Ptolemy was paralysed and made mute at his insolence, and Balaam was made blind in one eye and lame in one leg after his boast when sent to curse Israel. In several Graeco-Roman myths – traditionally a medium for teaching about the gods – impairment is a punishment for acting beyond the limit acceptable to the gods.³²⁰

a) Cain - John Chrysostom, *Adv. Judaeos* 8.2.9-10; *PG* 48:930; *FC* 68:212f.

b) Zechariah - Jerome, *Dialogi contra Pelagianos* 1.12; *CCL* 80:14f; *NPNF ii* 6:453f, John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.14-17; *PG* 49:23-26; *NPNF i* 9:336-338; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 2.9-17; *SC* 28:148-154; *FC* 72:74-77.

³¹⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 43.23; *PG* 54:402; *FC* 82:448.

³¹⁹ John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 1.7; *PG* 49:255; *NPNF i* 9:184f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1Thess.* 8; *PG* 62:445; *NPNF i* 13:359; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 8; *PG* 62:647-648; *NPNF i* 13:507f; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.14; *PG* 49:23; *NPNF i* 9:336.

³²⁰ Penal parallels – Zedekiah: *Leviticus R.*, 6.5, 1.51; Ptolemy: *3 Maccabees* 2.22; *OTPs* 2:519; Balaam: *LOTJ* 3:359. Pharaoh: *LOTJ* 4:263, 6:452.

Graeco-Roman myths relating to overstepping limit – in general: Buxton, 30-35, cf., 23, 26-28 (both physical and figurative blindness); cf., Parker, 235-256.

Lycurgus blinded by Zeus for striving with the gods: Homer, *Iliad* 6.128-143; Loeb 1:270-273.

Thamyris blinded by Muses for his boast: Homer, *Iliad* 2.595-600; Loeb 1:94f; Homer, *Odyssey* 8.63f; Loeb 1:262f; contrast according to Pausanias, it was rather from eye disease – Pausanias, 4.33.7; Loeb 2:356f.

Teiresias: blinded by Hera, but compensated by Zeus: Lucian, *Dialogi mortuorum* 447.3; Loeb 7:48f; Callimachus, *Hymn to Athena* 57-136; Loeb, 116-123: “It is not I that made thy child blind. For no sweet thing is it for Athena to snatch away the eyes of children. But the laws of Cronus order thus: Whosoever

Thirdly, on several occasions, God was said to be reluctant to bring about impairment as punishment. For instance, when explaining John 12:40 – “He has blinded their eyes” – John Chrysostom states,

The writer doth not here introduce God as Himself working these things, but showeth that they took place through the wickedness of others...we begin the desertion, and become the causes of our perdition; for God not only desireth not to leave or to punish us, but even when He punisheth, doth it unwillingly.³²¹

Elsewhere, the threat of impairment, or rather the threat of a condition worse than impairment, of John 5:14 – “Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you” – was understood in apologetic terms: “He justified Himself for ill-treating him as it were for so long.”³²² Impairment as punishment was by no means a straightforward view: there were many aspects to it, and these aspects were used in different ways.

The theme of sin causing impairment was applied with enthusiasm when the focus was not bodily impairment, but impairment of the soul. In this context, words of justice and righteousness were used. Even here, as with the previous theme of impairment caused by demons, impairment was used to illustrate sin, rather than sin used to explain impairment. An example is the use of the common association of money, greed and blindness. Several times a similar link was applied by Christian writers, with blindness

shall behold any of the immortals, when the god himself chooses not, at a heavy price shall he behold” (ibid., 98-102; Loeb, 118-121); cf., on Teiresias blinded by Athena: Nonnos, 5.337-343; Loeb, 1:192f: “You lost the light of your eyes, but you live! And the brilliancy of the eyes Athena transplanted to your mind”. Stesichorus: the loss of his sight caused by divine wrath: Pausanias, 3.19.13; Loeb 2:124f; various traditions: *Greek Lyric*, Stesichorus, 192-193; Loeb 3:92-97; cf., Plato, *Phaedrus* 243a-b; Loeb 1:460-463: Stesichorus did wrong and was punished - he recanted and was healed. On the use of myth in Graeco-Roman tradition as a vehicle for teaching about behaviour and the gods: Griffin, 144-204.

³²¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 68.2; *PG* 59:377; *NPNF i* 14:253; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.8; *PG* 61:247; *NPNF i* 12:173f.

³²² As an explanation of John 5:14 - John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 3; *PG* 51:53; *NPNF i* 9:214.

of the soul being a punishment for sins relating to wealth: “Blinded by covetousness, [Ananias] brought destruction on his own head.” A similar association between the inability to see and wandering off a path was also used: “God being most justly wroth took away His light from them, so that into sins...the blindness of the human mind fell, by erring and straying from the path of righteousness.” So too blindness and the abuse of eyesight were linked together: “If any one, for example, using their eyes for the gratification of base desires, were ordered to be made blind, this would be a just sentence for them to bear.” Parallels were also made to penal mutilation. In the rhetorical dynamic of author and reader, the familiar was being used, and different associations interwoven.³²³

Another example is mutilation – applied figuratively to those who cut out from themselves a God-given sense of self-control:

It is for those who throw out such vile accusations against those who desire to be God’s servants, to beware lest, by the calumnies which they cast upon others who strive to live well, they ‘lame’ their own souls, and ‘mutilate’ the inner person, by severing from it that justice and moderation of mind which the Creator has planted in the nature of all His rational creatures.³²⁴

³²³ Augustine explicitly describes figurative impairment in terms of just and righteous punishment: Augustine, *De natura et gratia* 22.24; *CSEL* 60:249; *NPNF* i 5:129; Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 77.30; *CCL* 39:1090f; Tweed *et al.*, 4:74; Augustine, *C. Faustum* 21.1-2; *CSEL* 25:569; *NPNF* i 4:264f. Ananias blinded by covetousness: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 12; *PG* 60:99; *NPNF* i 11:76; cf., Simon the Magus - Augustine, *C. Faustum* 22.48; *CSEL* 25:640; *NPNF* i 4:290; cf., in apocalyptic literature, heathen and self-righteous almsgivers blinded: *Apocalypse of Peter* 12, *NTA* 2:632, *Apocalypse of Paul* 40, *NTA* 2:733.

Blindly straying from the path: Augustine - *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 77.30; *CCL* 39:1090f; Tweed *et al.*, 4:74; cf., Augustine, *De natura et gratia* 22.24; *CSEL* 60:249; *NPNF* i 5:129; Cyprian, *De zelo et livore* 11; *CCL* 3A:80f; *ANF* 5:494.

Blindness and the abuse of sight: Augustine, *Epist.* 102.25; *CSEL* 34, 2:566; *NPNF* i 1:421; cf., Augustine, *Confess.* 1.18.29; *CCL* 27:16; *NPNF* i 1:53; - *ibid.*, 5.8.15; *CCL* 27:65; *NPNF* i 1:84.

Similar associations in HB and NT:

a) a bribe blinds - Exodus 23:8, Deuteronomy 16:19, 1 Samuel 12:3.

b) the blind wander about or are lead astray - Deuteronomy 28:29, Isaiah 59:10, Matthew 15:14f.

c) abuse of sight and blindness - Matthew 5:29, John 9:39f.

³²⁴ Origen, *C. Celsum* 7.46; *SC* 150:124; *ANF* 4:630.

Early Church writers linked to penal mutilation the scriptural association of figurative blindness and the Jews, who were asserted to be “deservedly blind.” Some attempts were made to explain this punishment, for example through the Jews’ “avarice” or “pride and perversity.”³²⁵ However, in general, what the Jews had done to deserve this figurative blindness was not clear:

If the inquirer objected that it was not the fault of the Jews if God blinded them so that they did not know Christ, we should try in the simplest manner possible to make that person understand that this blindness is the just punishment of other secret sins known to God.³²⁶

In this example, two aspects of the theme were applied together: the blindness of the Jews is an impairment that illustrates their sin (not knowing Christ); this blindness is also attributed as coming from God to punish other “secret sins.” Several associations of impairment themes could be at play in the rhetorical dynamic.

Figurative interpretation also predominates in early Jewish scholarship: very few references to impairment as divine punishment in biblical and rabbinic texts were taken to mean impairment of the body. In rabbinic tradition, many biblical texts that might appear to refer to impairment of the body are interpreted figuratively. For instance, the obduracy text of Isaiah 6:9f was understood as meaning that Israel is made spiritually blind as a result of sinning against God: “with blindness and confusion of heart will YHWH mutilate them...they will revere them like gods in their blindness.” Bribe takers were said to become blind in heart and mind – a figurative interpretation of Deuteronomy 16:19. The text of Genesis 19:11 that the men of Sodom were “struck

³²⁵ Jews “deservedly blind”: Socrates, *HE* 1.9.35; *GCS* nf 1:35; *NPNF* ii 2:15; punished - for avarice: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 123.10; *CCL* 40:1833; Tweed *et al.*, 5:532; - for “pride and perversity”: Augustine, *C. Faustum* 16.32; *CSEL* 25:481; *NPNF* i 4:233.

³²⁶ Augustine, *C. Faustum* 13.11-12; *CSEL* 25:390; *NPNF* i 4:203f.

with blindness” was understood in the sense that they could not see God’s ways, having refused to see them. A further interpretation of Isaac’s loss of vision at Genesis 27:1 was that he had become blind to Esau’s wickedness.³²⁷

However ancient writers of different traditions may have made use of the theme of impairment being a punishment for sin, they most clearly demonstrate their ambivalence towards it when speaking directly to individual people with impairments. In this context, impairment understood as the parents’ sin being passed to their children is dismissed as “contrary to reason...since it cannot be that when one sinneth another should be punished.” Similarly, the belief in a pre-existent soul that is punished by impairment is rejected as a “godless and wicked teaching.”³²⁸ On several occasions, particular scriptural texts that indicate God as the cause of impairment are interpreted with some ingenuity: “When Paul saith... ‘He hath blinded their minds,’ it is not meant to bring Him in as the doer of it, but those who gave the occasion.”³²⁹ More explicitly,

³²⁷ “Outside of the specific [biblical] cases mentioned [Deuteronomy 28:28f; Zechariah 11:15-17; Proverbs 30:17], blindness in general is nowhere stated to be a punishment for sin” - *EJ* 4:1089; for similar picture in rabbinic texts: *EJ* 4:1090f. Compare the detailed analysis in Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, passim. YHWH mutilates with blindness: 4QHosea Peshier (4Q166 [4QPHos]), Martinez, 192; cf., *Exodus R.* 42.4. Bribe takers: Talmud, *Kethuboth* 105a. Men of Sodom: Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.* 4.40; Loeb Supplement 1:314f; cf., *Genesis R.* 50.8, *Numbers R.* 9.18, *Ecclesiastes R.* 2.28. Jacob’s inability to see: *LOTJ* 1:328f, 5:281f; *Genesis R.* 65.5, 65.10; cf., Koziba: *Lamentations R.* 2.4.

³²⁸ Sins of the parents visited on their children – “contrary to reason...it cannot be”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 58.3; *PG* 59:210; *NPNF i* 14:210; cf., *ibid.*, 56.1; *PG* 59:205; *NPNF i* 14:200. Ezekiel 18:32 and Jeremiah 21:24-32 are quoted to show that the verses of Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Numbers 14:18, Deuteronomy 5:9 have been cancelled. Cf., attacks on the heresy, a “godless and wicked teaching,” that people with impairments are being in the present life for sins committed formerly (John 9:1 used as the focal text): Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:675f; *NPNF ii* 6:140f.

³²⁹ Paul interpreted ingeniously (2 Corinthians 4:4): John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 38.1; *PG* 57:430; *NPNF i* 10:252; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 8.2; *PG* 61:455; *NPNF i* 12:318 - with footnote *ad loc.*: “This is one of the few instances in which the expositor allowed himself to be diverted by dogmatic considerations from the true meaning of the word”; cf., on Jn 12:40 - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 68.2; *PG* 59:376-377; *NPNF i* 14:253. ἵνα at John 9:39 explained as a conjunction not of cause, but of consequence: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 27.3; *PG* 61:226; *NPNF i* 12:159; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.1-2; *PG* 59:307; *NPNF i* 14:201.

pastoral letters to individuals with impairments strongly deny any link at all between impairment and sin:

I beseech you do not regard the bodily affliction which has befallen you as due to sin...If you suppose that your blindness is caused by sin...and evidence of God's anger, you will think Isaac a sinner...you will charge Jacob with sin.³³⁰

In other places, it is expressly denied that God causes impairment at all, on the grounds of inconsistency: "If He hardens hearts, who then makes wise? If He makes blind and deaf, who then has given sight and hearing?"³³¹

When Early Church writers engaged with the experience of particular people with impairments, two solutions emerged that hold on both to the justice and omnipotence of God, and also to the loving providence of God: original sin, and God's unsearchable wisdom. Original sin was applied specifically to infants with impairments, again both physically and figuratively.³³² Adam, wounded by the tooth of the serpent, "left by his wound an obligated inheritance for the human succession, so that we are all lamed by that wound." When defending the doctrine, Augustine writes,

Since you also deny that an infant is subject to original sin [as opposed to personal sins], you must answer why such great innocence is sometimes born blind; sometimes, deaf... There would have been nothing shameful in the works of God if there had not first been a reason why human nature had to be ashamed of the deformity it had deserved.³³³

³³⁰ In direct correspondence, all link between impairment and sin denied: Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:675f; *NPNF ii* 6:140f; - *ibid.*, 76.2; *CSEL* 55:35; *NPNF ii* 6:157. Cf., traditions about Anthony and Didymus: Sozomen, *HE* 3.15; *GCS* 50:125f; *NPNF ii* 2:295; Socrates, *HE* 4.25-26; *GCS* nf 1:259f; *NPNF ii* 2:110; Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:675f; *NPNF ii* 6:141.

³³¹ Denial of God as cause of impairment at all: *Kerygmata Petrou* 2.43.2f, *NTA* 2:535; cf., *Homilia Clementina* 19.22.6; *GCS* 42:265; *ANF* 8:337; *ibid.*, 2.43; *GCS* 42:52f; *ANF* 8:237.

³³² The particular problem of impairment from birth: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.1; *PG* 59:305; *NPNF i* 14:200f; *ibid.*, 58.3; *PG* 59:319; *NPNF i* 14:210; Jerome, *Epist.* 130.16; *CSEL* 56:197; *NPNF ii* 6:269f.

³³³ Original sin applied to congenital impairment: Augustine, *C. Julianum* 3.4.10; *PL* 44:707; *FC* 35:115f; - *ibid.*, 3.11.21; *PL* 44:712; *FC* 35:11; *ibid.*, 6.10.30; *PL* 44:839; *FC* 35:338f. Personal and original sin differentiated: *ibid.*, 6.21.67; *PL* 44:864; *FC* 35:378f. The doctrine applied to impairment in general: Ambrose, *De Cain et Abel* 1.3.10; *CSEL* 32.1:345; *FC* 42:366f; Jerome, *Epist.* 147.9; *CSEL* 56:324;

The other option, favoured especially by John Chrysostom, was to state that God's ways, undoubtedly just and loving, are beyond human understanding - and deliberately so:

For why does it concern thee, if such an one is blind, or such an one poor? God hath not commanded thee to look to this, but to what thou thyself art doing...Alas! how many things there are to teach us to bridle this unseasonable impertinence and idle curiosity; and yet we refrain not, but are curious about the lives of others; as, why one is impaired, and why another is poor. And so by this way of reasoning we shall fall into another sort of trifling which is endless...and thus the argument will run to interminable length. This in truth is the reason, why God has marked out limits to our knowledge.³³⁴

By referring in these ways to some ulterior answer about impairment's cause, either to original sin, which is explicitly contrasted to personal sin, or to the unfathomable wisdom of God, where the reasoning is beyond human ability, these writers demonstrate clearly how the belief that a person's impairment was caused by sin could not be accepted at face value. The effort of their interpretation is evidence that this belief was by no means the opinion that people in the ancient world routinely held.

Ambivalence in relation to the view that impairment is caused by sin is also discernible in writings from other ancient cultures. From Mesopotamian texts, although disease was understood to be "rooted in the will of the gods", many reasons were understood for the gods' action, not simply punishment. The contents of these texts "reflects a belief that most illnesses were divine instruments or messages of which punishment was

NPNF ii 6:293; Augustine, *C. Julianum* 5.14.51; *PL* 44:813; *FC* 35:291-293. Original sin (with no explicit relation to impairment): Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.29.147; Loeb 6:520; Yonge, 504.

³³⁴ Access to God's providential wisdom in causing impairment is beyond human capability: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 19; *PG* 62:132-133; *NPNF i* 13:140-141; cf., John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 1.8; *PG* 49:256-257; *NPNF i* 9:186; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 23; *PG* 60:183; *NPNF i* 11:154; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.26; *PG* 49:29; *NPNF i* 9:341; Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 53.6; *CCL* 36:454f; *NPNF i* 7:293.

one, though not the only, sub-category or motive.”³³⁵ In many Mesopotamian prayers relating to disease, the supplicant searches for a possible reason, either in their own behaviour or in the behaviour of their relatives, which might be causing the displeasure of the gods. The very fact that the supplicant is unable to identify any cause inevitably raises questions about the gods’ own causation. In a similar way, the differences themselves in rabbinic opinions about whether or not impairment is caused by sin indicate that the view is not closed to different interpretation. Also, scholars point out how the structure and content of the Book of Job are designed to raise questions about the role of God in the causation of infirmity and injury. The epitome of this ambivalence can be seen in the different blessings in rabbinic tradition to be spoken when a person with an impairment is observed. If the person has been born with an impairment, the prayer blesses “God the varied creator”; if the person’s impairment has been acquired, the blessing refers to “God the true judge.”³³⁶

In Graeco-Roman myth, ambivalence towards the role of the gods was expressed both with irony and also explicitly. It is a commonplace of Graeco-Roman theology that, in contrast to their human favourites, the gods do not experience in themselves the consequences of their actions: they do as they please, often with no discernible

³³⁵ Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 134; cf., *ibid.*, 132-139, 160, 164-168, 226-228; *BWL*, 41; Yamauchi, 102f; cf., *ibid.*, 106: “There is little evidence to suggest that in Egypt the idea of sin as a moral failing was viewed as a cause of disease.” Cf., Dasen’s analysis of impairment in Egypt: no sense of transgression: *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 156-159

³³⁶ Different rabbinic opinions over impairment and sin: Preuss, 299-302, 306f; cf., *ibid.*, 457. Job as subversive to straightforward belief about disease and punishment: Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 73-78, 409; Clines, “Deconstructing the Book of Job,” 106-123; cf., Yamauchi, 119f, 120f, 121-123; *Testament of Job* 20.2-3; *OTPs* 1:847. See also: Noorda, 215-224. The blessings at seeing people with impairments: Preuss, 235; Talmud, *Berachoth* 58b; cf., *Megilah* 24a.

purpose.³³⁷ An example with impairment of this use of irony to raise questions about the activity of gods comes in a tradition relating to Teiresias. In a hymn of Callimachus, Athene defends her action to Teiresias' mother, but her logic is undercut by the circumstances:

It is not I that made thy child blind. For no sweet thing is it for Athena to snatch away the eyes of children. But the laws of Cronus order thus: Whosoever shall behold any of the immortals, when the god himself chooses not, at a heavy price shall he behold.³³⁸

Even in Athena's self-justification, there is no mention that she had to make the child Teiresias blind: "a heavy price" is all that is specified in Cronus' edict. And this immortal's concern rings hollow in the face of the distraught mother of the child. We can compare the detail in *Odyssey* 8 of the action of the Muse to Demodocus, "whom the Muse loved above all others, and gave him both good and evil; of his sight she deprived him, but gave him the gift of sweet song." Whatever compensation she may have given (and why would the Muse do this to someone she "loved above all others"?), no reason is stated for her action.³³⁹ In the context of impairment, such events occurring apparently without rhyme or reason are used as the hallmark of divine activity: "I use the word [god-sent] in the same way that we call all unforeseen things god-sent."³⁴⁰ In these circumstances, blame attaching to impairment was explicitly rejected – people were rather to be met rather with acceptance:

³³⁷ The gods acting as they please, with no discernible purpose: Grmek, 35, 39f; cf., Parker, 255f; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 73-78; Yamauchi, 111-113. Similar use of irony undercutting the gods' behaviour in Graeco-Roman theology: Griffin, 88f, 169-171, 188; cf., Longrigg, 11-14.

³³⁸ Athena's words to the child Teiresias' mother: Callimachus, *Hymn to Athena* 57-136; Loeb, 116-123.

³³⁹ Homer, *Odyssey* 8.63f; Loeb 1:262f.

³⁴⁰ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.6; Pack, 15f; White 21 (the context is dreams foretelling the occurrence of impairment). Cf., Artemidorus' dream interpretations predicting impairment: a) Going deaf – *Oneirocritica* 1.24; Pack, 32; White 28. b) Going blind – *Oneirocritica*, 1.26; Pack, 32-35; White, 28-30; *Oneirocritica*, 2.36; Pack, 162; White, 115; *Oneirocritica*, 2.39; Pack, 175; White, 123; *Oneirocritica*, 4.24; Pack, 259f; White 197; *Oneirocritica*, 5.11; Pack, 304; White, 231; *Oneirocritica*, 5.20; Pack, 306; White, 232; *Oneirocritica*, 5.44; Pack, 311; White, 235; *Oneirocritica*, 5.52; Pack, 313; White, 236;

In all manner of evils which we deem to have befallen our neighbours by nature or fortune, nobody is wroth with them or reproves or lectures or punishes them, when so afflicted, with a view to their being other than they are.³⁴¹

In this third section of the chapter, we have dealt directly with ancient understandings of divinely caused impairment. As we have seen before, Early Church writers developed familiar impairment themes for their own use. God was seen to cause impairment for many different reasons: He may have wanted to prevent something harmful or wrong from happening, or He may have wanted to make sure something important and willed by Him did happen. These might relate directly to the person with an impairment, or not. God may have intended to bring about some change in the person's attitude or behaviour. He may have planned to teach the person particular discipleship qualities, or understandings about Himself. The person might learn through their own experience the benefits, rewards and promises that God has made available to all people, and for these reasons God could have made the person impaired. It could indeed be that the person's impairment was an appropriate punishment for some sin they have committed. Then again, it could be a means for the person's sin to be cleansed or forgiven. Some ancients denied outright any connection at all with the person's sin, drawing on logic or

Oneirocritica, 5.54; Pack, 313; White 236; *Oneirocritica*, 5.77; Pack, 320; White, 240; *Oneirocritica*, 5.90; Pack, 323; White, 242. c) Having epilepsy – *Oneirocritica*, 2.12; Pack, 124f; White 96. d) Become paralysed – *Oneirocritica*, 5.51; Pack, 313; White 236. e) Hand crushed – *Oneirocritica*, 5.66; Pack, 317; White, 238. f) Have apoplectic stroke – *Oneirocritica*, 5.88; Pack, 323; White, 242.

Cf., the use of dreams in medical diagnosis and treatment: Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Galen – Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 165-172; Aristotle: *Peri enupnion* 1-3, 458a-462b; Loeb 8:348-371; cf., Aristotle, *De divinatione per somnia* 1-2, 462b-464b; Loeb 8:374-385; Hippocrates on dreams – health, disease, treatment: Hippocrates, *Peri enupnion* 86-93; Loeb 4:420-447.

³⁴¹ Plato, *Protagoras* 323d; Loeb 2:136f: “Who, for instance, is such a fool as to try to do anything of the sort to the ugly, the puny, or the weak?” - τοὺς αἰσχροὺς ἢ σμικροὺς ἢ ἀσθενεῖς. Cf., in a discussion of Homer's treatment of Thersites: people with impairments are not blameworthy or shameful: “that which is brought about, not through our own acts, but by fortune” – Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quomodo adul.* 35c; Loeb 1:186f.

particular characters from the Bible. Others said that the person was not experiencing punishment for their own personal sins, but that they took their share, along with all other people, in original sin and its consequences. Others again said that even to ask in the first place why a person has an impairment is a waste of time and effort – God’s wisdom and providence are beyond our understanding, and deliberately so: to prevent us following false and empty leads, and to focus us on questions that are of genuine importance. As people in the ancient world sought to understand the cause of a person’s impairment, punishment for sin as one possibility, but one out of many others – and one that was far from unambiguous. Certainly, it could not be described as the generally held view.

5.0 *Conclusion*

Writers of the ancient world did not routinely hold the view that impairment was a punishment for sin. Impairment was seen to occur for a large number of reasons. It was seen as a natural part of being human – it could and did happen to anyone. It was sometimes hereditary, and sometimes the result of disease, passed on by contagion and developing over time. It sometimes occurred from the impact of a sudden blow, or from injury, or could be caused by some obstructive matter. And sometimes it was the result of excess, whether from a build-up of a bodily substance, or from over-exposure. These were well-established and widespread perspectives on the causes of impairment, as we

see both from pagan texts and also from Early Church writers' consistent use of each of these themes with figurative impairment.

Alongside the understanding that impairment occurs as a natural part of human life, was the belief that impairment was caused by demons – a belief confined to specific traditions. The interest that this belief held for the writers of the Early Church was its application for figurative impairment. Even New Testament texts where bodily impairment was described in demonic terms were interpreted and applied in terms of impairment of the soul, and not of the body.

A further belief about the cause of impairment was that God permits, and sometimes works impairment; and that He does so “not lightly and to no purpose.” Many reasons were identified for God permitting and working impairment. They included preventing certain things from happening, and making sure other things do happen; bringing about changes in attitude and behaviour; teaching particular qualities and understandings; demonstrating the benefits, rewards, and promises available to all people; punishing sins in an appropriate way, and providing the means for sins to be healed and forgiven. Much of the evidence for these divine causes of impairment was drawn from the encounters in the Gospels between people with impairments and Jesus.

This variety of beliefs about the causes of impairment demonstrates that the belief that God causes impairment in order to punish sin was not at all the opinion regularly held in the ancient world, nor even in the Early Church. Even when the writers referred to this belief directly, they showed ambivalence towards it. The belief was denied outright –

on the grounds of logic, from scriptural precedent, and from the experience of specific people. As with the theme of demonic causation, most applications of this belief were made not with bodily impairment, but with figurative impairment – using sin not to illustrate the cause of impairment, but using impairment to illustrate aspects of sin. Two themes emerged in response to the experience of particular people with impairments. The first was original sin, which was contrasted directly with personal sin. The second was the unsearchable wisdom of God, who, it was said, has deliberately limited human understanding of such matters.

Modern commentary holds a simplistic view of what people in the ancient world believed. People with impairments were not generally regarded as having caused their condition from sins they had committed. Indeed, as we see in Chapter 4, when it came to people with impairments in the Gospels, they were highly valued by Early Church writers in relation to the people in their own congregations and communities. These characters did not serve as a warning of the consequences of sin, but rather, in their encounters with Jesus, they served as models for the benefits, rewards, and promises of God available to all people.

This conviction of Early Church writers – discernible too in other ancient texts – that impairment was not without cause or purpose, nor contrary to God’s providential love, was the product of rigorous thought, sharp spiritual awareness, and the authority of experience. People in the ancient world who knew well the experience of impairment were far less tentative in ascribing impairment to the purposes of a loving God than those in the modern era to whom impairment is not a mainstream experience. This

apparent paradox highlights sharp differences in ancient and modern attitudes to impairment and demonstrates the exacting challenge to presuppositions in any current appropriation of ancient impairment texts, including the biblical texts.

There arises also a question for those who, like people in the ancient world, are currently familiar with impairment: ancients who knew the experience of impairment interpreted their experience within an understanding of God as loving and merciful; can those who currently live impairment make any appropriation of their understanding and wisdom? And can any such appropriation be done in ways that make the ancients' understanding and wisdom accessible to those who are not disabled?

CHAPTER 3

ANCIENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTS OF IMPAIRMENT

1.0 Introduction

Modern studies of impairment in the ancient world emphasise how negatively ancient cultures viewed the effects of impairment. Ancient attitudes have been characterised as “Fear and loathing at one end of the spectrum, pity and contempt at the other.”³⁴² There was, it is said,

little sympathy in early Greek literature for the deformed or oppressed, an attitude that can be demonstrated to have characterized popular (and official) opinion in virtually every period of classical antiquity. Attitudes to the deformed reflected the belief that health and physical wholeness were essential to human dignity, so much so that life without them was not thought to be worth living.³⁴³

The place of people with impairments in ancient societies is, it is alleged, clear-cut: they were socially marginalised and outcasts in the fullest sense. This is reflected in ancient literature: characters with impairments, it is claimed, lack any characterisation or depth, and impairment imagery “almost always” has a negative connotation.”³⁴⁴

³⁴² Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 106.

³⁴³ Ferngren, “The *Imago Dei*,” 34.

³⁴⁴ On a life of impairment allegedly thought to be not worth living, compare Garland’s assertions that a very high proportion of infants with impairments were immediately exposed: “There is every reason, therefore, to *assume...*” Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 12f (my italics).

Alleged general ancient attitudes towards people with impairments – Disdain and loathing: Garland *Eye of the Beholder*, 13f, 28f, 87, 106, 178f, 196; Social marginalisation: York, 80, 96, 98f, 137, 137, 139,

The biblical texts are no exception, allegedly portraying people with impairments as helpless as a matter of routine. Classical scholars draw on the biblical texts to show that negative perceptions of impairment were “probably universal,” and biblical scholars redraw the same picture, without questioning the received opinion and making little, if any, reference to impairment texts outside the Bible.³⁴⁵ Sometimes agendas are clear. Not infrequently, for instance, Christian commentators emphasise what is negative about impairment in the Hebrew Bible in order to show how Jesus was different: uniquely, the argument goes, Jesus showed acceptance to people with impairments. Some radical interpreters use the negative emphasis to discard the Bible altogether as irrelevant or irredeemable. Disability writers draw on these secondary sources in their own assessment of ancient views of impairment. They interpret biblical texts as bound within a consistently hostile atmosphere towards people with impairments. They pinpoint the Bible as especially formative for negative Western attitudes towards

143, 183; Vledder, 46f, 157f, 160-167, 180, 230f, 236, 238-242, 244-249, 251, 253; Malina and Rohrbaugh, 210f; Senior, 9; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 31, 39, 43f, 178f, 186;

Little if any characterisation of people with impairments – “stereotypical incapability”: Roth, 171; cf., *ibid.*, 17-20, 22-27, 28-55, 67f, 76, 78f, 103-110, 142-144, 150f, 158-164, 171, 175-177, 181-183, 214-221; Wolfe, 17; Vledder, 13f, 44, 127f; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 393f; F. Graber in C. Brown, *New International Dictionary* 1:218; R. K. Harrison in C. Brown, *New International Dictionary* 2:415; Haenchen, *Gospel of John* 1:245f, 1:254f.

Cf., “Rarely if ever, one suspects, did they [the ancients]...note that sensitivity and moral discrimination are not the exclusive preserve of the physically whole” – Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 104.

Any positive representation of people with impairment is said to be the exception, not the rule – and also clearly subversive!: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 26, 87, 94f, 96-99, 104; cf., Roth, 152, 198-201.

Alternatively, the active qualities of discipleship, “eminently worthy of emulation,” that are demonstrated by Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52) are interpreted as evidence that the text is suspect!: Achtemeier, 121f.

Impairment imagery – “almost always with a negative accent”: Schrage, 276; cf., Fontaine, “Roundtable Discussion,” 110; Fontaine, “Disabilities and Illnesses,” 290.

³⁴⁵ Alleged negative views of impairment in the Bible “probably universal”: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 2.

The Bible’s contributory portrayal of people with impairments: Woolfe, 17. The Bible’s negative use of impairment imagery: Fontaine, “Disabilities and Illnesses,” 290: “When the literary trope of ‘blindness’ or ‘lameness’ appears, it is usually negative in meaning.”

On impairment as negative in effects in biblical scholarship: Pierce, 47-58 – with examples of the effects of this currently on people with impairments.

impairment, such as the helplessness of people with impairments, their role as objects of charity, and their unacceptability to God and so to God-fearing society.³⁴⁶

This chapter investigates more closely ancient perspectives on the effects of impairment, and looks at how the themes of impairment's effects were at play in the rhetorical dynamic of implied author and implied reader. To people in the ancient world, the experience of impairment was mixed, both negative and positive, and that was how they used impairment in their texts. The modern preoccupation with the negative aspects to impairment, drawn as we have seen from a mainstream position of inexperience, overlooks a vast range of material, and leads to an uncritical basis for the interpretation of ancient texts, including the Bible. The difficulties and inabilities of impairment were not minimised by ancient writers – but they did not focus on them in anything like the way their modern interpreters assert. Impairment was associated also with themes of ability and usefulness; these themes occur in the biblical texts too. Even the hoary issue of impairment and priesthood turns out to be far from straightforward, and the notion that impairment was seen by people in the ancient world as incompatible with holiness evaporates as a modern projection.

³⁴⁶ The Bible understood as negative by the disability community: e.g., Morris, *Pride Against Prejudice*, 39-63; Barnes, "Legacy of Oppression," 15f; Fontaine, "Roundtable Discussion," 109, 111-114; Selway and Ashman, 432f.

Low expectations of ancient attitudes result: "The scriptural heritage that lacks the benefit of our present knowledge of the abilities of persons with disabilities" – Webb-Mitchell, 54.

An occasional sense that this negative emphasis in modern commentary may not be the only side to the story: "Many of the images in the Bible are negative, but some of the passages about disabled people

2.0 *Impairment: Difficulties and Inability*

2.1 Difficulties

In this first section of the chapter, we focus on impairment themes in ancient texts that could support uncritical modern views – the difficulties of impairment. The difficulties of living impairment were clearly described by ancient writers. No-one was under any illusion that impairment was a pleasant or desirable experience. However, in the rhetorical dynamic of implied author and reader, these impairment themes were frequently being put to use, and to many different uses. Even these uses of impairment’s negative effects show a much wider understanding of impairment’s effects than simply rejection, disdain, and “a life not worth living.”

We start with mobility. The amorous Hephaistus was described as making his approach to Athena with great difficulty – πολλῇ ἀνάγκῃ – “for he was lame.” Athena makes her escape from Hephaistus, but not before his seed falls on her leg, which results in the birth of Erichthonius, “the lower part of whose body was snake-formed.” Parallels were made elsewhere between the movement of snakes and people with paralysis – an association lost in societies where wheelchairs are common. The difficulty of Hephaistus’ movement is central to the story – an explanation of the birth of Erichthonius. However, Hephaistus’ lameness was also used to convey humour – clear

have been inappropriately interpreted because of the social stigma surrounding disabilities”- Stiteler, “Roundtable Discussion,” 121.

too from other ancient descriptions of this episode: Hephaistus approaches with such difficulty, but Athena escapes easily.³⁴⁷

The difficulty of moving was associated not only with those who were mobility impaired. For those who were blind, it was a common image: “You shall grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness, but you shall be unable to find your way” [Deuteronomy 28:29]. In this passage, the image was used to describe something worse than the experience of those who are blind: the blind grope at night, but the affliction will be such that people grope at noon. Blindness in this passage was not, as modern commentary asserts, a punishment. Rather, these particular effects of blindness were being used to illustrate how the punishment will be – it will be an experience even worse than the experience of those who are blind. In rabbinic tradition, this was explained in the terms of helplessness. The blind benefit from being seen by the sighted during the day, and so can be assisted. What those afflicted in this way will experience will be worse: to them, no such assistance will be available – they will be utterly helpless. The same image of mobility difficulty is used in rabbinic tradition to describe the haphazard nature of human wisdom: “The wise person is like a blind person groping their way through a window.” There is self-deprecating humour in this use by the traditionally wise to describe their discovery of wisdom: completely sightless, they fall

³⁴⁷ Hephaistus and Athena: Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.14.6; Loeb 2:88-91. Erichthonius as half snake: Hyginus, *Fabulae* 166; P. K. Marshall, 138f; M. Grant, 129f. In other contexts too, the association is made between the movement of snakes and the way in which people with mobility impairments move around (an association lost in cultures where wheelchairs are common): “Still another woman had the same dream [that she gave birth to a snake] and her child became a paralytic. For the serpent must employ its entire body to travel anywhere, which is also true of paralytics”: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 4.67; Pack, 290; White, 213. Compare Abbot Chaereon is described as “as if he were once more in his childhood he crawled with his hands hanging down and resting on the ground...all his limbs had already failed and were dead”: John Cassian, *Collationes* 11.4; *CSEL* 13:316; *NPNF ii* 11:416. Compare also on the difficulties of impairments in old age: Nestor’s words to Achilles - Homer, *Iliad* 23.623; Loeb 2:540f.

in through an open window. The difficulty of moving around was not underestimated; but, as a theme, nor was it poorly used – as we have seen in these examples, in the rhetorical dynamic, the same image was used for warning or for humour.³⁴⁸

Another difficulty associated with impairment was the loss of particular pleasures. An example is the loss to blind people of the pleasures brought by dreams.³⁴⁹ Similarly, those who are blind were thought to be unable to enjoy their food:

Isaac’s longing for tidbits was due to his blindness. As the sightless cannot behold the food they eat, they do not enjoy it with full relish, and their appetite must be tempted with particularly palatable morsels.³⁵⁰

This association was also used figuratively. An impairment image described how pleasure reaches a surfeit and is lost: “When we are sated with pleasure, then we find that the organs of the external senses in us lose their tone...seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear.”³⁵¹ Similarly, impairment’s difficulties describe the difficulty of understanding. Plato’s Forms are said to be “a hazy object of vision to the rest of us, whose eyes are weak” - ἀμαυρόν τι θέαμα ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀμβλυώττοντας.³⁵²

Again, impairment’s difficulties were being used for different effects.

³⁴⁸ This difficulty of moving threatened for those who break the covenant: Deuteronomy 28:29; the same movement difficulty used descriptively elsewhere in the Bible: Job 5:14, 12:25, 18:7; Isaiah 59:10; Acts 13:11, 17:27. Compare the mobility difficulties of blind people in this Graeco-Roman text: “Like blind men you go tottering all around” – Arrian, *Epicteti dissertationes* 3.22.26; Loeb 2:138f. Cf., the prayer for one’s enemies to have the inability of blindness: “Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see” – Psalm 69:23, Romans 11:10; cf., Job 11:20, 17:5. We can compare the use of stumbling as an image for difficulty – G. Stahlin in *TDNT* 6:745-758, 7:339-358.

³⁴⁹ A life of impairment as one where pleasures are lost – Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 4.17; *CCL* 2:925f; *ANF* 3:548. Blind people do not derive the pleasure of dreams: Talmud, *Berachoth* 55a.

³⁵⁰ *LOTJ* 1:330; cf., Talmud, *Yoma* 74b; Preuss, 554. Cf., Aristotle, *Problemata* 13.10, 908b; Loeb 15:312f.

³⁵¹ Impairment used to describe pleasure saturation: Philo, *Leg. All.* 3.64.183; Loeb 1:424; Yonge, 71; cf., Philo, *Prov.*, Fr. 2.12; Loeb 9:464, 466; Yonge, 749. Compare also, the governors sent to Judea became saturated with spoils and “at length less sharp in their pillaging” – ἀμβλυτέρως - Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 18.6.5.173; Loeb 9:110; Whiston, 488.

³⁵² Lucian, *Philopseudes* 16; Loeb 3:344f. Compare the Egyptian tradition that dreams are sent by the god so that those who dream realise that they are in fact blind to how things really are: *AEL* 3:211. The

Impairment's difficulties was shown too in relation to marriage. Impairment could affect a person's prospects for marriage. In rabbinic tradition, Leah and Rachel were both "very beautiful" but "Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah because the eyes of Leah were weak." Herodotus describes Assyrian women with impairments being sold off at auction with the smallest dowry. He also tells the story of Labda whose lameness led to rejection for marriage – although her offspring by the following suitor in time overthrew the dynasty of the suitor who had rejected her.³⁵³ In early Christian tradition, a husband was not to divorce his wife on the grounds that she was "misshapen in body, or faulty in her members – either blind, or deaf, or lame, or having any other defect." In one of his letters, Pliny used the example of an elderly person unable to move his limbs, and needing to have all his daily needs met by others as a means of praising the man's wife for her "steadfast loyalty."³⁵⁴

As this last example shows, the experience of impairment was on occasions understood to be more than something difficult: in some circumstances, it was seen as a grievous affliction. To the Argonauts, Phineus appears to endure "above all...most bitter woes" not only for his blindness itself, but also because of the effects of his blindness:

"Unhappy one, none other of men is more wretched than thou." When the chorus

people of Antioch's confusion as blindness: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 2.6; *PG* 49:36; *NPNF i* 9:346.

³⁵³ Jacob preferring Rachel to Leah, despite the great beauty of them both: *Jubilees* 28.5; *OTPs* 2:109. Assyrian women with impairments: Herodotus, 1.196; Loeb 1:248f. Labda's marriage: Herodotus, 5.92; Loeb 3:104f. Compare the philosopher Zenothemis who married a woman with a disfiguring impairment "as proof that he thinks little of physical beauty or ugliness and of wealth and glory": Lucian, *Toxaris* 24-26; Loeb 5:142-147. Also, there are debates in rabbinic texts about whether a blind or lame woman makes a beautiful and graceful bride or not: Talmud, *Kethuboth* 17a.

³⁵⁴ No divorce on grounds of impairment: Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte* 1.54; *CCL* 35:62; *NPNF i* 6:23f. Spouse as carer: Pliny (the Younger), *Epist.* 8.18; Loeb 2:150f.

speak with Oedipus, unaware of his identity, they say, “He is terrible to see and terrible to hear...Were you even blind from birth? Yours has been a sad life and a long one.”

Sophocles uses this impairment association as a device of irony: the audience knows the blind man’s identity, and knows the greater wretchedness of his past. The theme is also used to prepare for the contrast of the chorus’ moment of realisation about Oedipus’ identity when their sympathy turns to rejection.³⁵⁵ Similarly, Tobit speaks about his blindness as a grievous experience, again with irony:

He [Raphael] replied, ‘Joyous greetings to you!’ But Tobit retorted, ‘What joy is left for me any more? I am a man without eyesight; I cannot see the light of heaven, but I lie in darkness like the dead who no longer see the light. Although still alive, I am among the dead. I hear people but I cannot see them’ [Tobit 5:10].

Through Tobit’s statement of his grim experience, great emphasis is put on Raphael’s reply to Tobit: “ ‘Take courage; the time is near for God to heal you; take courage.’ ”

The audience know what Tobit does not – that the disguised Raphael speaks with divine authority.³⁵⁶

Jerome records that in a conversation with Antony, Didymus “frankly confessed that his blindness was a great grief to him.” Again, the theme is being used: Jerome tells the story in a pastoral letter to Castrutius, someone who had himself gone blind, to

³⁵⁵ Phineus: a general description - Apollonius Rhodius, 2.179-245; Loeb, 114-119; bitter woes – *ibid.*, 2.179; Loeb, 114f; none more wretched – *ibid.*, 2.244f; Loeb, 118f; respect, attentiveness and sorrow from the Argonauts – *ibid.*, 2.106f, 2.240f, 2.301, 2.438-455, 2.487-492, 2.1051, 3.555f; Loeb, 116f, 118f, 122f, 132f, 134-137, 172f, 232f; “And he rose from his couch, like a lifeless dream, bowed over his staff, and crept to the door on his withered feet, feeling the walls; and as he moved, his limbs trembled for weakness and old age” – *ibid.*, 2.197-200; Loeb, 114f. Oedipus: Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 140, 150-153; Loeb 2:426-429. Cf., Oedipus’ grievous circumstances: “I cannot go, for I fall short for lack of strength and vision, two afflictions” – Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 495f; Loeb 2:468f, and the first words of the play: “Child of a blind old man” – *ibid.*, 1; Loeb 2:412f.

³⁵⁶ Cf., Tobit 2:10: “For four years I remained unable to see. All my kindred were sorry for me, and Ahikar took care of me for two years before he went to Elymais.” See also Raguel’s words to Tobias:

enable Castrutius to identify with, and so be addressed by, the experience of highly respected Church figures.³⁵⁷ As we shall see below, John Chrysostom employs a similar technique when he interprets the experience of well-known people with impairments (those who encounter Jesus in the Gospels) so that people with impairments in the congregations he is preaching to can identify with them and be encouraged.

The association of impairment and death identified by Tobit occurs elsewhere in ancient texts. An example is this dream interpretation:

A man dreamt that someone said to him, ‘Do not be afraid that you will die, but you cannot live either.’ The man went blind. It was fitting and logical that the dream should turn out this way. For, since he was alive, he did not die, but since he did not see the light, he was not alive either.³⁵⁸

In Jewish tradition also, the blind and the dead were linked together: “Verily there are four that may be regarded as though they were dead, the blind, the leper, the childless and he who was once rich and has lost his fortune.” Choosing death rather than living life with impairment is recorded as an initial reaction to the onset of impairment. A

“Blessings on you, my child, son of a good and noble father! O most miserable of calamities that such an upright and beneficent man has become blind!” – Tobit 7:7.

³⁵⁷ Didymus: Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:677; *NPNF ii* 6:140f.

Solon includes freedom from impairment amongst the attributes of a fortunate person: Herodotus, 1.32; Loeb 1:38f. Compare Thamyris’ reaction to his blindness: he “forsook his art through stress of the trouble that afflicted him” – Pausanias, 4.33.7; Loeb 2:356f. Also, the Egyptian sun god, Re, wept when he found that his eye was missing from his body; from these tears, humans came into being – *ANET*, 6. Cf., People with paralysis: “They drag out a miserable existence” – “miserum spiritum trahunt” – Celsus, *De medicina* 3.27.1a; Loeb 1:344f.

Compare too the words of the centurion at Matthew 8:6 – “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, in terrible distress” – δεινῶς βασιλιζόμενος. Compare Augustine’s description of Bartimaeus: “regarded as an object of the most notorious and the most remarkable wretchedness because, in addition to being blind, he had also to sit begging” – Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 2.65.125; *CSEL* 43:227; *NPNF i* 6:158f.

Impairment is used to illustrate the state of inability of extreme pain -with reference to the NT paralysed man on his bed: “The bed of pain is the infirmity of the flesh...the Lord help thee on thy bed of pain. Thy bed did carry thee, thou carriedst not thy bed” – Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 40.5; *CCL* 38:452f; *NPNF i* 2:169f.

senator who became blind decided to end his life by starvation; however, “Augustus called on him and by his encouraging words induced him to live.” Reacting in frustration at Aphrodite’s adultery, Hephaistus blames his parents for his lameness: “Would they have never begotten me!” Death and impairment were linked in the description of foundling children who had been exposed and deliberately maimed in order to work as beggars: “nothing was more calamitous to the exposed than to be reared.”³⁵⁹ We can compare Pliny’s comment in the example above that although the elderly man with severe impairment “was willing to accept of life”, to Pliny himself his situation was “foedum miserandumque dictu.” Clearly, in certain circumstances, one of the reactions to the onset of impairment was that life was no longer worth living – but it was not the only reaction.

The difficulties of impairment occur in related themes. An example is the use of impairment’s difficulties to show that worse things happen than impairment, grievous though impairment is. Plutarch states that given music’s ability to over-excite the

³⁵⁸ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 5.77; Pack, 320; White, 240.

³⁵⁹ Jewish traditions of the blind as like the dead: *LOTJ* 1:364; references elsewhere in *LOTJ* 5:422; cf., *Genesis R.* 71.6, *Exodus R.* 5.4, *Lamentations R.* 3.2; cf., Preuss, 273 (with references at footnote 221). This statement applied figuratively: Talmud, *Nedarim* 7b. Augustus and the blind senator: Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 2.53.3; Loeb 1:208f. Hephaistus’ frustration: Homer, *Odyssey* 8.312; Loeb 1:280f; his petulance is short-lived, however: Hephaistus goes on to use his skill to trap and humiliate the divine adulterers. Locrian lawmaking: Exposed children reared and impaired to work as beggars: Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 10.4.1-25; Loeb 2:420-449. Cf., Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 141; Loeb 3:462-465: Demosthenes tells the story of a one-eyed man facing the prospect of losing his second eye as “much perturbed by the threat...reflecting that his life would not be worth keeping after such a loss as that.” With irony, Demosthenes adds that this was the first and only change in Locrian law. Compare also Ambrose on the mutilations that result from disease: “All these for humankind are more often the equivalent of death” – Ambrose, *De Cain et Abel* 2.9.35; *CSEL* 32:406; *FC* 42:434; cf., the paralysed woman at Treves, “Being, as it were, already dead” – Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini* 16.2; *SC* 133:286; *NPNF ii* 11:11. In a dream interpretation, spinal curvature and death are linked: a man dreamed that his daughter had a hunchback, and his sister died: “his stock was not healthy” – Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 4.29; Pack, 263; White, 198. Not that there always an association of death in such dreams: “Domitian himself, it is said, dreamed that a golden hump grew out on his back, and he

passions, there is little harm in being deaf and unable to hear music. The situation is the same with sight:

Teiresias laboured under a misfortune in not being able to see his children or his intimate friends, but greater was the misfortune of Athamas and Agave, who saw them as lions and deer.³⁶⁰

The theme occurs in Herodotus' story of Croesus and his mute son. As the oracle foretold, the muteness of his son was much less of an affliction to Croesus than what would happen to him on the day his son lost his muteness. When a Persian soldier attacked Croesus, the son spoke out revealing Croesus' identity, and Croesus was led away into captivity.³⁶¹ We see the same theme in Philo's use of impairment's effects to highlight the disastrous effects of what we can do to ourselves:

These things [impairment included] are all the results of fortune, very grievous and intrinsically miserable, but still, if compared with those which are brought on ourselves by our own deliberate will, they are far lighter.³⁶²

In a similar way, worse than being blind to the sun is being blind to the things of God, as Plutarch says of atheism. This proverbial saying was a common theme in early Christian writing. It is a great loss to the blind not to see the sun, but it is a greater loss

regarded this as an infallible sign that the condition of the empire would be happier and more prosperous after his time; and this was shortly shown to be true" – Suetonius, *Domitianus* 8.23.2; Loeb 2:384f.

³⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De superstitione* 167c-d; Loeb 2:468f. We see the theme on a trivial level - a face blemish is worse than a mutilation on the body: "A mole or a wart on the face is more unpleasant than brandmarks, mutilations, or scars on other parts of the body" – Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* 800e; Loeb 10:170f.

³⁶¹ Croesus and his mute son – Herodotus, 1.85; Loeb 1:106-109. Self-inflicted disasters worse than impairment and other blows of fortune - Philo, *Conf. Ling.* 6.20; Loeb 4:20; Yonge, 236. Cf., diseases, fevers, and disorders, including: "paralysis of the tongue, and deafness of the ears, and imperfections of the eyes, and a general dimness and confusion of all the other senses, things which, though terrible, will yet hardly appear so when compared with other things more grievous still" – Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 25.143; Loeb 8:400, 402; Yonge, 678. Impairment is not to be feared in the light of "a better life": John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 2.12; *PG* 49.233; *ACW* 31:176.

³⁶² Self-inflicted disasters worse than impairment and other blows of fortune - Philo, *Conf. Ling.* 6.20; Loeb 4:20; Yonge, 236. Cf., diseases, fevers, and disorders, including: "paralysis of the tongue, and deafness of the ears, and imperfections of the eyes, and a general dimness and confusion of all the other senses, things which, though terrible, will yet hardly appear so when compared with other things more grievous still" – Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 25.143; Loeb 8:400, 402; Yonge, 678.

still to those unable to see in their soul that they are deprived of true and divine light:

“What greater injury can befall a person?”³⁶³

A second related theme is the emphasis that it is not what happens to us that is important, but how we respond to what happens to us: impairment – even impairment – can be lived well. This attitude was associated especially with the Stoics: Cicero states that someone with an impairment who is wise is not “miser” but “beatissimus.”³⁶⁴

However, when ridiculing the Stoics, Augustine reduces this position *ad absurdum*:

Their wise person...is always happy, even though they become blind, deaf, mute, mutilated, racked with pains, or suffer any conceivable calamity such as may compel them to make away with themselves.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ Plutarch on the blindness of atheism: τὸ παρορᾶν καὶ τυφλώττειν - Plutarch, *Mor., De superstitione* 167a-b; Loeb 2:466f. Early Christian writers using the grievous experience of impairment to highlight the worse experience of impairment in relation to God or the true light: Ambrose, *Exameron* 4.1.2; *CSEL* 32.1:112; *FC* 42:127-129; Basil of Caesarea, *Hexameron* 6.1; *GCS* nf 2:89; *NPNF* ii 8:82; Cyprian, *De dominica oratione* 5-6; *CCL* 3A:92f; *ANF* 5:470; Jerome, *Epist.* 133.1; *CSEL* 56:242; *NPNF* ii 6:272; John Cassian, *Collationes* 4.19; *CSEL* 13:114; *NPNF* ii 11:337; Gregory of Nazianzen, *In laudem Athanasii* 2; *PG* 35:1084; *NPNF* ii 7:270; “What greater injury can befall a man?” – Origen, *C. Celsum* 8.38.21; *SC* 150:258; *ANF* 4:653. Cf., “For a dreadful, dreadful palsy is sin, or rather it is not palsy only, but also somewhat else more grievous” – ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλο τι χαλεπώτερον : John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 67.4; *PG* 58:638; *NPNF* i 10:413. Compare Augustine comparing the effect of the loss of sight in the body’s most excellent member, the eye, to the soul’s loss of sight: “it is now miserable because it does not enjoy God” – Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.1; *CCL* 48:806; *NPNF* i 2:479. Cf., “He that knows what in the soul gives joy and gladness, knows how great an ill it is to be abandoned by the light of truth: since a great ill do men reckon the blindness of their bodily eyes, whereby this light is withdrawn.” – Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 9.23; *CCL* 38:69; Tweed *et al.*, 1:86. Impairment is not to be feared in the light of “a better life”: John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 12.12; *PG* 49.233; *ACW* 31:176.

Using the same theme in a different way, Augustine argues that blessedness in this life cannot be found: “For what flood of eloquence can suffice to detail the miseries of this life? The amputation or decay of the members of the body puts an end to its integrity, deformity blights its beauty...What if some sickness makes the members tremble? What if a man suffers from curvature of the spine to such an extent that his hands reach the ground?...What kind of sense is it that remains when a man becomes deaf and blind? And who is quite sure that no such thing can happen to the wise man in this life?” - Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.4; *CCL* 48:665; *NPNF* i 2:401f.

³⁶⁴ Cicero, *De finibus* 5.28.84-86; Loeb 17:486-489.

³⁶⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.4; *CCL* 48:666f; *NPNF* i 2:402.

With a similar Stoic flavour, Plutarch interprets Homer's treatment of Thersites, the lame and disfigured critic of the Greek military leaders in the *Iliad*. Homer uses the story, Plutarch maintains, to encourage magnanimity:

that when we ourselves have met with chances and changes [such as Thersites' impairment] we be not humiliated or even disturbed, but bear gently with scoffings and revilings and ridicule.³⁶⁶

In Jewish and Christian traditions, this related impairment theme was widespread. Philo included impairment among those things

by which those who are weak spirited are broken down, not being able to raise themselves at all through their want of courage; but those who are full of high thoughts and noble spirits, rise up to struggle against these things, and contend against them with fortitude and exceeding vigour.³⁶⁷

Similarly, early Christian writers applied the theme both in general and also with particular people: "Let not these things be offences to you, but battles; nor let them weaken nor break the Christian's faith, but rather show forth his strength in the struggle."³⁶⁸ The theme can be identified too in the way impairment was used to

³⁶⁶ Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quomodo adul.* 35d; Loeb 1:186f.

³⁶⁷ Philo, *Virt.* 2.5; Loeb 8:164, 166; Yonge, 640.

³⁶⁸ Cyprian, *De Mortalitate* 12; *CCL* 3A:23; *ANF* 5:472; cf., Theodoret, *Epist.* 78; *SC* 40:178; *NPNF ii* 3:274f. See also: of Abbot Paul, who healed others' impairment, but was not heal of his own: "It was made clearly and plainly evident even to unbelievers that the infirmity of all his limbs was caused by the providence and love of the Lord, and that the grace of these healings was granted by the power of the Holy Ghost as a witness of his purity and a manifestation of his merits" – John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.26; *CSEL* 13:205; *NPNF ii* 11:371f.

Advice on how those with impairments "are to be admonished" – including, "Unless [God] purposed to give them an inheritance after correction, He would not have a care to educate them by affliction...how great health of the heart is in bodily affliction...[that] an elated mind is reminded by the afflicted flesh of the good of humility...how great a boon is bodily affliction, which both washes away committed sins and restrains those which might have been committed...to the end that they may keep the virtue of patience, to consider incessantly how great evils our Redeemer endured from those He had created." – Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis*, 3.12; *SC* 382:322-330; *NPNF ii* 12:34-36. Cf., the use of people with impairments from the Gospel encounters with Jesus as models of faithful behaviour in the circumstance of impairment by John Chrysostom: *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.1-23; *PG* 48:803-806; *FC* 72:286-294; *In paralyt.* passim; *PG* 51:47-64; *NPNF i* 9:211-220; *Hom. in Jo.* 37.1; *PG* 59:207-208; *NPNF i* 14:128f; also, people with impairments in general demonstrating appropriate ways of living with impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 35; *PG* 60:256; *NPNF i* 11:222f; *ibid.*, 42; *PG*

demonstrate hope in the life to come: “We are not afraid of...any such misfortune, because we know that we are on our way to a better life, which is...free from all such inequality.”³⁶⁹ In these various ways, the grievous experience of impairment was used by ancient writers with different purposes and for different effects.

Chief among the difficulties of living impairment was how other people responded – on the social model, the disability of people with impairments in the ancient world. Firstly, able-bodied people were described as reacting to people with impairments with abhorrence, scorn or shame. According to Suetonius, this was Augustus’ reaction to people with impairments (although his generosity with the blind senator, as mentioned above, is recorded by the same historian with approval). Hephaistus bitterly describes his wife’s adulterous attitude: “Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, scorns me for that I am lame and loves destructive Ares because he is comely and strong of limb, whereas I was born misshapen.”³⁷⁰ A maimed veteran in Rome, again a victim of adultery, was scorned:

The adulterers laughed to see the mutilated hands of the hero... Who could be more unlucky than this man – laughed at by adulterers at the moment when they should have been dying?³⁷¹

The astrologer Ptolemy refers to times when the influence of the maleficent planets that cause impairment is reduced: on these occasions, the “injuries are not disfiguring and do

60:302; *NPNF i* 11:262f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:465-468; *NPNF i* 13:373-375. For more examples and further discussion, see below pages 349-393.

³⁶⁹ John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 12.12; *PG* 49:233; *ACW* 31:176.

³⁷⁰ “He abhorred dwarfs, cripples, and everything of that sort, as freaks of nature and of ill omen” – “pumilos atque distortos et omnis generis eiusdem ut ludibria naturae malique ominis abhorebat” - Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 2.83.1; Loeb 1:251f. Hephaistus on Aphrodite’s scorn: Homer, *Odyssey* 8.308f; Loeb 1:280f.

³⁷¹ Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 1.4.3; Loeb 1:108f; cf., *ibid.*, 1.4.1-12; Loeb 1:104-121.

not entail reproach.” In an oath-taking ceremony of loyalty, Hittite troops were deliberately encouraged to scorn people with impairments:

They parade in front of them a [blind woman] and a deaf man and you [speak] as follows: ‘See! Here is a blind woman and a deaf man. Whoever does evil to the king (and) the queen, let the oaths seize him! Let them make him blind! Let them [ma]ke him[deaf]! Let them [blind] him like a blind man! Let them [deafen] him like a deaf man!’³⁷²

However, while modern commentators assert that this reaction to people with impairments was almost universal, they rarely point out that many people in the ancient world rejected as wrong precisely these responses. Specific texts state that people with impairments are not to be considered shameful. Significantly, while modern commentators use the Thersites incident to conclude that the ancients held strongly negative views about impairment, Plutarch used the same incident to come to the opposite conclusion:

Homer ridicules those who feel ashamed of lameness or blindness, in that he does not regard as blameworthy that which is not shameful, or as shameful that which is brought about, not through our own acts, but by fortune.³⁷³

The *Iliad* text shows that in the Thersites incident, Homer criticises Thersites not for his impairment, but for his “measureless speech”: “Never again will his proud spirit

³⁷² Reduced influence of planets causing impairment: Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.153; Loeb, 330f. Hittite soldiers’ oath: *ANET*, 354. Cf., Hera ashamed of her son Hephaistus: *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 316-318; Loeb, 346f.

³⁷³ Plutarch on Homer’s use of Thersites: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quomodo adul.* 35c; Loeb 1:184-187: “Thersites is reproached by Odysseus, not as lame or bald or hunchbacked, but as indiscreet in his language, while on the other hand the mother of Hephaistus affectionately drew an epithet from his lameness when she addressed him thus: ‘Up with you, club-foot, my child’ (Homer, *Iliad* 21.331; Loeb 2:432f). Plutarch’s interpretation is in marked contrast to the conclusions drawn from this Homeric passage by modern interpretation: the leading modern study of impairment in the Graeco-Roman world interprets the same text as showing that Thersites was seen as “another cripple...hideous and insubordinate” on the receiving end of “Odysseus’ brutal mistreatment of a disabled outsider.” This action is described by this modern interpreter as “doubtless...[well received by] the many...who subscribed to the further view that the deformed and disabled should keep their mouths shut and stay out of sight”- Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 80.

henceforth set him on to rail at kings with words of reviling.” Again rejecting shame as a response to people with impairments, John Chrysostom told his congregation: “For if God is not ashamed of them, but has set them in His vestibules, much less thou be ashamed.”³⁷⁴

Secondly, people with impairments were ridiculed. Throughout Aristophanes’ play, *Plutus*, much humour is drawn from the blindness of the god Wealth. Other writers did the same: “Not only was Plutus blind, but his guide, Fortune, as well.” Hephaistus was a favourite butt of jokes, and not only from his fellow Olympians: “Two mules, equally advanced in years, adorn my carriage, in all things resembling Homer’s Prayers: lame, wrinkled, with squinting eyes, the escort of Hephaistus.”³⁷⁵ An opponent’s impairment was often the focus of humour. A Babylonian text reads: “You are lame and are unable to hop over a ditch.”³⁷⁶ Early Church writers ridiculed the impairment of pagan deities:

³⁷⁴ Thersites: physical attributes (lame and spinal curvature) mentioned after personal attributes – “of measureless speech, whose mind was full of great store of disorderly words, wherewith to utter revilings against the kings, idly, and in no orderly wise – Homer, *Iliad* 2.211-277; Loeb 1:66-71; N.B. words of onlookers as Odysseus struck him: “Never again will his proud spirit henceforth set him on to rail at kings with words of reviling” – *ibid.*, 2.276f; Loeb 1:70f.

People with impairments in church: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:466; *NPNF i* 13:374. Cf., “Open thy compassion to all who are enrolled the disciples of God; not looking contemptuously to personal appearance... This form is case around us from without, the occasion of our entrance into this world, that we may be able to enter into this common school. But within dwells the hidden Father, and His Son, who died for us and rose with us” – Clement of Alexandria, *Quis dives salvetur?*, 33-34; *GCS* 17:181-183; *ANF* 2:600f.

³⁷⁵ Humour in Wealth’s blindness: e.g., Aristophanes, *Plutus* 120f; 372f; Rogers, 14f. Fortune blind too: Diogenes Laertius, *Demetrius* 5.82; Loeb 1:534f. cf., Lucian, *Timon* 20, 24-27; Loeb 2:346-349, 352-357. Lame horses, the escorts of Hephaistus: *Greek Anthology* 11:361; Loeb 4:240f; cf., the remark to a lame blacksmith, following the same trade as Hephaistus, “It is quite fair you should have a lame leg” – *Greek Anthology*, 11:307; Loeb 4:212f.

³⁷⁶ An enemy’s lameness made use of: *Greek Anthology* 11.273; Loeb 4:198. Babylonian text: *BWL*, 254. There are many examples of impairment ridiculed. Deaf and one-eyed guests mocked: SHA, Antoninus Elagabalus, 29.3-4; Loeb 2:162. Commodus’ cruelty included himself mutilating people and mocking people with impairments: SHA, Commodus Antoninus, 9.6, 10.6, 11.2; Loeb 1:286-291. Mocking people with impairments – Juvenal, 2.23; Loeb, 18f; *ibid.*, 4.113-122; Loeb, 64-67; *ibid.*, 8.32; Loeb, 160f; *ibid.*, 8.53; Loeb, 162f. Cf., Persius, 1.128; Loeb, 328f; Petronius, *Satyrica* 28 Loeb, 40f. Cf., Plautus, *Curculio* 392, 394; Loeb 2:230-233; *Greek Anthology* 11.74; Loeb 4:108f. Cf., Propertius, 4.8.41f; Loeb, 316f. Cf., treatment of a slave with spinal curvature – Pliny, *HN* 34.6.11-12; Loeb 9:134f.

Those maimed, wrinkled, squinting divinities, the Litae, daughters of Thersites rather than of Zeus. So that Bion – wittily as I think – says, ‘How in reason could men pray Zeus for beautiful progeny – a thing he could not obtain for himself?’³⁷⁷

However, ancient writers also emphasised the limit of propriety when ridiculing people with impairments. Cicero writes: “In physical blemishes there is good enough matter for jesting, but here as elsewhere the limits of licence are the main question”; this depends on “wisdom and discretion” – “prudencia et gravitate.”³⁷⁸ Plutarch too identifies the host’s responsibility in this respect:

Cf., Claudius’ impairment mocked by Seneca (the Younger) in *Apocolocyntosis* 5, 6, 11, 12; Loeb, 380f, 382-385, 394f, 398f.

Statue of someone with spinal curvature: “’Twas a drunken Prometheus, I fancy, made for the earth this monster” – Martial, 14.182; Loeb 3:502f; cf., *ibid.*, 14.212; Loeb 3:512f – re a person of restricted growth. As an entertainment, a philosopher fights with, and is beaten by, “A tough little dwarf” – Lucian, *Symposium* 18-19; Loeb 1:430-433. Cf., hyperbole for fighting dwarfs – Statius, *Silvae* 1.6.56-64; Loeb 1:68f. Compare a philosopher’s mockery of blinding love: “For this is what men usually do when blinded by desire, and they attribute to women advantages which they really have not” – “cupidine caeci” – Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 4.1153f; Loeb, 328f. In an Egyptian text, the effects of love for a god: “The love of thee make arms languid, thy beautiful form relaxes the hands” – *ANET*, 366.

³⁷⁷ Zeus’ offspring, the Litae, mocked for being *χωλαὶ* (see Homer, *Iliad* 9:503-507; Loeb 1:418f) – Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.50; Marcovich, 77f; *ANF* 2:185. Cf., Hephaistus mocked for his lameness: Ps-Justin Martyr, *Oratio ad Graecos* 3; *PG* 5-6:235; *ANF* 1:272; Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 3.9.5; *PTS* 43-44:109; *ANF* 2:112; Athanasius, *C. gentes* 12; *PG* 25:25, 28; *NPNF ii* 4:10; Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 76; *PG* 26:949; *NPNF ii* 4:216; Athenagoras, *Legatio* 21.3; Schoedel, 44-47. Plutus the god Wealth is also ridiculed through his impairment, as both blind and blinding: Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.2.10.2; *SC* 158:28; *ANF* 2:273; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.5; *PG* 8:1236; *ANF* 2:413. Cf., examples in Philo: *Dec.* 15.74; Loeb 7:42, 44; Yonge, 524.

There is, however, very little mockery of people with impairments in Early Church texts, and what there is does not have the sarcasm used on pagan deities. An example is Macrianus who ruled as emperor through his two sons, “Being unable to put the royal garment on his crippled body – ἀναπήρω τῷ σώματι – Eusebius, *HE* 7.10.8; Loeb 2:152-155. The wives of Lamech mock Adam for his choice of sexual restraint from Eve as “lameness”: *LOTJ* 1:118.

³⁷⁸ Cicero on what is laughable: “The chief, if not the only, objects of laughter are those sayings which remark upon and point out something unseemly in no unseemly manner” – “turpitudinem aliquam non turpiter” – Cicero, *De oratore* 2.58.236; Loeb 3:372f. “In physical blemishes there is good enough matter for jesting, but here as elsewhere the limits of licence are the main question” – *ibid.*, 2.58.239; Loeb 3:374f; this depends on “wisdom and discretion” – “prudencia et gravitate” – *ibid.*, 2.60.247; Loeb 3:382f. Cicero gives examples of impairment as the source of remarks both serious and jesting, defining the two: “Seriousness is bestowed austere and upon things of good repute, jesting upon what is a trifle unseemly” – *ibid.*, 60.248-249; Loeb 3:382-385; the jesting example in relation to impairment he dismisses as “absurd” – “ridiculum,” while the serious words he describes as “noble and dignified” – “praeclarum et grave.” We can compare: “The ridiculous may be defined as... deformity not productive of pain or harm to others” – τὸ γελοῖον... διεστραμμένον ἀνευ ὀδύνης – Aristotle, *Poetica*, 5.1449a; Bywater, 14f.

lest unawares the members of the party introduce an insolent violence bitter as henbane in their wine as they run riot with their so-called commands, ordering stammerers to sing, or bald men to comb their hair, or the lame to dance on a greased wine skin.³⁷⁹

Witty self-mockery, however, was appropriate, as we saw with the rabbinic image of blindly falling into wisdom. Agamestor the philosopher had a leg impairment, and he bettered his able-bodied companions by using his impairment in a drinking game in a way they could not copy: “Thus Agamestor showed himself an urbane gentleman; and, following his example, one should make his ripostes good-natured and merry.” The future king of Sparta, Agesilaus, was praised in a similar way: “the ease and gaiety with which he bore such a misfortune [his lameness], being first to jest and joke about himself, went far towards rectifying it.”³⁸⁰ “Laugh not at the lame or blind” occurs in writings of several cultures, and according to legal historians this even took legislative form: “In the fourth century, the fifty-seventh of the so-called Apostolic Canons condemned and punished those who ridiculed disabled persons.”³⁸¹

Thirdly, people with impairments were vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The description of Gratian’s murder draws on this theme: “Not suspecting any treachery, he fell into the hands of his enemy as a blind man into the ditch.” The vulnerability of the

³⁷⁹ Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 1.4, 621e-622a; Loeb 8:58-61. Cf., “People support with equanimity being teased about baldness, but with asperity about impairment of sight” – εἰς δὲ πῆρωσιν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀηδῶς - “some endure these conditions with gentle equanimity” – τινὲς δὲ ταῦτα πράως καὶ μετρίως φέρουσιν : examples of self-mockery over impairment, and of appropriate and inappropriate teasing of others with impairments – Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 2.1.633c-e; Loeb 8:130-133.

³⁸⁰ Agamestor the philosopher: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 1.4, 621e-622a; Loeb 8:58-61. Agesilaus: Plutarch, *Vit.*, *Agesilaus* 1-2; Loeb 5:2-5. Compare the wit of the blind Rabbi Shesheth: Talmud, *Berachoth* 58a. John Chrysostom mocks himself in impairment terms when describing his fear when contemplating his episcopal responsibilities: *De sacerdotio*, 6.12; *SC* 272:348, 350; *NPNF i* 9:81f.

³⁸¹ “Laugh not at the lame or blind”: *AEL* 2:160]; Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quomodo adul.* 35c; Loeb 1:184-187; Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 1.4.3; Loeb 1:108f; *5 Ezra* 21; *NTA* 2:645; *4 Ezra* 2.20-21; *OTPs* 1:527; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 4.8.32.276; Loeb 4:608; Whiston, 122; John Chrysostom, *Hom in*

blind Oedipus to ambitious city state leaders is a key theme in Sophocles' play, *Oedipus at Colonus*. Aesop has a fable of a stag with one eye whose attempts to escape being hunted are foiled because of its impairment. Augustine mentions a similar impairment proverb: "A sound finger is safer in the body than a dim eye." Tertullian draws on the theme to attack the supposed powers of magicians: "It is no difficult matter to delude the external vision of a man whose mental eye is so easy to blind." Through imagery, the theme is applied also to inanimate objects. Ships are described as blind – they do not see the sea's dangers, and so do not avoid them. In a transferring of the theme, waves and cliffs are said to be blind: their power is indiscriminate, a fact that makes approaching ships and their sailors vulnerable.³⁸²

However, ancient writers also condemned the abuse of the vulnerability of people with impairments. Interpreting Leviticus 19:14, Philo talks of "the most iniquitous conflict of all" in which those who are unable to hear or speak cannot "retaliate in equal manner."³⁸³ Not only are the abusers themselves deemed guilty, but also those who do not prevent the abuse:

I Thess. 11; *PG* 62:465-468; *NPNF i* 13:373f. Ridicule of people with impairments outlawed: Harakas, 156.

³⁸² Murder of Gratian – Socrates, *HE* 5.11; *GCS* nf 1:285f; *NPNF ii* 2:124. Cf., To illustrate a soul "darkened by unnatural dogmas," Clement of Alexandria uses the image of eels in muddy waters caught by being blinded – because of their blindness they fall into captivity – Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.16.99; *GCS* 17:70; *ANF* 2:52. Oedipus' vulnerability: Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 173-175; Loeb 2:430f. Aesop's fable of the stag with one eye: Aesop, 77; Hausrath and Hunger, 103f; Vernon Jones, 119. Augustine's use of an impairment proverb: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 130.8; *CCL* 40:1904; Tweed *et al.*, 6:81f – "tutior est enim in corpore digitus sanus quam lippiens oculus". Against the supposed powers of magicians: Tertullian, *De anima* 57.35; *CCL* 2:866; *ANF* 3:233. Blind ships: *Greek Anthology* 9.289; Loeb 3:154f. Blind waves: *Greek Anthology* 12.156; Loeb 4:362f; cf., *ibid.*, 7.400; Loeb 2:214f; blind cliffs: *ibid.*, 7.275; Loeb 2:150f. Cf., "We speak of a blind ditch, not because it has lost its eyes, but because by lying hid it makes us blind to its existence" – Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 43.6; *CCL* 36:375; *NPNF i* 7:241.

³⁸³ Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4.38.197-198; Loeb 8:130; Yonge, 635. Cf., the exploitation of Mephibosheth condemned: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 7.11.3.267-271; Loeb 5:500-504; Whiston, 201; *LOTJ*

As if it were enough not to have pushed a blind man down with one's own hand, though he is equally guilty who scorned to save him, when it was in his power, when fallen and on the point of tumbling into the ditch.³⁸⁴

Taking advantage of the vulnerability of animals with impairments through theft was a distinct crime, for which the recompense payable was four or five times the animals' purchase price.³⁸⁵ Not only were people with impairments not to be exploited, but also they were to be protected from exploitation. A study of Ancient Near Eastern legal texts states that "such protection was seen as a virtue of gods, kings and judges." Many texts demonstrate this characteristic in ancient law and theology: a biblical example is Leviticus 19:14. Similarly, during the Roman siege of part of Alexandria in 260 CE, in persuading the senate of Alexandria to allow certain non-combatants to escape, Anatolius says, "Why should we destroy with hunger those who are impaired and maimed in body?"³⁸⁶

4:76f, 6:244 (footnote explanation *ad loc.*); John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Philipp. 5*; *PG* 62:216; *NPNF i* 13:206.

³⁸⁴ John Cassian, *Collationes* 16.18; *CSEL* 13:453; *NPNF ii* 11:456. Cf., the condemnation of the use of people with deformities as sexual toys: Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.4.30.1; *SC* 156:66; *ANF* 2:278f.

³⁸⁵ Stolen blind or lame sheep or oxen to be repaid four or five times the payment: Talmud, *Baba Kama* 78b.

In a fable of Aesop, the deception by a doctor of an old woman who is blind is the story's basis: Aesop, 57; Hausrath and Hunger, 78-81; Vernon Jones, 13; (by tradition, Aesop himself had a mobility impairment: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 104, 111).

³⁸⁶ Protection in Ancient Near Eastern texts for those who are vulnerable – including people with impairments: Fensham, *passim*. Cf., Preuss, 273, 276, 292f. "By your powerful right (hand), to take care of the weak by the strength of your might [...] by your name and to show yourself mighty in your power" – The Hymns, 1QHymns^a (1QHodayoth^a [1QH^a]), XXIII 7-8; Martinez, 359. Sumas hymn: the god stands by the sick; the judge who does not take a bribe, but takes the part of the weak is pleasing to the god and has their life prolonged (repeated) – *BWL*, 131, 133; cf., grievous guilt of those who oppress the poor and who give the weak into the power of the strong – *BWL*, 119. "Do not laugh at a blind man, nor tease a dwarf, nor cause hardship for the lame. Don't tease a man who is the hand of the god, nor be angry with him for his failings. Man is clay and straw, the god is his builder." – *AEL* 2:160. Cf., "Beware of attacking a cripple; don't stretch out your hand to touch an old man" – *AEL* 2:150. Cf., Amun addressed as Helmsman of the weak / helpless – *AEL* 2:112. The creator god, "Has erected a shrine around about them, and when they weep he hears. He made for them rulers (even) in the egg, a supporter to support the back of the disabled" – Egyptian, *ANET*, 417. Anatolius's words at the siege of

In the biblical story of Mephibosheth, several of these impairment difficulty themes are interwoven [2 Samuel 9:1-13, 16:1-4, 19:24-30]. Lamed in both legs as a child, Mephibosheth was not unfamiliar with rejection: although the grandson and only surviving descendent of Saul, he was living in internal exile at Lodebar – appropriately meaning ‘Nowhere’ [Amos 6:13]. His dependence on his carer – his vulnerability to abuse as it turns out – is a key element in the story. David had restored Mephibosheth on the grounds of his covenant friendship with Saul. But David’s own fortunes changed, and when David returned after exile, Mephibosheth’s loyalty to him was clear from his appearance, but he had not actually joined David. This was, he said, because his servant Ziba had refused to take him, and without Ziba’s assistance he was unable to go. David, however, influenced by Ziba’s slander of Mephibosheth, doubted Mephibosheth, and having already given his property to Ziba on the strength of Ziba’s slander, returned only half to Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth gave further proof of his loyalty in the final comment of the episode: Ziba could take it all, he said, as what really mattered was that “my lord the king has come safely home” [2 Samuel 19:30].

In both early Jewish and early Christian traditions, David was seen as making a serious error of judgement in doubting Mephibosheth’s loyalty and trusting Mephibosheth’s assistant. David’s error here was even said to be the reason why the kingdom of Israel was divided and why Jerusalem had been destroyed.

Mephibosheth was a figure of importance in early Jewish tradition, especially for his

Alexandria: Eusebius, *HE* 7.32.9; Loeb 2:232f. Rabbi’s question to the blind man with a torch: Talmud, *Megilah* 24b

wisdom: his name became synonymous with scholarship. A linguistic analysis of the Hebrew Bible texts has shown how this episode of Mephibosheth's vulnerability and David's response was being used within the succession narrative to illustrate David's flawed character: "a feeling of uneasiness persists...David demeans himself in this way." Significantly, these impairment themes that were active in the rhetorical dynamic for ancients, modern commentary fails to notice.³⁸⁷

If such responses to people with impairments were strongly criticised in ancient texts, other responses were encouraged. Compassion, for instance, was applauded. It featured as central to Demosthenes' definition of the spirit of the commonwealth: "That spirit is a spirit of compassion for the helpless, and of resistance to the intimidation of the strong and powerful." Early Church writers referred to such compassion as natural: "For it belongs to our nature to be cast down when we see persons in distress." However, on Aristotle's analysis, compassion is a complex literary device. It is a pleasure peculiar to tragedy, resulting from a calamity (impairment is included in his list of examples) that occurs to friends, or "one who does not deserve it...of which fortune is responsible" especially when people show themselves "undaunted at such critical times."³⁸⁸ Similar views emerged in a discussion of beggars with impairments:

³⁸⁷ David criticised for his mistreatment of Mephibosheth: Talmud, *Shabbath* 56a, 56b, *Yoma* 22b; *LOTJ* 4:76f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Philipp.* 5; *PG* 62:216; *NPNF i* 13:205f. David's mistrust of Mephibosheth – Why the kingdom was divided: Talmud, *Shabbath* 56a, 56b, *Yoma* 22b; Why Jerusalem fell: *EJ* 11:1379f; *LOTJ* 6:244. Mephibosheth an important scholar – the Torah teacher of David: Talmud, *Berachoth* 4a, *Eiruvim* 53b (see footnote 37: Mephibosheth was "synonymous with 'noted scholar'"; *LOTJ* 4:76f, 4:101, 4:111. Linguistic analysis of the Hebrew text: Fokkelman, 23-40. Modern commentary overlooks the impairment themes in the Mephibosheth story: e.g. summarised in Fokkelman, 23f, 38f; we can contrast Jewish tradition: *EJ* 11:1379f.

³⁸⁸ The spirit of the commonwealth: τὸς ἀσθενεῖς ἐλεεῖν – Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 171; Loeb 3:480-483 (cf., expectation re impairment as common experience). "For it belongs to our nature to be cast down when we see persons in distress" – John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 43.37f; *PTS* 12:101; *NPNF ii* 9:49 – φυσικῶς γὰρ ὁρῶντές τινας πάσχοντας συστελλόμεθα.

Being asked why people give to beggars but not to philosophers, he said, ‘Because they think they may be one day be lame or blind, but never expect that they will turn to philosophy.’³⁸⁹

Not that compassion was a straightforward or automatic response to people with impairments: the literary response elicited for Polyphemus the Cyclops when he is blinded by Odysseus is complex and ambivalent.³⁹⁰ And if compassion was indeed as natural as it was claimed, people with impairments and preachers would not have needed to resort to all means of persuasion to elicit compassion:

And why (you say) do they expose their maimed limbs? Because of thee. If we were compassionate, they would have no need of these artifices: if they persuaded us at the first application, they would not have contrived these devices.³⁹¹

Other encouraged responses were generosity, attention, and service. In various traditions, it was a characteristic of right living to be generous and attentive towards people with impairments.³⁹² “Lead the blind...and give a hand to the fallen” was a

Cf., At Peter’s paralysed daughter, “The whole crowd lamented” – *Acts of Peter* 131; *NTA* 2:28. Also, the words ascribed to Jesus: “My soul is troubled for the sons of men, because they are blind in the heart and do not see” – *The Coptic Gospel of Thomas* 28; *NTA* 1:121. Pity and fear – pleasure peculiar to tragedy, calamities happening amongst friends: Aristotle, *Poetica* 14.1-9, 1453b; Loeb 23:48-51; cf., Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 2.8.7, 1386a; Loeb 22:226f. “Let pity then be a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it” – Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 2.8.2, 1385b; Loeb 22:224f; evils being painful and distressing things, including injuries, old age, disease, and events “of which fortune is responsible” including: ἀσθένεια and ἀναπηρία. “And when men show themselves undaunted at such critical times it is especially pitiable” – Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 2.8.16, 1386b; Loeb 22:228-231.

³⁸⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Diogenes* 6.56; Loeb 2:56f.

³⁹⁰ For treatment of the emotional ambivalence towards Polyphemus at his blinding in *Odyssey* 9: Newton, 137-142; Glenn, 133-181; Schein, 73-83.

³⁹¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Hebr.* 11.8; *PG* 63:95; *NPNF i* 14:421; cf., *ibid.*, 11.9; *PG* 63:95-96; *NPNF i* 14:421f.

³⁹² Job – generosity to people with impairments, amongst many others: *Testament of Job* 17.3; *OTPs* 1:846. Cf., Abraham – *Testament of Abraham* 1.2; *OTPs* 1:882. Job on his deathbed: “be generous toward the poor, treat the feeble with consideration” – *LOTJ* 2:241. Cf., Eliphaz’s words to Job: “When any that was not whole came to thee, thou wouldst console him...[specific examples with people who were blind and deaf]...In such wise thou didst endeavour to console the feeble and the maimed.” – *LOTJ* 1:422. Cf., Issachar’s words to his children: “Have pity upon the poor and the feeble, bow your backs to till the ground” – *LOTJ* 2:203. Paulina’s wealth used to support people with various impairments – Jerome, *Epist.* 66.5; *CSEL* 54:652; *NPNF ii* 6:136.

common injunction.³⁹³ Although monetary assistance was important, it was not the only recommended response. Herodotus mentions a Babylonian custom – one of their wisest, he says – which requires anyone with an infirmity to be placed in the marketplace, and passers-by who have had the same or a similar condition were obliged by the custom to “come near and advise them about their disease and encourage them...None may pass by without speaking.” Giving practical assistance was particularly associated with impairment. For instance, for a poor person to dream that they are blind was seen as positive – the dream predicted assistance from other people: “For many come forward to help a blind person.” In Early Church texts, such help was specified amongst those deeds which are divinely rewarded, and among those especially vexing to Satan.³⁹⁴ Occasionally, this response took institutional form: Athens had a system of

³⁹³ “Lead the blind...and give a hand to one who has fallen” – *Sibylline Oracles* 2.84-6; *OTPs* 1:347 (cf., *Concilium Ephesium*, *Cyrilli epistula altera ad Nestorium* 12f; *DEC* 1:40). Cf., “Let us then stretch out our hands to them that lie low” – Theodoret, *Epist.*, 78; *SC* 98:178; *NPNF ii* 3:275; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Ap.* 45; *PG* 60:319; *NPNF i* 11:277 – “Where alms are, the devil dares not approach.” Cf., The Damascus Document, CD XIV 12-16; Martinez, 44. Cf., “You must fill your hand. Give alms to the needy...lead the blind man...Extend your hand to him who falls, and save the helpless one...When you have wealth, stretch out your hand to the poor. Of that which God has given you, give of it to the needy” – *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* 23-29; *OTPs* 2:575. John Chrysostom was well aware of the use of impairment as a begging device, but he is specific about its cause: “And why do they expose their maimed limbs? Because of thee. If we were compassionate, they would have no need of these artifices: if they persuaded us at the first application, they would not have contrived these devices” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Hebr.* 11.8; *PG* 63:95; *NPNF i* 14:421.

³⁹⁴ Babylonian custom: Herodotus, 1.197; Loeb 1:250f.

Dream of blindness means help will come: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.26; Pack, 32-35; White, 28-30. Cf., Orion, son of Poseidon, blinded for raping Merope – “Then he came to Lemnos as a beggar and there met Hephaistus who took pity on him and gave him Cedalion his own servant to guide him. So Orion took Cedalion upon his shoulders and used to carry him about while he pointed out the roads” – Hesiod, *Fr. Astronomy* 4; Loeb, 70f; cf., Hyginus, *Poetica Astronomica* 2.34; Vire, 81; M. Grant, 221. Abbot Paul – “he was reduced to such a condition that the utmost care of men was unable to minister to his infirmity, but only the tender service of women could attend to his wants” – and so cared for at a convent for the remaining four years of his life – John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.26; *CSEL* 13:205; *NPNF ii* 11:371f. The list from the parable of the sheep and goats of Matthew 25:31-46 of those inheriting the Kingdom is expanded to include “those who helped the blind” – Hippolytus, *De consummatione mundi* 42.14; *GCS* 1.2:306; *ANF* 5:253. “Nothing will so vex him” (Satan) – Theodoret, *Epist.* 78; *SC* 98:178; *NPNF ii* 3:274. Cf., particular examples mentioned by Palladius of people who spent their lives in the service of people with impairments: Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 69.3; Bartelink, 282; *ACW* 34:150; cf., *ibid.*, 45.3; Bartelink, 220; *ACW* 34:122f; also, Jerome on Nepotian: *Epist.* 60.10; *CSEL* 54:560; *NPNF ii* 6:127 – “he was a staff to the blind” – “caecorum baculus.” Compare a 10th century African hymn: “The cross is the staff of the lame, the cross is the guide of the blind” – Morley, *Bread of Tomorrow*, 111.

state welfare for maimed veterans unable to support themselves, and the Early Church organised its support for people with impairments in an unprecedented way.³⁹⁵

2.2 Inability

³⁹⁵ Hands, 100, 202; cf., pensions for those – τὸς ἀδυνάτους...τὸ σῶμα πεπηρωμένους - on low income: Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 49.4; Loeb 20:136-139; cf., Lysias' speech, "On the refusal of a pension to an invalid"; Loeb, 516-533: – i.e. other people with impairments earned their living? One-off payments to the blind in Rome: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 38; Garrison, passim. Gregory the Great – collections made "for the relief of the blind, the maimed and the feeble" – *Epist.* 5.30; *CCL* 140: 296f; see also Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 6.5-6; Bartelink, 34; *ACW* 34:38.

Early Church response unprecedented and far reaching: T. S. Miller, passim; Amundsen and Ferngren, "Early Christian Tradition," 47-60; Ferngren, "Early Christianity," 1-15; Nutton, "Healers in the Medical Market Place," 140; Nutton, "Rise of Medicine," 64-66; Ferngren, "The *Imago Dei*," 23-46; Amundsen, "Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children," 3-22; Ferngren, "Status of Defective Newborns," 47-64; Granshaw, "The Hospital," 1181f; Amundsen, "Medicine and Faith," 326-350; Allan, 446-462; Porter, "Religion and Medicine," 1450-1453.

Hospitality to people with impairments as hospitality to Christ: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:466; *NPNF i* 13:373f – for further references, see below text at page 257 and footnote 494. It seems that Chrysostom's congregation did not find this easy to grasp: he continues, "Perhaps thou laughest at hearing this?" and refers them to Jesus' parable at Luke 14:12-14. Elsewhere is the statement that responding to people with impairments is responding to Christ – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 88; *PG* 58:778; *NPNF i* 10:522f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 45; *PG* 60:319; *NPNF i* 11:276f. Cf., "However low you may abase yourself, you cannot be more lowly than Christ. Even supposing that you walk barefooted...that you rank yourself with the poor, that you condescend to enter the tenements of the needy, that you are eyes to the blind, hands to the weak, feet to the lame...even supposing you do all this, where are the chains, the buffets, the spittings, the scourings, the gibbet, the death which the Lord endured?" – Jerome, *Epist.* 66.13; *CSEL* 54:664; *NPNF ii* 6:139.

Concern for less able parts of the Body: Parts that are damaged beyond repair are nonetheless looked after for their own sake: "Are we therefore to cut off the limbs? Not at all, but we use every means that the sufferer may enjoy some comfort, since we cannot get rid of the disease. This also let us do in the case of our brethren, and, even though they be diseased incurably, let us continue to tend them, and let us bear one another's burdens" – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 68.3; *PG* 59:377; *NPNF i* 14:253. Such a reaction of the Body as a whole giving particular care to those who are less able, is a natural one: "Seest thou not that we have in our own flesh itself many defects? For one man, for instance, is lame, another has his feet distorted, another his hands withered, another some other member weak; and yet nevertheless he does not grieve at it, nor cut it off, but oftentimes prefers it even to the other. Naturally enough; for it is part of himself" – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 20; *PG* 62:140; *NPNF i* 13:146.

We can compare similar early Jewish traditions in relation to people with impairments: Marx, 232-286; see also, *ibid.*, 287-504.

It should be pointed out, however, that this response has been identified in negative terms by disability writers: such attitudes, it is said, "Effectively robbed disabled people the claim to individuality and full human status. Consequently, they became the perfect vehicle for the overt sentimentality and benevolence of others." – Barnes, "Legacy of Oppression," 16.

A much used impairment theme was the inability of impairment. In some respects, impairment made people unable to do certain tasks. Soranus says that a midwife must not be “unduly” impaired,

as regards her sense and soundness of limb...since there are things which she must see, answers which she must hear when questioning, and objects which she must grasp by her sense of touch.³⁹⁶

The Graeae were made incapable of fulfilling their task as guardians of the Gorgon when Perseus snatched the one eye they had between them while they were passing it around, and threw it in the lake. So too, someone without the presence of the Holy Spirit when called upon to pray publicly “is made mute, and is entirely crushed, being unable to speak.” The same theme was used figuratively. When Koziba murdered a leading rabbi, he was told that he had “paralysed the arm of Israel and blinded their right eye.”³⁹⁷

This inability of impairment was a theme applied with different impairments.

Heracleitus refers to an ancient proverb that the deaf “when present are absent.” In epic poetry, an impairment image was used of the dust which even heroes and kings will become: κούφη κόνις. An Akkadian text brings out the same notion: “I have become like a deaf person...My eyes stare without seeing. My ears are open without

³⁹⁶ Soranus, *Gynaecia* 1.1.3; V. Rose, 172f; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 5.

³⁹⁷ Graeae: Hyginus, *Poetica Astronomica* 2.12; Vire, 38f; M. Grant, 195. Alexander's death renders his army incapable: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De fortuna Alexandri* 336e; Loeb 4:440f; cf., Plutarch, *Vit.*, *Galba* 1.4.1053; Loeb 11:208f.

Muteness as inability to pray in public: Hermas, *Pastor* 2.11; Loeb, 2:122f. Cf., muteness of congregation showing inability of the preacher: John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* 5.8; *SC* 272:302; *NPNF* i 9:73. Those who perform a task without the required experience are described as blinded by their inexperience: John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* 3.10; *SC* 272:166; *NPNF* i 9:50.

Rabbi's death is a paralysing and blinding of Israel: *Lamentations R.* 2.4. Cf., when Herod murdered the leading rabbis of his day, he was told: “As you have extinguished the light of the world, [for so the Rabbis are called] as it is written, For the commandment is a light and the Torah a lamp, go now and

hearing.”³⁹⁸ The inability to speak or understand a foreign language was expressed in terms of impairment:

Our compatriots do not as a rule know Greek nor the Greeks Latin: therefore we in their tongue and they in ours are deaf, and all of us as well are assuredly deaf in those languages, countless in number, which we do not understand.³⁹⁹

The association was seen again in dream interpretation: “The mole signifies a blind person because of the animal’s own blindness and futile endeavours because of the useless toil of the animal.”⁴⁰⁰ The proverbial blindness of wealth was explained in terms of Zeus deliberately making Wealth never able to distinguish between those deserving and not deserving to be rich. Wealth unseen was also said to be blind: “For they consider wealth, unless it has witnesses and, like a tragedy, spectators, no wealth but something blind indeed.” Within Jewish and Christian literature, the muteness of idols was proof of their inability: “What use is the sculpture which the craftsman carves, or the cast effigy and sham oracle, in whom their craftsman trusts, to make mute idols?” We can compare Psalm 115:6-8: “They have mouths but do not speak; eyes but do not see” [cf., Jeremiah 10:4-5]. By the same association, Lot’s wife becoming a “lifeless

attend to the light of the world [which is the Temple, of which] it is written, And all the nations become enlightened by it.” – Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 4a; cf., Preuss, 272.

³⁹⁸ Those who are deaf: “of them does the proverb bear witness that when present they are absent” – Heraclitus, *On the Universe* 3; Loeb 4:472f. “Senseless clay” – κωφήν γὰρ δὴ γαίαν – what even epic heroes will lie in – Homer, *Iliad* 24.54; Loeb 2:566f. Cf., “The bones and unsubstantial dust of men who once were kings,” the wise, famous and wealthy – κούφη κόνις – Menander, Fr. 538K.3f; Loeb, 484f. Cf., Those who in fury abuse the corpses of the dead defend their actions saying “that they were insulting the dead, not for the sake of abusing the mute and senseless dust, for there was no advantage in that” – Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.19.95; Loeb 7:364; Yonge, 577. Akkadian text: *ANET*, 434f.

³⁹⁹ Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.39.116; Loeb 18:540f.

⁴⁰⁰ Dreaming of a mole: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 3.64; Pack, 232; White, 174; with further reference at White, 181, footnote 30.

Similarly, perception inability is used illustratively: “If you tell the eye to hear, it cannot; so you are unable to perform the works of light while you are in darkness” – *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Naphtali* 2.10; *OTPs* 1:811. Also, the inability of a person with an impairment is used against Pelagians to illustrate the distinction between will and capacity: “a blind person would like to see but is unable” – Augustine, *De natura et gratia* 51.59; *CSEL* 60:276; *NPNF i* 5:141; *ibid.*, 47.55; *CSEL* 60:273; *NPNF i* 5:140.

and senseless stone” is used to describe inabilities of the soul, such as looking back at “deaf glory and blind riches.”⁴⁰¹

A common figurative use of this inability theme was for the inability to understand.

Josephus writes of the conundrum that Solomon would resolve: “The whole court were blind in their understanding, and could not tell how to find out this riddle.” So too with the lack of insight that comes from stimulating experience: “For those who have never travelled are to those who have, as blind people are to those who see clearly.” When Jesus was born, those around him “were all blinded concerning him; they all knew about him, but they did not know from where he was.” Plato states of the inability of a soul that has no contact with the Muse, that it “becomes feeble, deaf, and blind, because it is not aroused or fed nor are its perceptions purified or quickened.” This inability to understand is caused “from the weakness of the persons who are unable to use them [the

⁴⁰¹ Wealth not able to distinguish as blind: Aristophanes, *Plutus* 89-91; Loeb 3:370f; Rogers, 12f. Wealth not seen by others as blind: οἴονται τὸν πλοῦτον καὶ τυφλὸν ἀληθῶς – Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 5.5, 679b; Loeb 8:410.

Mute idols: Commentary on Habbakuk, 1QPHabbakuk Peshar (1QPHab) XII 10-12; Martinez, 202. Cf., “You neither revere nor fear God, but wander to no purpose, worshipping snakes and sacrificing to cats, speechless idols, and stone statues of people” – *Sibylline Oracles* 3.29-31; *OTPs* 1:362; cf., *ibid.*, 4.6-12; *OTPs* 1:384; *ibid.*, 5.77-85; *OTPs* 1:394f; *ibid.*, 5.484-486; *OTPs* 1:404; *ibid.*, 8.398; *OTPs* 1:427. Cf., *Joseph and Aseneth* 11.8, 12.5(6), 12.11; *OTPs* 2:218, 221, 223. Cf., *LOTJ* 2:7, 2:334.

See also: Lot’s wife and impairment used to describe inability of the soul: Philo, *Somm.* 1.42.248; Loeb 5:426; Yonge, 387; cf., Philo, *Fug.* 22.121-123; Loeb 5:74, 76; Yonge, 332; Philo, *Ebr.* 38.156-157; Loeb 3:398, 400; Yonge, 220. Some examples from the Early Church: Muteness of idols as their powerlessness: *Epist. ad Diognetum* 2.4; Loeb 2:352f - cf., *ibid.*, 3.3-5; Loeb 2:354-357; *Sibylline Oracles* 3.31; *OTPs* 1:362 - cf., *ibid.*, 4.7, 9, 28; *OTPs* 1:384; *ibid.*, 8.379, 398; *OTPs* 1:426f. Ps-Justin Martyr, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 16; *PG* 6:265; *ANF* 1:280. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.50.1-3; Marcovich, 77; *ANF* 2:185; cf., *ibid.*, 4.62.1-4; Marcovich, 95; *ANF* 2:189. Idols and their worshippers both ridiculed in terms of impairment: Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 4.51.6; Marcovich, 79f; *ANF* 2:186 - cf., *ibid.*, 10.104-106; Marcovich, 153-156; *ANF* 2:200f; *ibid.*, 10.98; Marcovich, 145f; *ANF* 2:199. Athanasius, *C. gentes*, 13-14; *PG* 25:28f; *NPNF ii* 4:11. Cf., Before the invention of the alphabet, the wisdom of the ancients is described as dying mute – τελευτᾶν ἀφώνους - Ps-Justin Martyr, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 12; *PG* 6:265; *ANF* 1:278.

enlightening objects] properly”: “As the sun dazzles the eyes of the weak, not by reason of its proper nature, so it is with those who give no heed to the word of God.”⁴⁰²

Impairment’s inability was used as a way of taunting one’s enemies. Diomedes shows his disdain for Paris by using an impairment image for his arrow: “I care no more than if a witless child or a woman had struck me; this is the blank weapon of a useless man, no fighter” – κωφὸν γὰρ βέλος. Oedipus draws on the blind Teiresias’ inability in order to taunt him: “Night, endless night hath thee in her keeping, so that thou canst never hurt me, or nay one who sees the sun.”⁴⁰³ As the Jewish traditions about David’s reaction to the impaired Jebusites show [see 2 Samuel 5:6-8], such a provocation clearly worked:

Now the Jebusites, who were the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and were by extraction Canaanites, shut their gates, and placed the blind, and the lame, and all their maimed persons, upon the wall, in way of derision of the king; and said, that the very lame themselves would hinder his entrance into it. This they did out of contempt of his power, and as depending on the strength of their walls. David was hereby enraged, and began the siege of Jerusalem, and employed his utmost diligence and alacrity therein, as intending, by the taking of this place, to demonstrate his power.⁴⁰⁴

In a similar vein, John Chrysostom describes someone digging a pit for another to fall into, but, blinded by malice, they fail to see it and fall into it themselves.⁴⁰⁵

On occasions, the theme of impairment as inability was intensified to express impossibility. We see this in some uses of the proverbial muteness of stone and fish.

⁴⁰² The inability of Solomon’s court to see a solution: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.2.2.30; Loeb 5:586; Whiston, 213. Non-travellers as blind: Philo, *Abr.* 14.65; Loeb 6:36; Yonge, 417. At the birth of Jesus: *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* 11.14; *OTPs* 2:175. A soul without contact with the Muse: Plato, *Respublica* 3.18, 411c-d; Loeb 5:292f. Inability to use enlightening objects: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 8; *PG* 62:60; *NPNF i* 13:87. Dazzling sun: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 68.2; *PG* 59:376; *NPNF i* 14:253.

⁴⁰³ Diomedes taunts Paris: Homer, *Iliad* 11.390; Loeb 1:508f; ET: Lattimore, 244. Oedipus’ taunt to Teiresias: Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 374f; Jebb, 60f.

⁴⁰⁴ Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 7.3.1.61-62; Loeb 5:390; Whiston, 185; cf., *LOTJ* 6:254f.

When Hippolytus appeals in vain to the stones of a building, Theseus mocks him for it: “ ‘O halls, could ye but find a voice for me’ ... ‘Wisely thou fleest to speechless witnesses!’ ” For sophists, it was bad to dream of a large catch of fish: “It signifies that they will not find a suitable audience, for fish are mute.” The same effect is used in a description of the halcyon’s nest: “The entrance remains hidden and wholly invisible [τυφλὸν] to others – with the result that not even a drop of water can get in.” So too, impairment was used for solid objects rendering sound silent - κωφὸν καὶ ἄναυδον - it is impossible for sound to pass through them. The theme was also used for pathos. To emphasise the impossibility of escape, a prisoner is told: “Remain fast bound, sending thy prayers to the deaf winds.” Similarly, impairment was used of a lover’s dream – the beauty of the vision is beyond reach and warms in vain - κωφὰ χλιαινομένη. ⁴⁰⁶

This use of impairment with the sense of impossibility was used also of people. It could express exasperation: “Am I shouting to the deaf and wasting my voice in vain?” “Are you so blind, and do you fail to see?” “One must be very blind to be still asking who

⁴⁰⁵ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 15; *PG* 62:107; *NPNF i* 13:122.

⁴⁰⁶ Euripides’ use of mute stone: - Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1074, 1076; Loeb 4:246f. Cf., Philo, *Leg. Gai.*, 32.237-238; Loeb 10:124; Yonge, 779. Fish in dreams for sophists: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.14; Pack, 129; White, 98 - who gives other references to fish as proverbially mute in footnote 47, p.144. Cf., “If a pregnant woman dreams that she is giving birth to a fish, the early dream interpreters say that her child will be mute. But I have observed that the dream means that the child will live for only a short time” - *ibid.*, 2.18; Pack, 134; White, 100. Halcyon’s waterproof nest: - Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Terrestr. aquat.* 983d-e; Loeb 12:466f. Sound silenced by solids: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 8.3, 721b, d; Loeb 9:134f; objects filled with liquid or solid matter: - κωφὸν καὶ ἄναυδον - *ibid.*, 8.3.721c; Loeb 9:134f. Cf., Blind straits: Strabo, 1.1.17; Loeb 1:34f; cf., silted river: τυφλόστομον γινόμενον - *ibid.*, 4.1.8; Loeb 2:188f. Blind alleys – Talmud: *Shabbath* 6a, 9a; *Eiruvin* 2a, 2b, 3b, 4b, 11a, 11b, 12b. Shoot with no bud as blind: Theophrastus, *De causis plantarum* 5.17.7;3; Loeb 190f; cf., *ibid.*, 3.2.8; Loeb 2:22f; Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum* 1.8.4; Loeb 1:58f. A barren soul is unproductive – “in the course of nature, [it cannot] bring forth offspring, just as a blind man cannot see, nor a deaf man hear” – Philo, *Mut. Nom.* 25.143; Loeb 5:214; Yonge, 353. Pathos – deaf winds: *Greek Anthology* 16.198; Loeb 5:274f; dream images of loved one: *Greek Anthology* 12.125; Loeb 4:344f; cf., *ibid.*, 12.25; Loeb 4:292f; cf., the phantom of Penelope’s sister: εἶδωλον ἄμαυρόν – Homer, *Odyssey* 4.824; 835 Loeb 1:166f.

this God is!” The theme occurs in philosophers’ debates: “Nor does the non-expert teach the non-expert, any more than the blind can lead the blind.”⁴⁰⁷ Similarly, Philo remarks:

It would be an extravagance of insanity to take those who are blind for judges of colour, or those deaf as judges of the sounds of music, so it is a most preposterous act to take those who are wicked as judges of real good.⁴⁰⁸

This impairment theme described the impossibility of explaining the true light of God:

Just as, in the case of sunlight, on one who has never from the day of his birth seen it, all efforts at translating it into words are quite thrown away; you cannot make the splendour of the ray shine through their ears.⁴⁰⁹

The theme was used too for self-depreciation: “I never was able to lift my legs for a jump and a lame person could throw the javelin better than I.”⁴¹⁰

The inability aspect to impairment was also used to convey what is partial or inconsistent. Animals with a single foot cut off can still walk, though partially: “the result is that the maimed leg is as it were dragged along by the others, and the animal

⁴⁰⁷ Shouting to the deaf: Aeschylus, *Choephoroe* 882f; Loeb 2:242f; cf., Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebas* 202; Loeb 1:336f. So blind that they cannot see: Arrian, *Epicteti dissertationes* 3.26.3; Loeb 2:226; cf., *ibid.*, 2.20.37; Loeb 1:382; *ibid.*, 1.18.4; Loeb 1:122f. Very blind still to be asking: Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19.22.3; *CCL* 48:689; *NPNF i* 2:415.

Impairment used for the impossibility of seeing the obvious is very common in Early Church texts, for example in Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 221; *Jaeger* 1:91; *NPNF ii* 5:56 – cf., *ibid.*, 3.13; *Jaeger* 2:2; *NPNF ii* 5:136; Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 11.6; *SC* 119:396; *NPNF ii* 5:357; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 3.14; *PG* 53:36; *FC* 74:45; Theodoret, *Epist.*, 39; *SC* 98:104; *NPNF ii* 3:263; cf., *Sibylline Oracles* 1.369f; *OTPs* 1:343. Impairment as inability to perceive the things of God: Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 3.4; *GCS* nf 2:45; *NPNF ii* 8:68. Cf., Clement of Alexandria quoting Epicharmus: “Mind sees, mind hears; all besides is deaf and blind” – Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.5; *PG* 8:960; *ANF* 2:352 – and footnote 14 *ad loc.*, with other references in pagan literature of this saying. Clement quotes a similar proverb of Heraclitus: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.14; *PG* 9:169; *ANF* 2:471. The blind unable to see the sun: Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 1.19.9; *CCL* 36:11; *NPNF i* 7:13. This association is used several times in Early Church writers – a few examples: Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 1.25.37; *CSEL* 60:36; *NPNF i* 5:29; Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 10.1; *SC* 119:370; *NPNF ii* 5:354; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 10; *PG* 62:551; *NPNF i* 13:440.

Non-expert leading the expert: Sextus Empiricus, *Pyr.* 3.259; Loeb 1:498f; cf., *ibid.*, 4.31; Loeb 1:18-21; Philo, *Dec.*, 14.67-69; Loeb 7:40; Yonge, 524.

⁴⁰⁸ Philo, *Prov. Fr.* 2.20; Loeb 9:472; Yonge, 750.

⁴⁰⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 10.1; *SC* 119:370; *NPNF ii* 5:354.

⁴¹⁰ *Greek Anthology* 11.84; Loeb 4:112f.

does not walk properly.” We see the association in dream interpretation: “If anyone dreams that they are blind in one of their eyes, the things mentioned above will happen to them in part and, as it were, only halfway.” The theme was applied figuratively in many ways. Plato refers to a lame courage - *χολήν τὴν ἀνδρίαν* - “able only to defend itself on the left and unable to resist attractions and allurements on the right...[and not] able to resist on both sides.” Impairment was used of Caligula’s half-completed harbour: it was built - *ἀμβλυτέρως*.⁴¹¹ The political disputes over Agesilaus becoming king of Sparta focussed on a prophetic warning about lameness: was Agesilaus’ impairment meant, or Leotychides’ illegitimacy? The successes of Agesilaus’ reign spoke for themselves:

For it mattered not to the god that one who halted in his gait should be king,
but if one who was not lawfully begotten, nor even a descendent of Heracles,
should be king, this was what the god meant by the ‘maimed royalty’.⁴¹²

It was perhaps in this sense of being partial that Aristotle referred to female being an impaired form of male - *ὥσπερ ἀναπηρίαν εἶναι*.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Animals’ impaired walk with missing limb: Aristotle, *De progressionem animalium* 8, 708a; Loeb 12:508f. Cf., distortion in walking of people with one-eye: *ibid.*, 17, 714a; Loeb 12:538f. Dream of partial impairment: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.26; Pack, 32-35; White, 28-30. Lame courage: Plato, *Leges* 1, 634a; Loeb 10:32f. Caligula’s harbour: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 19.2.5.206; Loeb 9:310; Whiston, 514.

⁴¹² Plutarch, *Vit., Agesilaus* 3.4-5; Loeb 5:6-9; cf., Pausanias, 3.8.8-3.10.2; Loeb 2:48-59; cf., Xenophon, *Hellenica* 3.3.3-4; Loeb 1:216f; cf., Plutarch, *Mor., De Pythiae oraculis* 399b-c; Loeb 5:284-287. Cf., Satan’s blindness as his current partial power: *LOTJ* 6:450. “Halting” metre - *σκάζουσι*: *Greek Anthology* 7.405; Loeb 2:218f. “The short syllable, being incomplete, mutilates the cadence” – *διὰ τὸ ἀτελής εἶναι ποιεῖ κολοβόν* – Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 3.8.6, 1409a; Loeb 22:386f. Cf., “Slack verses are lame in the middle...Tapering verses limp at the close” – *τὴν χολότητα ἔχοντες* - Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 14.632; Loeb 6:412-415. Caesar’s empire mutilated without the Jews – Talmud, *Avodah Zorah* 10b – there is an irony here, with the Roman festival of a lame man (understood to be Jacob / the Jews) carried by a strong man (understood to be Rome) – Talmud, *Avodah Zorah* 11b (footnote 5 *ad loc.*); Hellas lame without the Spartans: Plutarch, *Vit., Cimon* 16.8; Loeb 2:456f. Cf., Nachor: “inasmuch as he is a relation of the wise Abraham, he partakes of that light which is according to wisdom; but inasmuch as he did not join him in his emigration from the created to the uncreated being, from the world to the Creator of the world, he has acquired only a lame and imperfect knowledge,

This theme of impairment as partial was applied to someone wavering over a decision or having doubts: they are lame – one step is made confidently, but the next is tentative. In a Christian context, the image was drawn from the words of Elijah from 1 Kings 18:21 – “How long will you limp between two opinions?” The same image of lameness - ἐχώλεουον - is used in various ways: for Church leaders who use the Jewish dating system to locate Easter, Christians who use fortune-tellers or astrologers, faith without works, and not practising what one preaches. The theme also emerges with the image of the four sides of a square: if each key component of authority or righteousness is present, the square is said to be οὐδαμῶς χωλεύουσα. By the same token, impairment is used to describe someone lacking any of these aspects: “The one who is deficient in any one of the four is imperfect.” Similarly, those who have much in common but argue over detail were said to differ “as a pair of squinting eyes in looking at the same object.”

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A further application of the inability of impairment theme was to illustrate error. “If this soul has been so trained, if its power of vision has been so cared for that it is not blinded by error, the result is mind made perfect, that is complete reason.” It was an image frequently used of political figures: “A man who saw has turned blind, a hearer deaf, a leader now leads astray!” Historians with error in their records were said to be

intermittent and delaying, or rather put together like a lifeless statue” – Philo, *Congr.* 9.48; Loeb 4:480; Yonge, 308.

⁴¹³ Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 4.6, 775a; Loeb 13:460f.

⁴¹⁴ Indecision (God’s words to Abraham): *LOTJ* 1:236. Doubts: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Hebr.* 30.1; *PG* 63:209; *NPNF i* 14:503. Christians using the Jewish dating system: Athanasius, *De synodis* 5; Opitz 2, 1:233f; *NPNF ii* 4:452. Christians using astrologers or fortune-tellers: John Chrysostom, in *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 8; *PG* 62:648-649; *NPNF i* 13:508f. Faith without works: Basil of Caesarea, *Epist.* 295; Courtonne 3:170; *NPNF ii* 8:317; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 28; *PG* 60:651; *NPNF i* 11:539. Not practising what one preaches: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 72.1; *PG* 58:668; *NPNF i* 10:436. Authority as a square: Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 9.56; Loeb 8:344, 346; Yonge, 669. Righteousness as a square: Clement of

“so blinded by their passions as not to discern it.”⁴¹⁵ Philo wrote of the Israelites starting to worship the golden calf: “All the people having thus suddenly become blind, which but a short time before had been the most sharp-sighted of all nations.”⁴¹⁶ Eusebius refers to a pillar inscription at Tyre describing Christianity as “a dark mist of error, which enveloped [people’s senses]...in dark and destructive ignorance...that blind error and delusion.”⁴¹⁷ Impairment was used too for the process of making erroneous argument: false premise leads to false conclusion, “making the blind lead the blind.”⁴¹⁸ When the way of error is chosen, it was said to be like tearing out one’s own

Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.12; *PG* 9:324; *ANF* 2:503. Squinting quarrellers: Gregory of Nazianzen, *In pentecosten* 8; *PG* 36:440; *NPNF ii* 7:382.

⁴¹⁵ Unimpaired reason: Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.13.39; Loeb 18:464f. On political leaders as blind: *AEL* 1:174; cf., Plato, *Respublica* 7.15, 536a; Loeb 6:212f; cf., reference to Stoics using “councillors and generals and legislators as blind leaders” - τυφλοῖς χειραγωγοῖς - with references in footnote c to the “proverbial phrase” - τυφλὸς χειραγωγός. Erroneous Historians as blind: “Apion was therefore quite blinded in his mind when, for the sake of the Egyptians, he contrived to reproach us” – Josephus, *C. Apionem* 1.25.226; Loeb 1:254; Whiston, 787; cf., *ibid.*, 2.14.142; Loeb 1:348; Whiston, 802; cf., *ibid.*, 2.12.132; Loeb 1:348; Whiston, 801.

Philo uses the theme to compare the processes of remembrance: memory, he says, “Has its perceptions fresh and harmonious and clear, so that it never errs through ignorance”; while recollection “is but a mutilated and blind thing”: Philo, *Leg. All.* 3.30.92; Loeb 1:362; Yonge, 60.

⁴¹⁶ Israelites in error: Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.49.270-271; Loeb 6:584; Yonge, 515. Cf., “In foreign nations there is a great indulgence given to error; and especially in the country of Egypt, a land in a state of utter blindness respecting the true God, in consequence of their making created and mortal things into gods” – Philo, *Jos.* 42.254; Loeb 6:262; Yonge, 456 (cf., Psalm 115 in HB).

The Dead Sea Scrolls have many examples of impairment used of error: “The flock began to go blind [and move off the path which he had indicated to them] without the lamb realising these matters. The Lord of the flock grew extremely angry against [the flock] [and the lamb knew it and came down from the top of that rock] and came to the flock and found most of them blind [and astray]” - 4QEnoch^c (4Q204 [4QEn^c ar]), XIII 4.3-6; Martinez, 253. Cf., *1 Enoch* 89.28-90.26; *OTPs* 1:66-71. Cf., Fragment of Pseudo-Daniel: “those shall stray in their blindness” – 4QPseudo-Daniel^c (4Q245 [4QpsDan^c ar]), 2.2; Martinez, 289. Cf., blind leading the flock – Preuss, 272 (with references in footnote 198). A fragmentary phrase: “the failure of blindness” – 4QOrdinances^b (4Q513 [4QOrd^b]); Martinez, 91. “[Therefore, he will fence in your path] with brambles and [he will not find] his footpaths. [Its interpretation: with madness,] blindness and confusion [of heart will YHWH mutilate them...]” – Commentary on Hosea, 4QHosea Peshera^a I 7-9 (4Q166 [4QPHos^a]); Martinez, 191f. “They will listen to those who misdirect them and acclaim them [...] and will revere them like gods in their blindness” - Commentary on Hosea, 4QHosea Peshera^a II 5-6 (4Q166 [4QPHos^a]); Martinez, 192; cf., The Damascus Document, CD I 8-11; Martinez, 33. Time and again mentioned: walking in “the path of perfection” – also: “Those who walk in darkness” – 1QS XI 10; Martinez, 18. Cf., Stumbling used figuratively (N.B. contrast with walking in the way of perfection): “As for me, if I stumble, the mercies of God shall be my salvation always” – Rule of the Community, 1QS XI 11-12; Martinez, 18.

⁴¹⁷ Eusebius, *HE* 9.7.3, 11; Loeb 2:342f.

⁴¹⁸ False argument: Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 1.221; Jaeger 1:91; *NPNF ii* 5:56. Cf., Ignorance “that blind mistress”: Philo, *Migr. Abr.* 4.18; Loeb 4:142; Yonge, 254. Cf., “For he who worships no God

eyes.⁴¹⁹ People who did not admit the light of Christ were said to be blind “like moles, doing nothing but eat, you spend your lives in darkness.”⁴²⁰

Just as chosen error was described in terms of self-inflicted impairment, so impairment was also used to describe wilful refusal. The refusal to listen to a person’s plea was described in terms of deafness: “Joseph’s brethren turned a deaf ear to their brother’s supplication when they sold him.” Impairment was conveniently used to describe the refusal of those whose task it was to use their perception, like judges or astronomers: “Seeing so clearly into vain sciences, they have wilfully shut their eyes to the knowledge of the truth” – ἔκοντες πρὸς τὴν σύνεσιν τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπετυφλώθησαν.

The image of deafness as refusal was used of subjects to their king, of a king in relation to the gods, and even of the gods themselves: “In his heart he blames the deaf ears of the unjust gods.”⁴²¹

at all is barren, and he who worships a multitude is the son of a harlot, who is in a state of blindness as to his true father, and who on this account is figuratively spoken of as having many fathers, instead of one” – Philo, *Migr. Abr.* 12.69; Loeb 4:170; Yonge, 259. Cf., On the consequences of adultery: “The husband, like a blind man, knowing nothing of what has been going on in his own house, will be compelled to nourish and to cherish as his own the offspring sprung from his greatest enemies” – Philo, *Dec.* 24.129; Loeb 7:70; Yonge, 529; cf., Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.60.332; Loeb 5:288; Yonge, 566 – the image applied to those who worship idols. Cf., “The prince of error blinded me, and I was ignorant” – *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Judah* 19.4; *OTPs* 1:800; cf., *ibid.*, 11.1-2; *OTPs* 1:798; cf., *LOTJ* 2:192, 201, 207; cf., “And the sons of Noah came to Noah, their father, and they told him about the demons who were leading astray and blinding...his grandchildren” – *Jubilees* 10.2; *OTPs* 2:75. Wisdom as the sharp sight: *Sentences of the Syriac Menander* 2.31-33; *OTPs* 2:593. Cf., Jesus the healing impairment as removing error: Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 1.6; Marcovich, 19f; *ANF* 2:172.

⁴¹⁹ Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De fortuna* 98a-b; Loeb 2:78f.

⁴²⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 11.113-115; Marcovich, 163-167; *ANF* 2:230f.

Error as impairment is a very common in Early Church writings – a few examples: Origen, *C. Celsus*, 7.46; *SC* 150:122-126; *ANF* 4:630; *ibid.*, 7.4; *SC* 150:20-22; *ANF* 4:629; *Gospel of Philip* 34; *NTA* 1:192; Socrates, *HE*, 3.8; *GCS* nf 1:200-203; *NPNF* ii 2:82; Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 20.49.376f; *SC* 290:338; *FC* 89:282f; Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 2.5; *SC* 199:266; *NPNF* ii 4:37; Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 40; Opitz, 2.1:205; *NPNF* ii 4:284; Athanasius, *Apologia de fuga* 8; Opitz, 2.1:74; *NPNF* ii 4:258; Augustine, *Epist.* 93.10; *CSEL* 34.2:482; *NPNF* i 1:395: (the disciple Peter’s errors as a lameness).

⁴²¹ Joseph’s brothers: *LOTJ* 6:157. Cf., desires render deaf all outward sense, therefore Joseph’s arguments had no effect on Potiphar, and so he fled her: Philo, *Jos.* 10.49; Loeb 6:166; Yonge, 439.

Judge criticised as deaf to pleas: Egyptian legal text, *ANET*, 328.

Blind astronomers: Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 1.4.4; *GCS* nf 2:7; *NPNF* ii 8:54.

Particular aspects of refusal were described with impairment. An example is the refusal to be distracted: “As for me, while I sought for sixes from the favouring dice, ever the ruinous aces leapt to light. They sang to me, but I was deaf. They bared their bosoms, but I was blind.” Similar terms were used of the refusal to relax mental rigour, and the refusal to choose mental sight. Refusal as muteness was used in the context of extreme emotion: “So I withal, though many a woe is mine, Am mute, and I refrain my lips from speech.” However, under different circumstances, the muteness of refusing to speak is criticised: “If you are mighty, gain respect through knowledge and through gentleness of speech. Don’t command except as is fitting...Don’t be mute, lest you be chided.” In a variation of the theme, when individuals refuse to accept for themselves a command given to the group, they are “to a certain degree, rendered deaf to it [the command], making the multitude a kind of veil and excuse for their obstinacy.”⁴²²

King’s subjects: *AEL* 2:56; cf., king as not deaf to the gods’ advice: *AEL* 3:88. The gods’ deaf ears: *Greek Anthology* 11.311; Loeb 4:214. Cf., “The people were deaf to all his entreaties” – Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 13.78; Loeb 8:358; Yonge, 671.

Compare traditions relating to God’s apparent refusal to listen : “ ‘As I called, and they would not hear, so they called and I would not hear,’ says the Lord of hosts” [Zechariah 7:13] – see also below text at page 295 and footnote 571. See also: “Heaven and Earth, Sun and Moon, Stars and Planets, Mountains and Rivers turned a deaf ear to his prayers”: *LOTJ* 3:433. “Like he who winnows in the wind [grain] which does not separate out, so is he who speaks to an ear which does not listen or he who recites to the sleepyhead, to the one who is asleep in spirit” – Wisdom Poems, 4Q Sapiential Work C (4Q424 [Sap. Work C]) 3.4-5; Martinez, 394.

Blindness as refusal in early Jewish traditions: Preuss, 72, 77f, 270.

Muteness as refusal could also be associated with resentment: “Why, Odysseus, dost thou sit like this like one that is mute, eating thy heart?” – Homer, *Odyssey* 10.378f; Loeb 1:372f; cf., Lucian, *De domo* 1; Loeb 1:176: “as if he were mute or else out of ill-will had resolved to hold his tongue.”

⁴²² Refusal to be distracted: Propertius, 4.47; Loeb, 318f.

Refusal to relax mental rigour: Philo, *Migr. Abr.* 39.222; Loeb 4:262; Yonge, 275.

Refusal to choose mental sight: Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.9.54; Loeb 7:130; Yonge, 539; cf., Philo, *Dec.* 14.67-69; Loeb 7:40; Yonge, 524.

Refusing to speak in extreme emotion: Euripides, *Troades* 695; Loeb 1:410f. However, refusing to speak disapproved of: *AEL* 1:70; cf., *ANET*, 409f.

Refusing to accept that general command applies to an individual: Philo, *Dec.* 10.39; Loeb 7:24; Yonge, 521.

Some examples of refusal as impairment in the Early Church: Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 1.254; Jaeger 1:101; *NPNF ii* 5:59; Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*, PG 46:21; *NPNF ii*

Impairment used of refusal was also applied with a positive sense. In both Jewish and Christian traditions, the theme of refusing to see or hear what is unholy in terms of impairment was common.

It appears to me that all who are not utterly uneducated would choose to be mutilated and to become blind, rather than see what is not fitting to be seen, to become deaf rather than to hear pernicious discourses, and to have their tongues cut out if that were the only way to prevent their speaking things, which ought not to be spoken.⁴²³

The same image was used of refusing to allow the body's tendencies to overwhelm the mind: "For the proclivities of our appetites are restrained and held in check by the prudent mind, and all the motions of the body are muzzled by reason." Philo used lameness to illustrate the refusal to be swayed by the opinion of others. The righteous person's soul does not make vast strides, extended wide by opinion, and

will never be unduly elated or puffed up by arrogance, nor stand upon tiptoes, and boast as if it were well to make vast strides with bare feet; but the breadth which was extended wide by opinion, will become torpid and contracted and then will voluntarily succumb and yield to lameness - ἐκουσίως ὑποσκελίσασα ἑαυτὴν χωλεύοι.⁴²⁴

5:432; Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 2.3; *SC* 119:270; *NPNF ii* 5:345; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.29.5; *GCS* 7:131; *NPNF ii* 1:548; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.8; *PG* 9:289; *ANF* 2:495. Lameness used in a similar way: Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.9.77.1-4; *SC* 70:248; *ANF* 2:229f; Gregory of Nazianzen, *Apologetica* 61; *PG* 35:472; *NPNF ii* 7:218.

The theme adapted as refusal to be healed of one's spiritual impairment: Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 10.104-6.1-5; Marcovich, 153-156; *ANF* 2:201; Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 1.86; Jaeger 1:51f; *NPNF ii* 5:44; Gregory of Nazianzen, *In patrem tacentem* 10; *PG* 35:948; *NPNF ii* 7:250.

⁴²³ Philo, *Det. Pot. Ins.* 48.175; Loeb 2:316; Yonge, 131; cf., Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 31.224; Loeb 10:116; Yonge, 778.

Some similar examples from early Christian texts: Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 39; *PG* 26:900f; *NPNF ii* 4:206 - cf., *ibid.*, 26-27; *PG* 26:881-884; *NPNF ii* 4:203; Theodoret, *HE*, 4.22; *GCS* 44:250; *NPNF ii* 3:122; Theodoret, *Eranistes, Florilegium* 1.84; Ettlinger, 96; *NPNF ii* 3:176; Ignatius, *Epist. ad Trallianos* 9; Loeb 1:220f; Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 2.286; Jaeger 1:304f; *NPNF ii* 5:259; *Acts of Peter* 37.(8); *NTA* 2:315. In this respect, it is recommended to have as one's models people with impairments: "you should be like a blind person and not see any of those things which you find unedifying...If you hear anyone disobedient...or disparaging...like a deaf person as if you had never heard it, you should pass it all by...and as far as an answer in retaliation is concerned be silent as one that is mute" - John Cassian, *De institutis* 4.41; *CSEL* 17:76; *NPNF ii* 11:232.

⁴²⁴ Reason muzzles appetites: *4 Maccabees* 1.35; *OTPs* 2:545.

Choose a lame soul over a long-striding soul: Philo, *Somn.* 1.21.131-132; Loeb 5:366, 368; Yonge, 377. Other examples in early Jewish texts of impairment used of refusal positively: Preuss, 77f.

Philo goes on to describe this chosen lameness as “a most honourable thing...superior in real dignity and importance.”

The inability of impairment was used positively in other respects. Plutarch wrote of a person’s children:

It is a good thing also to pretend not to know of some shortcomings, and to turn the old person’s dull eye and dull ear to what they do, and seeing, not to see, and, hearing, not to hear, sometimes what goes on.⁴²⁵

In the context of Democritus putting his own eyes out to remove the effects of lust, Tertullian referred to the “Christian with grace-healed eyes [who] is sightless in this matter...mentally blind against the assaults of passion.” In the interpretation of dreams, a prisoner or someone forcibly constrained by others is fortunate if they dreams that they are blind: it signifies that their troubles will soon be over, as they “will no longer see the evils that surround them.” To dream of being blind is positive in another interpretation: “I know of a stadium-runner...He won after he dreamt that he had gone blind. For like a blind person, the one who takes the lead in a race does not see their fellow-competitors.” With a similar positive effect, the Israelite spies in Jericho avoided detection by pretending to be deaf-mute – their apparent inability was perceived as no threat.⁴²⁶

This impairment inability theme was also a means of conveying universal human limitation. In Akkadian tradition, an image for humans was “the beclouded people”,

⁴²⁵ Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De liberis educandis* 13e; Loeb 1:64f.

⁴²⁶ The Christian mentally blind to passion: Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 46.57; *CCL* 1:162; *ANF* 3:51.

and in Hittite myth, the great wave speaks to Ishtar in similar terms: “For whom do you wait thou singing, for whom do you wait filling your mouth with [song]? Humans are deaf and hear not; in their eyes they are blind and see not.”⁴²⁷ Human inability to perceive divine matters was described in many traditions with impairment: “The eyes of the soul of the multitude are not strong enough to endure the sight of the divine.” We can compare Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “Now we see in the mirror dimly, but then face to face” [1 Corinthians 13:12]. This human inability to perceive God is reflected in the blessing of a blind scholar: “You have visited one who is seen but does not see; may you be granted to visit Him who sees but is not seen.” Oracles and scripture were portrayed as prostheses as it were: they are “a deaf person’s hearing, a blind person’s sight.” Consequently, the tolerance of false prophets brings blindness: “Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination” [Micah 3:6].⁴²⁸

Impairment’s inability in dreams taken positively – Prisoner: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.26; Pack, 32-35; White, 28-30; Runner: *ibid.*, 1.26; Pack, 32-35; White 28-30. Israelite spies as deaf-mute: *LOTJ* 6:171.

⁴²⁷ Akkadian text: *ANET*, 114; Hittite myth: *ANET*, 123; cf., in Egyptian tradition: *AEL* 3:211. Humans by nature impaired: Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 3.21; Loeb 10:12; Yonge, 759. Universal human blindness of mind: Philo, *Cher.* 2.19.62-64; Loeb 2:46; Yonge, 86f – the mind irradiated by light like a person rising from sleep or a blind person being given sight and exploring the world with excitement. Universal human lameness in virtue: Philo, *Mut. Nom.* 35.187; Loeb 5:236; Yonge, 357 – illustrated by the lameness of Jacob. Cf., Philo, *Mut. Nom.* 38.211; Loeb 5:250; Yonge, 359; Philo, *Rer. Div. Her.* 15.76-78; Loeb 4:318, 320; Yonge, 282; Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.* 4.155; Loeb Supplement 1:439. In Gnostic texts: Layton, 49. Cf., modern scholars’ discussion of ancient writers’ use of blindness “as an image to represent the limits of humanity” – Buxton, 35-37; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 172-176; Schrage, 276f, 290f. In various contexts, substantial sections of the human race are categorised in terms of impairment: all who are not male, all who are uncircumcised, the dead. E.g. the uncircumcised Abraham unable to stand in the divine presence: *LOTJ* 5:234; cf., Talmud, *Yevamoth* 71a. Cf., all who are not male: see Amundsen, “Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children,” 4f; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 34. Cf., Gentiles: Talmud, *Yevamoth* 71a. Cf., The dead: Homer, *Iliad* 24.54; Loeb 2:566f. Cf., the inability to understand foreign languages: “All of us... are assuredly deaf in those languages, countless in number, which we do not understand” – Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.39.116; Loeb 18:540f. We can compare the universal association implicit in the early Jewish blessing said on waking from sleep: “Blessed is He who opens the eyes of the blind” – Talmud, *Berachoth* 60b.

⁴²⁸ Human eyes too weak to see the divine: Plato, *Sophista* 254a-b; Loeb 7:402f. Cf., “All mortals have mortal pupils in their eyes, [Too] small, since flesh and bones have produced them, [Too] weak to see Zeus, the ruler of all” – *Orphica* (E and T), 22-24; *OTPs* 2:799; *Orphica* (J), 22, 24; *OTPs* 2:801; Philo,

Human nature was described with impairment in other respects too. Moses used his speech impairment to refuse God's call, "for judging the greatest human eloquence to be mere speechlessness in comparison with the truth...he shrunk from the undertaking."⁴²⁹ Similarly, "the human mind is apt to be blind towards the perception of what is really expedient and beneficial for it, being influenced rather by conjecture and notions of probability than by real knowledge." A reason for this was identified as the soul's contamination by the body: "it is blinded by being combined and commingled with the mortal nature." The soul's power is thereby restricted, like a person trying to see in a fog, or move about in water - παραπλησίως.⁴³⁰ There were other reasons given for this universal human impairment:

Every body is under the influence of some distracting idea or other; so that, as far as the subjects of the discussion is concerned, they are completely deaf, and are present with their bodies only, but are at a distance as to their minds, being in no particular different from images or statues.⁴³¹

Ebr. 28.107; Loeb 3:374; Yonge, 217; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.9.54; Loeb 7:130; Yonge, 539; Philo, *Virt.* 33.179; Loeb 8:272; Yonge, 658.

Oracles as the means for those who are blind in this sense to see: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De defectu oraculorum* 432b; Loeb 5:466f; Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 14.109; Loeb 10:54; Yonge, 767.

Scripture as way of sight to all being blind: Philo, *Somn.* 1.26.164; Loeb 5:382; Yonge, 379f; cf., Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 2.91-92; Jaeger 1.253f; *NPNF ii* 5:114; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.4; *PG* 8:37; *ANF* 2:449; Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.72; *SC* 132:456-458; *ANF* 4:461.

Cf., Augustine interprets the blind person of John 9 as standing for all humankind: all people are born blind and in need of a guide, specifically in relation to unbelief and faith: "Caecitas est infidelitas, et illuminatio fides" – Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 44.1; *CCL* 36:381; *NPNF i* 7:245. Cf., Early Jewish tradition of blind person led by a sighted person, God being the sighted person and Israel the blind: Holden, 348.

The blind scholar's blessing: Talmud, *Chagigah* 5b; cf., "As God sees all things, and is seen by none, so the soul sees, but cannot be seen" – *LOTJ* 1:60.

⁴²⁹ Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1.14.83; Loeb 6:318; Yonge, 467.

⁴³⁰ Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 3.21; Loeb 10:12; Yonge, 759. Soul impaired by contact with body: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De defectu oraculorum* 431f-432a; Loeb 5:464-467; however, this was not a universal belief: Plato states explicitly that the soul is not impaired by such contact – Plato, *Respublica* 10.11, 611c; Loeb 6:480f.

⁴³¹ Everyone distracted: Philo, *Congr.* 13.65; Loeb 4:490; Yonge, 309; cf., Origen, *C. Celsum* 7.39; *SC* 150:102-104; *ANF* 4:626.

The human condition was in a general way deteriorating: "It is almost a matter of observation that with the entire human race the stature on the whole is becoming smaller daily...Moreover, the famous bard Homer nearly 1000 years ago never ceased to lament that mortals were smaller of stature than in the old days" – Pliny, *HN* 7.16.73-74; Loeb 2:552-555; cf., "Among later generations of men, there were but few

It was not only in contrast to divine matters that human limit was described as impairment:

The most sharp-sighted of humans are absolutely blind if their sight is compared with that of antelopes or eagles. Again, in hearing and in smell, often other animals are very far beyond humans; as, for instance, the ass, which appears to be the stupidest of all the animals, would show that our sense of hearing is very obtuse if he were brought into comparison with us.⁴³²

A frequently used universal application of impairment was in relation to the future: “No-one knows the result which will come about, which is hidden from speech, sight, or hearing. The face is deaf, for silence confronts.”⁴³³

The difficulties and inabilities of impairment were well understood by ancient writers. However, it is clear from the ways that these writers used these themes that impairment was not seen simply in negative terms. For instance, the grievous experience of impairment was used to show that worse things even than impairment can happen, and that response is more important than what happens – even impairment can be lived well. In imagery, impairment inability was used of refusal both positively as well as negatively. And there were even advantages to the inability of impairment: some things

who in a measure resembled Adam in his extraordinary size and physical perfection” – *LOTJ* 1:59. Since the Book of Genealogies was hidden, the strength of the sages has been impaired and their vision dimmed – Talmud, *Pesachim* 62b.

Finding wisdom like a blind person: Talmud: *Baba Bathra* 12b, *Nidah* 20b; cf., Gregory of Nyssa, *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione* 48; *PG* 46:40; *NPNF ii* 5:436: “We must, so far as we put our hands at all on what we are seeking, inevitably touch, as blind people feeling along the walls for the door, some one of the things aforesaid”.

⁴³² Human and animal perception compared: Philo, *Poster. C.* 46.161; Loeb 2:422; Yonge, 148.

⁴³³ All people impaired in regard to the future – deaf face: Egyptian prophecy, *ANET*, 445.

Cf., τῶν δὲ μελλόντων τετύφλωνται φραδαί – Pindar, *Olympian Odes* 12.9; Loeb, 128f; remark of Epimenides of Crete in Athens: ὡς τυφλὸν ἐστὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἄνθρωπος – Plutarch, *Vit., Solon* 12.5-6.84; Loeb 1:434; Plutarch, *Mor., De fortuna* 98a-b; Loeb 2:78f; Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.13.7.572; Loeb 3:376; Whiston, 726; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.17.77; Loeb 7:356; Yonge, 576; Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 14.109; Loeb 10:54; Yonge, 767. Cf., Prometheus’ words: “I caused mortals no longer to foresee their doom” – Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vincitus* 250; Loeb 1:236. In dire straits, Moses is compared to a blind person – his face is darkened by his many troubles and he does not know which way to go: *Exodus R.* 42.4.

are better not seen or heard! In other examples, impairment inability was used to describe natural and universal limits of human ability. In this next section, further themes are developed. We see how life as a person with an impairment was not at all not worth living, that people with impairment were far from simply helpless, and that literary tropes of impairment were by no means usually negative in meaning.

3.0 *Impairment: Abilities and Usefulness*

3.1 **Abilities**

In many circumstances, impairment was understood to be no hindrance to ability. The expectation was that people with impairments would participate socially and politically, with a modification of their role if necessary according to their particular circumstances. In legal texts, for instance, among the issues debated in the context of what public role people with impairments were to play were the particular form of a person's impairment, whether or not it was permanent, and what precedents there were from history.⁴³⁴ It is certainly inaccurate to assert that the existence of people in the ancient

⁴³⁴ Examples of debates in Roman law - Adopting and being adopted: *Digest* 1.7.9; Mommsen and Kreuger 1:20. "The deaf and the mute are not forbidden to appoint a procurator by any method which can be of service. They may also be appointed themselves, not indeed for legal proceedings but for administration": *Digest* 3.3.43; Mommsen and Kreuger 1:92. Acting as judge: *Digest* 5.1.6; Mommsen and Kreuger 1:165. "The mute, deaf and blind are liable where dowries are concerned, because they are able to contract marriages": *Digest* 23.3.73; Mommsen and

world can be characterised as “lives of extreme isolation...and disdain in which they were generally held both by their families and by society at large...not merely marginalised, but outcast.”⁴³⁵

Kreuger 2:683. Appointment of tutor to deaf or mute person: *Digest* 26.1.6, 13, 17; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:746f.

Being a tutor – “Deaf and mute persons cannot be statutory tutors since they cannot be lawfully appointed either by will or in any other way. Someone who is hard of hearing can, however be tutor”: *Digest* 26.4.10-11; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:755. “Even if a tutor becomes blind, he can give authorization”: *Digest* 26.8.16; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:776. “Someone who becomes blind, deaf, mad, or chronically sick after taking on a tutelage can resign it. Usually, poverty which is unequal to the task and burdens of tutelage is accepted as an excuse”: *Digest* 27.1.40; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:792.

“In the case of someone who is making his will, at the time when he makes the will, soundness of mind is required, not health of body...Deaf or mute persons cannot make a will; but if someone has become mute or deaf after making a will, because of illness or some other accident, the will nevertheless remains valid. If a mute or deaf person has obtained from the emperor the privilege of making a will, the will is valid...Someone who has lost his hands can make a will although he cannot write...A deaf person [is] said to have *testamenti facto*; for although [he] cannot make a will, they can still acquire by will for themselves or for others”: *Digest* 28.1.2, 6, 7, 10, 16; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:815f; cf., *ibid.*, 28.1.25; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:818. “A mute or deaf person can properly be instituted heir”: *Digest* 28.5.1; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:832. “It is settled that by military law a deaf and mute person can make a will if he is still with the colours before dismissal as unfit for service”: *Digest* 29.1.4; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:867. “It is agreed that a mute person and also a deaf person, even those born in that condition, can act as heir and become bound to the inheritance”: *Digest* 29.2.5; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:875. “A deaf-mute who receives a legacy can rightly be directed to restore it after his death”: *Digest* 31.1.77; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:58. “Mute, deaf or blind persons can receive bonorum possessio if they understand the transaction”: *Digest* 37.3.2; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:277f. “The mute and deaf are not forbidden to make gifts”: *Digest* 39.5.33; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:413.

“The son of a deaf or mute father can manumit by his command, but the son of a lunatic cannot manumit”: *Digest* 40.2.10; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:426. “In the twelfth book of his *Digest*, Celsus, in the interest of utility, says that a man deaf from birth can manumit”: *Digest* 40.9.1; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:470.

“In any transaction in which speech is not required but consent is sufficient, such as hire, sale, and other like contracts, a deaf person can also take part seeing that he is able to understand and to consent”: *Digest* 44.2.48; Mommsen and Kreuger 4:647. “Where presence, and not simply verbal assent, is necessary, a mute, provided he has his wits, can be regarded as replying. Likewise, with someone who is deaf, he also can reply”: *Digest* 50.17.124; Mommsen and Kreuger 4:964.

“He forbids a deaf person without any hearing at all to make application before him [the magistrate]. For no-one was to be allowed to make application who was unable to hear the praetor’s decree. This would have been dangerous even for the applicant himself; for if he had not heard the praetor’s decree, he would have been punished as contumacious for not obeying it...Next comes an edict against those who are not to make application on behalf of others ...On the grounds of disability, the praetor rejects the man blind in both eyes, obviously because he cannot see and respect the magistrate’s insignia...But although a blind man cannot make an application on behalf of someone else, yet he keeps his senatorial rank and can also act as judge. Could he then also hold magistracies? This needs discussion. There is certainly an example of a man who did so. Appius Claudius, though blind, took part on councils of state; and in the senate expressed a very stern view on Pyrrhus’s prisoners of war. But it is better to say that the blind man can retain a magistracy already entered upon but is absolutely forbidden to seek another one. There are many examples in support of this opinion”: *Digest* 3.1.1.3-5; Mommsen and Kreuger 1:79f.

Ability of people with impairments to earn living not hindered by their impairment: Hippocrates, *Art.* 53; Loeb 3:320f, 324f.

⁴³⁵ Modern assertions of lives of isolation and disdain: Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 28f; cf., *ibid.*, 29-44.

Impairment did not in itself exclude a person from fulfilling their public duties. The Corinthian general Timoleon became blind while on military service: “He did not, however, desist from the siege on this account, but persisted in the war and captured the tyrants.” Cicero refers to “that famous old worthy, Appius...[who] was blind for a number of years...[and] in no way unfitted by his misfortune for his duties whether private or public.” As we have seen already, there was initially resistance to Agesilaus becoming Sparta’s king because of his lameness. With Agesilaus, as with the Athenian ruler Medon (whose leadership was also disputed by political enemies on the grounds of lameness), the Pythian oracle was consulted, and gave the decision in favour of the person with an impairment: “For it mattered not to the god that one who halted in his gait should be king.”⁴³⁶

Alternative means could be found for people with impairments to fulfil their responsibilities. Artemidorus makes this point in dream interpretation:

To have ears in one’s eyes signifies that one will go deaf and that the information usually received by the ears will have to come to one through the eyes. To have eyes in one’s ears signifies that one will go blind and that the

⁴³⁶ The blind general Timoleon: Plutarch, *Vit., Timoleon* 37.7-10.254; Loeb 6:350; cf., the war hero Sergius who, having lost his hand in battle, later fought using a prosthesis: Pliny (the Elder), *HN* 7:29; Loeb 2:574f. Agesilaus: “For it mattered not to the god that one who halted in his gait should be king, but if one who was not lawfully begotten, nor even a descendent of Heracles, should be king, this was what the god meant by the ‘maimed royalty’ ” – τὴν χωλὴν εἶναι βασιλείαν - Plutarch, *Vit., Agesilaus* 3.4-5; Loeb 5:6-9. Medon – Codrus’ sons quarrelled about the rule in Athens: “Neileus refused to allow Medon to rule over him, because he was lame in one foot – χωλός – The disputants agreed to refer the matter the Delphic oracle, and the Pythian priestess gave the kingdom of Athens to Medon” – Pausanias, 7.2.1; Loeb 3:172f. Cf., the same theme applied to a less exalted participation, in a rabbinic proverb: the lame shepherd waits at the fold for the swift goats who have run off to return “and then rebukes and punishes them” – Talmud, *Shabbath* 32a. Blind Appius: Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.38.112; Loeb 18:536f.

Impairment no hindrance to the expectation that people with impairments support themselves as far as their ability – support only given where their ability falls short: John Chrysostom, *De Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles* 44.4; *SC* 362:146; *FC* 73:100.

information usually received by the eyes will have to come to one through the ears.⁴³⁷

Amongst particular examples discussed are the blind scholar Didymus who used engraved letters to read texts, and blind children who recognised their mother through other senses.⁴³⁸ For people deaf or mute, it was taken for granted that gestures, writing and sign-language could be used. Plato remarks,

If we had no voice or tongue, and wished to make things clear to one another, should we not try, as mute people actually do, to make signs with our hands and head and person generally?⁴³⁹

In the New Testament, Zechariah as a mute person communicates effectively both through gestures, and through writing [Luke 1:22, 62f]. God's use of prophets was understood in such terms:

As we indicate to the deaf what we want them to do, by gestures and signs...so, inasmuch as human nature is in a sense deaf and insensible to higher truths, we maintain that the grace of God...spake by the prophets, ordering their voices conformably to our capacity and the modes of expression with which we are familiar.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.24; Pack, 31f; White, 28.

⁴³⁸ Didymus' use of engraved letters: Sozomen, *HE* 3.15; *GCS* 50:125f; *NPNF ii* 2:294f; Socrates, *HE* 4.25; *GCS* nf 1:259; *NPNF ii* 2:110. A blind child recognising their mother: Talmud, *Kethuboth* 60a; cf., Preuss, 274, 406.

⁴³⁹ Plato on the communication ability of mute people: Plato, *Cratylus* 422e; Loeb 4:132f; cf., Pliny, *HN* 6.35.188; Loeb 2:478f; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 4.5.33; Loeb 3:310f; Talmud, *Gittin* 59a, 71a; Levin, 137-143; Preuss, 292, 303; Abraham, 140f.

In Roman legal texts, the use of alternative means of communication with people deaf, mute or blind are recognised as valid: *Digest* 28.1.2, 6, 7, 10, 16; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:815f; *Digest* 28.1.25; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:818; *Digest* 37.3.2; Mommsen and Kreuger 3:277f; *Digest* 44.2.48; Mommsen and Kreuger 4:647; *Digest* 50.17.124; Mommsen and Kreuger 4:964.

People who are mute are able to conduct business effectively without speech: Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium*, 2.1.209; Jaeger 1:285f; *NPNF ii* 5:271. Cf., use of prostheses in ancient world – Talmud: *Shabbath* 66a, 66b; *Yoma* 78b; *Yevamoth* 102b, 103a; Preuss, 236, 279; Ghalioungui, 65; Sandison, "Diseases of the Eye," 459f; Hippocrates, *Art.* 62; Loeb 3:350f; *ABD* 5:64; Sergius' iron hand – Pliny (the Elder), *HN* 7:29; Loeb 2:574f.

In the NT, Zechariah's communication as a mute person – by gestures: Luke 1:22, 62; by writing: Luke 1:63; cf., "In his pen there speaks a hand clearer than every sound, in his waxen tablet there is heard a letter more vocal than every mouth" – Tertullian, *De idololatria* 57.3; *CSEL* 20:57; *ANF* 3:75.

⁴⁴⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 2.1.242; Jaeger 1:297; *NPNF ii* 5:274f - cf., *ibid.*, 2.1.421; Jaeger 1:349; *NPNF ii* 5:292.

In some contexts, signs and gestures clearly constituted a comprehensive sign language: although not impaired himself, Mordecai was able to interpret and speak the language of those who were deaf and mute, and examples are given of how this particular language was constructed.⁴⁴¹

Under the same reckoning that people with impairments were expected to participate within society, they were also deemed not to be exempt from the law's requirements or punishments. People with impairments were not deemed incapable of serious crime. The blind thief Neoclides "in his thefts out-shoots the keenest-eyed." In early Jewish texts, the fact that those who are blind are more than capable in other respects means they cannot be ruled out as suspects in cases of murder. Lamech, being blind, does not see the divine mark on Cain and kills him; being blind, however, does not exempt him from the penalty proscribed for Cain's killer.⁴⁴² However, the particular circumstances of a person's impairment were taken into account when their liability was reckoned. In the case of the murder of a slave's master, for example,

Those who are weakened by age are excused. A deaf slave is also to be counted among the helpless...because he hears nothing... We except a mute slave, but only where shouting was the only form of assistance possible.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ *LOTJ* 4:382f.

⁴⁴² The blind thief Neoclides: Aristophanes, *Plutus* 665f; Loeb 3:424f; Rogers, 74f. The blind not excluded as murder suspects: Talmud, *Nedarim* 87b, 88a. No exemption under the law for blind Lamech: *LOTJ* 1:117.

⁴⁴³ The varying liability of slaves with impairments: *Digest* 29.5.3.8-10; Mommsen and Kreuger 2:899. Cf., the tradition of Mephibosheth as murdering his uncle Ishbosheth in the hope of succeeding him as king: *LOTJ* 6:261. The ability of Zechariah to communicate is used to show that the inability to speak is "an unavailing plea" - Tertullian, *De idololatria* 57.3; *CSEL* 20:57; *ANF* 3:75. Deliberately, the two great commandments are not dependent on physical wholeness for their fulfilment: "And this is a mark of Christ's love for us, viz. that the chief of the precepts, and those which maintain our life, should not be impaired in any degree through the weakness of the body" - John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 20.1; *PG* 49:198; *NPNF i* 9:472.

A person's impairment was understood to be no hindrance in the exercising of desirable qualities. Firstly, this was the case even with physical attributes. Samson's physical strength was not impaired by his blindness: "Putting out eyes avails naught, for Samson blind did more mischief than ever Samson seeing." In a similar way, as Homer makes clear, Polyphemus was far more effective against his enemy Odysseus when blinded. John Chrysostom pictures Paul defeating the heretics who made selective use of Paul's writings: with a single dismembered limb, or "shorn of his limbs even, he is able to destroy all his adversaries."⁴⁴⁴ Hephaistus' epithet is that he is "famous" – περικλυτός – a fame that results from his physical skill as a craftsman. Impairment did not in itself hinder even beauty. Although Jacob did not choose Leah because of her impairment, she was nonetheless strikingly beautiful.⁴⁴⁵

Secondly, impairment was seen to be no hindrance to wisdom or intelligence. "The eye grows blind and yet the mind retains its force; and a foot is cut off and yet the reasoning power does not halt." The ability of a blind person to discern accurately was demonstrated (by a blind rabbi) from the ability of wife and husband to appreciate each

⁴⁴⁴ Samson's mischief: *LOTJ* 4:431. Cf., "Samson's strength was superhuman...yet he had one imperfection, he was maimed in both feet" – *LOTJ* 4:48.

Polyphemus' power over Odysseus when blind: Homer, *Odyssey* 13.341-345; Loeb 2:26f; cf., *ibid.*, 1.68f; Loeb 1:132f; "Poseidon is angry simply because Odysseus blinded his son": Glenn, 177.

Strength of the mutilated Paul: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 21.4; *PG* 61:545; *NPNF i* 12:378. Cf., John the Baptist, whose head was cut off but not his voice – which continues to be heard through the Gospels: John Chrysostom, *Catechesis de iuramento* 10.26; Papadopoulos-Karameus, 165; *ACW* 31:159. Cf., the paradoxical strength of Jewish and Christian martyrs at their mutilation, see below pages 287-291. The loss of a limb is described as being "no great damage" to the body as a whole -

οὐ πολλὴ ἡ βλάβη - John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.9; *PG* 49:21; *NPNF i* 9:334.

⁴⁴⁵ Hephaistus takes his revenge: Homer, *Odyssey* 8.329-332; Loeb 1:280-283; cf., through his skill: "he forged bonds that might not be broken or loosed" – *ibid.*, 8.274f; Loeb 1:276f; also, the great shield of Achilles: Homer, *Iliad* 18:468-617; Loeb 2:322-335. Leah's impairment and great beauty: *Jubilees* 28.5; *OTPs* 2:109.

other accurately at night!⁴⁴⁶ The blind philosopher Democritus, who appears to have been the focus for a number of attitudes concerning impairment,

could not distinguish black from white: but all the same he could distinguish good from bad, just from unjust...it was permitted him to live happily without seeing changes of colour; it was not permitted him to do so without true ideas.⁴⁴⁷

In rabbinic tradition, the muteness of the sons of Rabbi Johanan did not hinder their knowledge of the Law, and David revered Mephibosheth, the lame relative of Saul, as his Torah teacher. The Homeric character Aegyptius was described as “a man bowed with age and wise with wisdom untold.” Homer himself, traditionally a blind person, was universally recognised as beyond any comparison in wisdom and his understanding of human affairs.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Eye and foot impaired, but not reason: Theodoret, *Eranistes*, *Florilegium* 3.312; Ettliger, 249; *NPNF ii* 3:243; cf., “Those who are mute by birth or have lost their voice through some disease or injury [who] are just as much reasoning beings” - οὐδὲν ἤττον λογικοί εἰσιν - John Damascene, *Expositio fidei* 35.2.21; *PTS* 12:87; *NPNF ii* 9:35; James the lame, “Learned in a high degree” – Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 47.2; Bartelink, 226; *ACW* 34:125; cf., Didymus the blind scholar and tutor of Jerome – see below text at page 247 and footnote 474.

Cf., Aristotle: Loss of perception does not hinder intelligence for those who are blind: Aristotle, *De sensu* 1 437a; Loeb 14:212f. Blind person able to discern, as a husband and wife at night – Talmud, *Chullin* 96a (blind people being used to illustrate a truth valid for all people); cf., Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.38.112; Loeb 18:536 (see Robbins, 133f).

⁴⁴⁷ Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.39.114; Loeb 18:538f. Cf., other particular people specified as impaired in body but not in reasoning ability or wisdom: Cicero, *De finibus* 5.28.84-86; Loeb 17:486-489; Antipater, Appius, C. Drusus, Cn Aufidius, Diodotus, Asclepiades – Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.38.112-5.39.113; Loeb 18:536-539; also, “For if night does not put a stop to happy life why should a day that resembles night stop it?” – *ibid.*, 5.38.111-112; Loeb 18:536f. Cf., “Is there any evil really in deafness? Marcus Crassus was half-deaf; still he suffered another worse annoyance, in hearing himself spoken ill of” – *ibid.*, 5.39.116; Loeb 18:540f.

⁴⁴⁸ Muteness of the sons of Rabbi Johanan did not hinder their knowledge of the Law: Talmud, *Chagigah* 3a. Mephibosheth as David’s teacher: *LOTJ* 4:76f, 4:111, 6:244. Aegyptius: γήραϊ κυφός - Homer, *Odyssey* 2.16; Loeb 1:36f.

On Homer, “The most renowned of the Greek poets” – Diodorus Siculus, 1.12.2; Loeb 1:40f; “the godlike being, the divine Homer” – *Greek Anthology* 2.320f; Loeb 1:82. Cf., on Homer, “No-one alive is ignorant of him”: Dio Chrysostom, 36.10; Loeb 3:430f; cf., Thamyris: *ibid.*, 13.21; Loeb 2:106f; Stesichorus: *ibid.*, 11.40; Loeb 1:476f; Anaxagoras, Teiresias – Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.39.114-115; Loeb 18:538-541. The Homer-like figure in the *Odyssey*, the blind singer Demodocus, is described as “famous...divine,” “whom the Muse loved above all other men” - Homer, *Odyssey* 8.63f, 83, 87; Loeb 1:262-265. Cf., respect for Homer in the ancient world as unequalled: Howatson, 284. Compare below: Didymus the Blind as Didymus the Seer – text at page 247 and footnote 474.

Thirdly, a person's impairment was no hindrance in respect of their virtue or piety: "lameness is an impediment to the leg, but not to the moral purpose." The Elder Seneca praises the piety of a blind priest: "How worthy he would be of being made a priest – were he not a priest already!"⁴⁴⁹ Similarly in Early Church writings, particular people with impairments are used to encourage all people that,

Neither poverty, nor infirmity, nor deformity of body...could ever become a hindrance to virtue...And the same in respect of grace...[whatever the physical impairment,] grace is not hindered from coming by any of these things. For it only seeks a soul receiving it with readiness, and all these external things it passes over.⁴⁵⁰

In early Jewish and Christian traditions, people identified by their impairments were prominent. This included witnesses in Christ's defence at the trial before Pilate, and others supporting Peter at his arrest.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Lameness of body, but not of moral purpose: Epictetus, *Encheiridion* 9; Loeb 2:490f; Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.34.57; *CSEL* 42:315; *NPNF i* 5:307. Blind priest: Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 4.2; Loeb 1:438-441.

⁴⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 2.26; *PG* 49:235-236; *ACW* 31:181f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 25.2; *PG* 57:328-329; *NPNF i* 10:172f; *ibid.*, 66.1; *PG* 57:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.10; *PG* 49:21; *NPNF i* 9:335: "No hurt arises from their infirmity if their soul be noble and well awake"; *ibid.*, 20.1; *PG* 49:198; *NPNF i* 9:472; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.*, 19; *PG* 62:131-133; *NPNF i* 13:139-141.

⁴⁵¹ People identified by their impairments (present or past) supporting Jesus: *Acts of Pilate* 6:1-2; *NTA* 1:510f; likewise, Peter: *Acts of Peter* 13-16; *NTA* 2:314.

In Jewish traditions also: "He in whom the divine words of wisdom and virtue dwell, even though he may be more deformed of body than Silenus, is necessarily fair": Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.* 4.99; Loeb Supplement 1:382f.

Blind Tobit the righteous - Tobit, 1:3-18, 2:2-8, 4:1-21; Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 96.18; *CCL* 39:1369f; Tweed *et al.*, 4:432f. Insight (partial / ironic) of blind Tobit to his sighted wife Anna – Tobit, 5:21f; irony of blindness occurring as a result of Tobit performing righteous act: Moore, 130-136 (parallels made with Job); "A pity [that] a just man has gone blind!" – 4QTobit^b (4Q197 [4QTob^b ar]) 3.III 9; Martinez, 297; cf., Preuss, 266.

Amos - with an impairment and obedient to God – "Though he had an impediment in his speech, he obeyed the call of God": *LOTJ* 4:261; cf., Preuss, 89.

The righteousness of blind Jacob: *Testament of Jacob* 2.2-4; *OTPs* 1:914; "You will find that God and his angels were their friends [Moses and Jacob] while they were in their bodies, and that God kept on speaking to them many times" – *Testament of Jacob* 7.6; *OTPs* 1:917. Cf., of a particular blind person: "It has been proclaimed of him in heaven that he is a wholly righteous man, and that whoever does him a kindness will be worthy of the future world" – Talmud, *Gittin* 68b.

Similarly, from the earliest traditions, people with impairments have responsibilities (and, where appropriate, flexibility) in relation to the fulfilment of Jewish Law: Marx, 505-643.

The impairment of a person being no hindrance to their righteousness before God is a common theme in Early Church writing: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1.27; *SC* 50:122; *ACW* 31:33f;

Thirdly, the theme was applied theologically: people whose ability to communicate has been affected through impairment are not hindered in their ability to communicate with God. In many traditions, it was a characteristic of God that He is able to hear the mute: “Even if you remove the organ of speech, God still hears those who are silent.” Those who are mute are nonetheless able to praise God: “If anyone by sickness be mute, they have no tongue, but they have praise.” The same notion is applied in general terms – for people with impairments, their impairment is no hindrance to their ability to worship, nor to the response they are able to receive from the gods: “The blind ones whom the god blesses, their way is open. The lame ones whose heart is on the way of the god, their way is smooth. The god blesses trust with protection.”⁴⁵²

Another way that impairment was shown to be of no hindrance is in the comparisons drawn between impairment of the body and impairment of the soul. Making parallels

ibid., 1.15; *SC* 50:116; *ACW* 31:28; John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 2.26-32; *PG* 49:235-236; *ACW* 31:181f: “Even if a person be lame, or his eyes have been torn out, or be disabled in body, or has fallen into the most extreme weakness, none of these things prevents grace from coming into the soul”.

The same theme is used as proof that the soul does not extend throughout the body: “If a man’s hands and feet are amputated, the soul remains whole and entire and it is in no way mutilated by the maiming of the body” – John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 5.28; *SC* 28:294; *FC* 72:149.

The use of people with impairments to demonstrate discipleship qualities is discussed below in Chapter 4.

⁴⁵² God hears the mute: *4 Maccabees* 10.18-21; *OTPs* 2:556. The ability to “understand a mute man, and hear him who does not speak” is a characteristic of divine power in many traditions: Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 2.1.268; Jaeger 1:304f; *NPNF ii* 5:277 - cf., ibid., 2.1.221; Jaeger 1:289f; *NPNF ii* 5:272; Origen, *C. Celsum*, 2.9; *SC* 132:302; *ANF* 4:433 - quoting Herodotus 1.47; *Sibylline Oracles* 8.373f; *OTPs* 1:426. Cf., the oracle demon who “counts the sand and measures the sea, hears the mute and gives ear to the silent” – John Chrysostom, *De Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles* 80; *SC* 362:200; *FC* 73:122 (see footnote 151 *ad loc.*).

Those who are mute able to praise God: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 134.11; *CCL* 40:1946; Tweed *et al.*, 6:135f; ibid., 86.1; *CCL* 39:1198; Tweed *et al.*, 4:213.

Those who are impaired both worship and are blessed: *AEL* 3:194; cf., *BWL*, 135; also, “Thou hearest, O Shamash, to prayer, supplication, and adoration; to devotion (and) kneeling, to reciting of prayers and prostration. In his hollow voice the feeble man calls out to thee; the miserable, the weak, the mistreated, the poor man comes before thee faithfully with psalms (and) offerings” – Sumero-Akkadian hymn: *ANET*, 389.

between impairment of body and of soul was a frequent ancient device. We see it, for instance, in Plato's extended parable of the cave in Book 7 of the *Republic*.⁴⁵³ It was a tool of humour too: Lucian described philosophies being sold like slaves at an auction; sharp-sight, blindness or deafness of soul associated with a particular philosophy results in the philosophy's price rising or falling.⁴⁵⁴ The parallel was used in a variety of texts to demonstrate that impairment of the soul has a much more damaging effect than impairment of the body: "Ignorance causes to the soul a mutilation more grievous than the mutilation of the body."⁴⁵⁵ This comparison was frequently used in the Early Church:

For a mind without the eyes of the flesh is still human, but the eyes of the flesh without a mind are bestial. And who would not rather be human, even though blind in fleshly sight, than a beast that can see?⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ Body / soul blindness in cave image – Plato, *Respublica* 7.3, 518a, 519a; Loeb 6:132f, 136f; cf., cave image with being led out / prison / body and external senses, in context of blindness / sight – Philo, *Rer. Div. Her.* 16.85; Loeb 4:324; Yonge, 283; also, Tertullian, *Ad martyras* 2.5; *CCL* 1:4; *ANF* 3:693. Some other examples of parallels between body and soul impairment: Plato, *Respublica* 6.19, 508c-d; Loeb 6:102f; Plato, *Phaedo* 48, 99d-e; Loeb 1:342f; Plato, *Gorgias* 524c-d; Loeb 3:522f; Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1.13.16, 1102b; Loeb 19:64f; *ibid.*, 3.5.15, 1114a; Loeb 19:148f; Aristotle, *De anima* 1.4, 408b; Loeb 8:48f; Plutarch, *Mor., De superstitione* 164e; Loeb 2:454f; Philo, *Ebr.* 38.156-157; Loeb 3:398, 400; Yonge, 220; Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 9.4.3.57; Loeb 6:30, 32; Whiston, 249. In dream association the same parallel is made: "For diseases of the body and defects in any of its parts resemble the licentiousness and irrational passions of the soul... I know of a man who was crippled in his right foot. He dreamt that his slave was crippled in the same foot and limped in the same fashion. And, indeed, he caught his slave with his own mistress, with whom he himself was in love. And it was this that the dream was telling him: his slave would share the same vice as himself" – τὸν αὐτὸν πόδα πηρὸν καὶ ὁμοίως σκάζειν - Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 3.51; Pack, 226; White, 171; cf., *ibid.*, 1.26; Pack, 32-35; White, 28-30.

⁴⁵⁴ Slave market context for buying and selling philosophies: Lucian, *Vitiarum auctio* 18, 21; Loeb 2:484f, 490f; cf., Lucian, *Nigrinus* 4; Loeb 1:104f. Oedipus' taunt to Teiresias:

τυφλὸς τά τ' ὄντα τὸν τε νοῦν

τά τ' ὄμματ' εἶ – Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 371; Jebb, 60f; cf., *Greek Anthology* 11.273; Loeb 4:198.

Origen alludes to the temple incubation of people with impairments in the Asclepius tradition: the "lame and mutilated in soul [are] those who run to the temples as to places having a real sacredness, and who cannot see that no mere mechanical work of man can be truly sacred" – Origen, *C. Celsum* 7.52; *SC* 150:137f; *ANF* 4:632.

⁴⁵⁵ "Ignorance causes to the soul a mutilation more grievous than the mutilation of the body": Philo, *Ebr.* 39.160; Loeb 3:400, 402; Yonge, 221; cf., Philo, *Dec.* 14.67-69; Loeb 7:40; Yonge, 524; Philo, *Det. Pot. Ins.* 46.167; Loeb 2:312, 314; Yonge, 130; Philo, *Omn. Prob. Lib.* 8.55; Loeb 9:40, 42; Yonge, 687; Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 25.143; Loeb 8:400, 402; Yonge, 678; Philo, *Conf. Ling.* 6.20; Loeb 4:20; Yonge, 236; Philo, *Prov. Fr.* 2.20; Loeb 9:472; Yonge, 750. Cf., Plutarch, *Mor., De superstitione* 167a-b; Loeb 2:466f.

⁴⁵⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate* 14.14; *CCL* 50A:447; *NPNF i* 3:193.

Particular characters from Scripture were used to demonstrate the point that the abilities of a soul without impairment far outweighs the inabilities of a bodily impairment:

“Tobit was blind, but he used to teach his son the way of God... The son gave his arm to his father, that he might walk: but the father taught the son the way that he might live.”⁴⁵⁷

John Chrysostom especially uses the parallel: “As the soul is greater than the body,” so being “lame and halt in soul is a much more grievous thing than the mutilation of the body.” This is clear, Chrysostom says, from the comparison of how onlookers react when they see a body “distorted and maimed,” and a soul “mutilated” by wealth. In a related image, sin as a paralysis of the soul was said to be “somewhat else more grievous” than bodily paralysis: for it is both the inactivity of good works, and the activity of evil works.⁴⁵⁸ A specific example is envy – which was said to paralyse the virtuous labours of a brother, and be worse than murder. In a similar vein, bodily blindness is preferable to abusing the eyes “in the spectacles of wantonness... and the pleasurable destruction of the unchaste.” In a direct comparison between bodily

⁴⁵⁷ Tobit and his son: Augustine, *Enarationes in Psalmos* 96.18; *CCL* 39:1369f; Tweed *et al.*, 4:432-434. Cf., Jacob – blind in body, but sighted in heart: Augustine, *Confess.* 10.34.52; *CCL* 27:183; *NPNF i* 1:157.

Isaac’s impairment of body but not soul is used to demonstrate the two natures of Christ – Theodoret, *Eranistes, Dialogue* 3.233; Ettlinger, 198; *NPNF ii* 3:220f.

⁴⁵⁸ Soul impairment more grievous than body impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:83-84; *NPNF i* 14:41f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 69.2; *PG* 58:651; *NPNF i* 10:422f; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 6-7; *PG* 51:58-61; *NPNF i* 9:217-219; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 20.3-4; *PG* 57:290-292; *NPNF i* 10:143f; *ibid.*, 27.7; *PG* 57:349; *NPNF i* 10:188f; *ibid.*, 67.4; *PG* 58:638; *NPNF i* 9:412f; *ibid.*, 85.3; *PG* 58:761; *NPNF i* 9:509; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.2; *PG* 59:213; *NPNF i* 14:132; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 25.7; *PG* 63:138; *NPNF i* 14:480; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 7.18-19; *SC* 50:237-238; *ACW* 31:111f; *ibid.*, 8.6, 11, 20; *SC* 50:251, 253-254, 258; *ACW* 31:121, 124, 128.

Onlookers’ reaction to mutilated soul: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Cor.* 29.8; *PG* 61:248; *NPNF i* 12:173f.

blindness and blindness of the soul (sin), the result is clear-cut: “sin alone is an evil, but blindness is not an evil” – ἄμαρτία μόνη κακόν, πῆρωσις δὲ οὐ κακόν.⁴⁵⁹

The theme of impairment as no hindrance combined with the notion discussed above of impairment as inability with the effect of paradox. This impairment paradox was used in many ways: an example is the effect of demonstrating wit. The rising dust of distant horsemen, for instance, was referred to as “a speechless, yet clear and truthful messenger” – ἀναυδος σαφῆς ἔτυμος ἄγγελος. In a gallery of statues, people known as great speakers – orators, philosophers, prophets and playwrights – were described as now “in mute bronze.”⁴⁶⁰ In other contexts, this impairment paradox was used to produce emphasis. Animals were proverbially mute, so when “a cow spoke” a prodigy was recorded. Something deemed to be impossible that happens was illustrated with the phrase, “The lame takes the prey.” This form of the impairment paradox occurring in a dream illustrates unquestionable truth: “Mute animals also speak the truth in every case because they are unversed in the artifices of speech.” Certain truth was illustrated in a

Soul paralysis as both inactivity and activity: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 67.4; *PG* 58:638; *NPNF i* 10:412f.

⁴⁵⁹ Envy – worse than murder: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.3; *PG* 59:210-211; *NPNF i* 14:130.

Bodily blindness preferable to wantonness: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 73.3; *PG* 58:675; *NPNF i* 10:443: “It were better for such people to be blind to be blind...than to abuse their eyes”.

Sin is an evil; blindness is not an evil: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.1; *PG* 59:306-307; *NPNF i* 14:200f.

Similarly, a worse punishment is said to befall the Jews because they had physical sight but were not seeing in their souls - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.1; *PG* 59:306-307; *NPNF i* 14:200f; *ibid.*, 58.3; *PG* 59:318-319; *NPNF i* 14:209f; *ibid.*, 59.1; *PG* 59:323; *NPNF i* 14:212f; *cf.*, John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:71; *NPNF i* 11:51.

⁴⁶⁰ Horsemen’s dust: Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebas* 82; Loeb 1:328f; *cf.*, of a beacon: “The voiceless messenger shineth from the far-seen watching-place and rouseth lamentable War” – ἄγγελος ἄφθονος - Theognis, 549f; Loeb 1:294f; birds as having tongueless mouths: *Greek Anthology* 7.191, 193; Loeb 2:108f; *cf.*, above the stones of a building: “speechless witnesses” – ἀφώνους μάρτυρας - Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1074, 1076; Loeb 4:246f; also, a hall ideal for making speeches in that is not used: “mute and voiceless” – κωφὸν...ἄλογον - Lucian, *De domo* 1; Loeb 1:176. In statues, famous speakers are represented - ἐνὶ χαλκῷ ἀφθόγγω: *Greek Anthology* 2.1-345; Loeb; 1:58-85. *Cf.*, “The one-eyed is

similar way elsewhere: “Plain even to a blind person, as they say.”⁴⁶¹ This impairment paradox was used also in the mocking of an enemy, as we saw above with the Jebusites placing people with impairments on their city wall and Hephaistus trapping Ares. In a similar way, the criticism that the apostles lacked education was turned against the critics. John, for instance was a fisherman – “How can he help imitating the very muteness of the fishes?” Yet, with Peter, he has rendered Plato and the great philosophers “more mute than fishes.”⁴⁶²

The impairment paradox was also used to express experience of God. “Yea, the mute fishes know how to proclaim the praise of their Lord.” Creation’s beauty is mute, “though, verily, it speaks unto all”: “The beauty of the earth is a kind of voice of the mute earth.” Stone is proverbially mute, but God is able to make a stone speak: “The stone, by the command of God, took on the likeness of Jeremiah. And they were stoning the stone, thinking it was Jeremiah... Then the stone cried out.” Another

regarded among the blind as keen-sighted”: *LOTJ* 5:178. Compare other proverbial examples: Schrage, 276.

⁴⁶¹ Animals as mute: Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* 2.17, 660b; Loeb 12:202-5; 2 *Enoch* (J & A), 58.3; *OTPs* 1:184f; *LOTJ* 2:204, 5:101. Quoted as a prodigy: “a cow spoke” – “Bos locuta” – Livy in Julius Obsequens, 15, 26, 27, 53; Loeb 14:248f, 258f, 288f. Cf., the Pythian oracle on Croesus’ mute son: “Better it were for thee that mute he abide as aforesaid; luckless that day shall be when first thou hearest him speaking”; fulfilled when Persian attempts to kill Croesus – Herodotus, 1.85; Loeb 1:106-109. “The lame takes the prey” – Talmud, *Bechoroth* 39a. Mute animals speaking in dreams denotes the truth: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.69; Pack, 196; White, 134. Unquestionable truth: “Plain even to a blind man, as they say” – Plato, *Sophista* 241d; Loeb 7:354f; cf., “He means that even the blind can see ‘tis better for our present life to be a rascal, rotten to the core” – Aristophanes, *Plutus* 48-50; Loeb 3:366-369; Rogers, 8f.

⁴⁶² David and the Jebusites – placing people with impairments on the walls “This they did out of contempt of his power, and as depending on the strength of their walls. David was hereby enraged.” – Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 7.3.1.61-62; Loeb 5:390; Whiston, 185. Cf., above, on Hephaistus trapping Ares: Homer, *Odyssey* 8.329-332; Loeb 1:280-283. According to Tertullian, David’s rage was caused not by their impairment, but by their “audacity” – Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 4.36; *CSEL* 47:545-547; *ANF* 3:411; cf., the gods angered not by impairment, but by impiety: Josephus, *C. Apionem* 1.28.256; Loeb 1:266; Whiston, 789.

Apostle John, mute as uneducated, but rendering great philosophers mute – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 2.1; *PG* 59:30; *NPNF i* 14:5; John Chrysostom, *In Acta Apost.* 4; *PG* 60:47; *NPNF i* 11:29; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Ephes.* 3; *PG* 62:25; *NPNF i* 13:61.

familiar image was applied to describe God's generosity: so abundant was God's giving of quails in the wilderness that people didn't even have to stoop to gather them up, and "even the halt that could not go far...gathered [them]."⁴⁶³ In the New Testament, this impairment paradox was used several times. Jesus draws on the proverbial muteness of stone in his reply to the religious leaders who complain at how he is greeted by his supporters on entering Jerusalem: "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" [Luke 19:40; cf., Habakkuk 2:11]. The impairment paradox is used to emphasise the divinity of Christ: "Those who are blind see, those who are lame walk, and those who are deaf hear" [Matthew 11:4-5]. In his epistles, Paul uses the paradox to interpret and express his experience of the paradoxical activity of God, put to him in a vision: "My power is made complete in inability" [2 Corinthians 12:9f]. Paul applies this paradox to the incarnation and crucifixion, Paul's own disabilities, and the holding together of the Church [Philippians 2:6-8, 2 Corinthians 13:4; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, 2 Corinthians 12:9f; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31].⁴⁶⁴

A further impairment ability theme was the extra ability that comes from impairment. An example is the notion that people who are blind have fewer distractions. Cicero writes of Democritus, the philosopher who famously blinded himself:

⁴⁶³ Mute fishes praising God: *LOTJ* 1:46. Mute creation speaks of God: Augustine, *Confess.* 8.7.40-42; *CCL* 27:125; *NPNF i* 1:124; cf., Psalm 19:1-4; Zechariah 2:13. In a similar way, a dog speaks out against Simon the magician describing Simon's voice against Peter's as "feeble and useless": *Acts of Peter* 5.12; *NTA* 2:298.

Earth's beauty is its voice: "vox quaedam est mutae terrae, species terrae" - Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144.13; *CCL* 40:2098; Tweed *et al.*, 6:327f; cf., "The mute and lifeless water produced living creatures, as it was commanded, that thereafter the nations might declare thy wondrous works" - *4 Ezra* 6.48; *OTPs* 1:536. God can make a stone Jeremiah speak: *4 Baruch* 9.28-30; *OTPs* 2:425. God's commandment as a voice that can be seen: Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.39.213; Loeb 6:554; Yonge, 510. God's generosity in the wilderness: *LOTJ* 3:255.

⁴⁶⁴ For a more detailed discussion of New Testament use of the inability paradox: Horne, "Those who are blind see," 88-101.

This man believed that the sight of the eyes was an obstacle to the piercing vision of the soul and, while others often failed to see what lay at their feet, he ranged freely into the infinite without finding any boundary that brought him to a halt.⁴⁶⁵

Similarly, Aristotle writes: “The blind remember better, being released from having their faculty of memory engaged with objects of sight.”⁴⁶⁶ Again, the same association was made in dream interpretation: for poets to dream that they are blind

is most auspicious... For they must have absolute calm when they are about to write their poetry. Most certainly they would be relaxed in this way, if the loss of their eyesight prevented them from being distracted by either figures or colours.⁴⁶⁷

Isaac was unique for a similar reason: God spoke of Himself as the God of Isaac but at all other times, “God never unites His name with that of a living person, for the reason that so long as anyone has not ended their years, no trust may be put in them, lest they be seduced by the evil inclination.” God made the single exception for Isaac, having full confidence in him: being blind, Isaac lived a retired life within his tent, and so the evil inclination had no power over him any more.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Cicero on Democritus: “ille in infinitatem omnem peregrinabatur” - Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.39.114; Loeb 18:538f. There is some irony that Cicero’s word translated “range freely” – “peregrinabatur” – is used of the characteristic movement of blind people, elsewhere translated as “wander about”; cf., text above at pages 194-195 and footnote 348. Other writers on Democritus blinding himself for the sake of less distraction to his thought: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De curiositate* 521c-d; Loeb 6:506f. “in order that his eyes might not repeatedly summon his intellect outside and disturb it, but might allow his mind to remain inside at home and occupy itself with pure thinking, blocking up as it were windows which open on the street”; Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 46.54, 57; *CCL* 1:162; *ANF* 3:51. Others blinding selves for the same reason: rabbi blinded himself to avoid temptation: *EJ* 4:1090f.

⁴⁶⁶ The blind having greater ability to remember: Aristotle, *Ethica Eudemia* 2.23, 1248b; Loeb 20:468f; cf., Didymus who “displayed such a miracle of intelligence as to learn perfectly...even sciences which especially require sight” – Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 109, 120, 126, 135; *PL* 23:706, 712, 714, 718; *NPNF ii* 3:381-384.

⁴⁶⁷ Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.26; Pack, 32-35; White, 28-30. Cf., Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De defectu oraculorum* 431f-432a; Loeb 5:464-467.

⁴⁶⁸ God has full confidence, uniquely, in the blind Isaac: *LOTJ* 1:376; cf., Isaac remaining at home because of his blindness: *LOTJ* 1:415.

In other respects people with impairments were seen to have greater abilities. In ancient Egypt, blind people were particularly associated with music, to the extent that in funerary art a known sighted person was portrayed as blind when playing music. Also, blind people were given particular positions of trust, “appreciated as less likely to seduce women, [and] trusted as impartial in the crucial function of land measurement.” A blind person was able to interpret a hitherto obscure aspect of Jewish law by drawing on their experience. In several respects, Agesilaus’ experience of impairment was identified as contributing to the success of his kingship in Sparta: he had spent more time with his subjects, and so later was “more in harmony” with them, his disposition of “ease and gaiety” was revealed in the way he made jokes about his impairment, and “his lameness brought his ambition into clearer light, since it led him to decline no hardship and no enterprise whatever.”⁴⁶⁹ However, the greater ability from the experience of impairment did not always have such positive results. Pliny refers to a blind informer

whose loss of sight had increased his cruel disposition, so that he knew neither fear, shame nor pity, and consequently was often used by Domitian to aim at honest men like a weapon which flies blindly and unthinkingly [“caeca et improvida”] to its mark.⁴⁷⁰

At times, this extra ability was understood as compensatory for the lost ability. This too was an established impairment theme. Philo refers to someone with an impairment in one faculty as having “great and abundant vigour in the others.” Similarly, Samson prays in terms of compensation before bringing the house down on the masses

⁴⁶⁹ Aristotle on the limited extra abilities dwarfs: Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* 4.10, 686b; Loeb 12:368f. Associations of those who were blind in Egyptian culture: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 102f; Dasen does point out that in some cases, “This attribution may also be satirical.” Blind person interprets a puzzle in the law from his experience – Levin, 127. The positive effects on Agesilaus’ kingship resulting from his experience of lameness: Plutarch, *Vit., Agesilaus* 1-2; Loeb 5:2-5.

⁴⁷⁰ Pliny (the Younger), *Epist.* 4.22.5; Loeb 1:302-305 – the informer was Catullus Messalinus.

Philistines at Gaza: “Vouchsafe unto me in this life a recompense for the loss of one of my eyes. For the loss of the other I will wait to be rewarded in the life to come.”⁴⁷¹

This compensatory ability theme was particularly clear with “the blind seers.” Having just blinded Teiresias, Athena says to his mother, “I will make him a seer to be famously sung hereafter, yea, more excellent than any other...and I will give him a long term of life.” As the Teiresias and Oedipus myths show, this was a theme much used by poets and playwrights; it occurred in historical writings too. Herodotus tells the story of Evenius, blinded inappropriately and then cheated: “from that day he had a natural gift of divination.” There are also occasional references to particular historical characters as “the seer who had been blind from birth.”⁴⁷² In a similar way, the blindness of Jacob in his old age was understood as leading to greater insight in relation to God and a greater ability to be God’s prophet:

After he becomes old [and blind]...then at last the soul...begins to see God obscurely...For the one who is seized (by this vision) and is prepared for prophesying, no longer uses their own judgement but that of God, echoing the things spoken by Him. And the prophet becomes an instrument, while God (is) the artist.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Compensatory ability: Philo, *Cher.* 2.18.58; Loeb 2:42, 44; Yonge, 86. Samson’s prayer: *LOTJ* 4:49. Cf., Compensatory abilities at night: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Quaestiones convivales* 8.3, 720e; Loeb 9:132f. In Aesop’s fable, a blind person has a compensatory skill in identifying animals by touch: Aesop, 37; Hausrath and Hunger, 53f; Vernon Jones, 36. This compensatory theme is rejected by Hull: *On Sight and Insight*, 117, 205f.

⁴⁷² Athena’s words to Teiresias’ mother: Callimachus, *Hymn to Athena* 121-128; Loeb, 120f. Teiresias: τὸν τερασκόπον – Euripides, *Bacchae* 248; Loeb 3:22f; cf., Hyginus, *Fabulae* 75; P. K. Marshall, 74; M. Grant, 73; cf., Creon and Teiresias: “ ‘In the past I have not been used to depart from your counsel.’ ‘That is why you steered the ship of this city straight.’ ‘I can testify from experience that it was profitable.’ ” – Sophocles, *Antigone* 993-995; Loeb 2:94f. Cf., Oedipus on Teiresias, as the penny drops: βλέπων ὁ μάντις – Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 747; Jebb, 102f. Cf., Lucian, *Dialogi mortuorum* 9 (28), 445; Loeb 7:44-49. Cf., Oedipus: “All the words I utter shall have sight!” – Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 74; Loeb 2:422f. Cf., Phineus: Apollonius Rhodius, 2.438-447; Loeb, 132f. Historical characters: Diopethes – Aristophanes, *Equites* 1085; Loeb 1:230f; Evenius – blinded (an extreme punishment) and cheated: “from that day he had a natural gift of divination, so that he won fame thereby” – Herodotus, 9.94; Loeb 4:270f; Ophioneus – “The seer who had been blind from birth” – Pausanias, 4.12.10; Loeb 2:240f; Phormio: a blind man who had a prophetic dream about the women of Erythrae – Pausanias, 7.5.7; Loeb 3:194f.

⁴⁷³ Jacob’s blindness in old age leads to greater prophetic insight: Philo, *Quaest. in Gen.* 4.196; Loeb Supplement 1:485-486; cf., Philo, *Quaest. in Exod.*, 2.51; Loeb Supplement 2:98; *LOTJ* 2:80. In general – special spiritual capabilities of people with impairments: Levin, 123. Blind rabbis with insight, and

Blind seers are also a biblical theme, as we see with Eli, Ahijah, and even in the soldiers' mockery of Jesus blindfolded: "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" [1 Samuel 3:2, 4:15; 1 Kings 4:4-18; Luke 22:63-65].

The compensatory ability theme occurred too with historical characters. An example from Early Church writings is Didymus the blind scholar at Alexandria: "God compensated to him the loss of corporeal vision, by bestowing increased intellectual acumen." On many occasions, he was referred to as "Didymus the Seeing." However, Didymus was remarkable to the ancients for his ability, not for his impairment. In his biblical interpretation, he was said to have "such regard for doctrine, expounding his explanation so skilfully and firmly, that he surpassed the ancients in knowledge."

Similarly, when Antony told him not to be distressed by the loss of his bodily eyes, he said, "Rather rejoice that you have eyes such as angels see with, by which the Deity Himself is discerned and His light comprehended." Jerome especially acknowledged a debt to him, several times referring to him as "my Didymus": "I have much to thank him for: for what I did not know, I learned from him, and what I knew already I did not forget, so excellent was his teaching."⁴⁷⁴

efficacious blessings: Talmud, *Yoma* 53b, *Chagigah* 5b; cf., Preuss, 274. Cf., the theme in general: voiceless cauldrons used as oracles, when agitated by the wind – *Greek Anthology* 14.10; Loeb 5:32f; the reliability of older people: in dreams, the words of "those who are very old. Their information is trustworthy because of their old age." – Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.69; Pack, 196; White, 134. Compare also, the blind Tobit sees (without realising) what his sighted wife cannot see: "Your eyes will see him on the day when he returns to you in good health. Say no more! Do not fear for them, my sister. For a good angel will accompany him; his journey will be successful, and he will come back in good health" – Tobit, 5:21f; cf., 5:17. Such irony is characteristic of the book Tobit: see MacCracken, *passim*.⁴⁷⁴ God's compensation to Didymus: Socrates, *HE* 4.25-26; *GCS* nf 1:259f; *NPNF ii* 2:110. Didymus the Seeing: for example, Jerome, *Epist.* 112.4; *CSEL* 55:371; Rufinus, *Apologia* 1.45; *CCL* 20:81 – "Didymus videns propheta"; *NPNF ii* 3:458; also Jerome's words quoted in Rufinus, *Apologia* 2.27; *CCL* 20:103; *NPNF ii* 3:470. Didymus remarkable for his ability: Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 4.1-4; Bartelink, 26, 28; *ACW* 34:35f; cf., Sozomenos, *HE* 3.15; *GCS* 50:125f; *NPNF ii* 2:294f; Jerome, *De*

With people of restricted growth, the extra ability theme was seen in a particular way. A recent study of people of restricted growth in ancient Egypt has shown that they carried a close association with gods of restricted growth and “with solar and rejuvenating powers.” As the occurrence of small stature “was not feared as a prejudicial event, pregnant women omitted to ask for protection against it, and, on the contrary, invoked Bes and other small gods as protectors during delivery.” In several royal texts, kings compare themselves to dancing pygmies, interpreted as showing “the awe and esteem with which the Egyptians viewed them.” In daily life the status of people of restricted growth was seen in the fact that they were

regarded as persons in the full legal sense, who could marry and inherit civil and religious functions...dwarfism [was considered] neither as a disease to be cured, nor as the result of a religious transgression to be countered.⁴⁷⁵

viris illustribus 109, 120, 126, 135; *PL* 23:706, 712, 714, 718; *NPNF ii* 3:381-384; Jerome, *Epist.* 50.1, 2; *CSEL* 54:389; *NPNF ii* 6:80, 81. Antony on Didymus’ ability to see: Socrates, *HE* 4.25-26; *GCS* nf 1:259f; *NPNF ii* 2:110; cf., Sozomenos, *HE* 3.15; *GCS* 50:125f; *NPNF ii* 2:294f; Jerome, *Epist.* 68.2; *CSEL* 54:677; *NPNF ii* 6:140f. Jerome’s debt to Didymus: Jerome, *Epist.* 84.3; *CSEL* 55:123; *NPNF ii* 6:176. Jerome – “my Didymus”: for example, Jerome, *Epist.* 112.4; *CSEL* 55:371; - also quoted in Rufinus, *Apologia* 2.27; *CCL* 20:103; *NPNF ii* 3:470. Didymus’ experience of blindness was not one of unadulterated happiness: he admitted to Antony that his blindness was a great grief to him: Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:677; *NPNF ii* 6:140f.

⁴⁷⁵ “Essentially positive” image in ancient Egypt: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 156-159. Kings comparing themselves to pygmies: a king says of himself: “that pygmy of the dances of god” – *AEL* 1:48 – *ad loc.* footnote 1: “That the king compares himself to a dancing pygmy shows the awe and esteem with which the Egyptians viewed them”; cf., *ibid.*, 1:26f, 3:204, 216 (*ad loc.* footnote 76). Dasen helpfully compares the status of people of restricted growth across ancient Egyptian and Graeco-Roman cultures: *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, *passim*.

Compare Vernant’s anthropological interpretation of lameness and tyranny in Greek myth and history – Battus, Labda, Oedipus: “the equivocal character of lameness, its ambivalence. Compared to a normal walk, it ordinarily constitutes a defect; the lame person lacks something...But this exception to the rule can also confer on the lame the privilege of an uncommon status, of an exceptional qualification; no longer a defect, but a sign of promise of a singular destiny, the assymetry of the two legs then presents itself in another way, positive rather than negative”: Vernant, 21; “The tyrant, at once equal to god and equal to a ferocious beast, incarnates in his ambivalence the mythic figure of the lame man”: Vernant, 34. A particular example to support Vernant’s theory might be found in the nations “of marvellous swiftness”: people “whose feet turn backwards and do not point forward” and others with a single leg – Aulus Gellius, 9.4.6, 9; Loeb 2:164-167.

Occasionally, people with impairments were shown to get away with doing or saying something that others could not – an aspect to the extra ability or compensatory themes.

Tiberius was suddenly asked by a performer with an impairment,

why Paconius, who was charged with treason, remained so long alive; the emperor at the time chided him for his saucy tongue, but a few days later wrote to the senate to decide as soon as possible about the execution of Paconius.⁴⁷⁶

In a similar way, a blind rabbi was said to have demanded that “threatening angels” let him pass, saying that “the unafflicted give way to the afflicted”; when called on to decide the issue, God supported the rabbi. The Early Church used the theme with Bishop Maris, an elderly bishop who had become blind. During a persecution, the bishop was led into the presence of the emperor Julian, and he firecely rebuked him. The emperor, we are told, “had nothing in return to reproach him with except his blindness... ‘The Galilean will not cure thee!’” Maris replied: “I thank God for bereaving me of my sight, that I might not behold the face of one who has fallen into such awful impiety!” Not only did Maris survive the encounter, he rendered Julian speechless – a reaction interpreted as an “unexpected exhibition of patience and mildness” on the part of Julian.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 3.61.6; Loeb 1:380f.

⁴⁷⁷ Blind rabbi encounters, and betters, threatening angels: Talmud, *Megilah* 29a. Bishop Maris: Socrates, *HE* 3.12.6, 10; *GCS* nf 1:206f; *NPNF ii* 2:85]; Sozomenos, *HE* 5.4; *GCS* 50:198; *NPNF ii* 2:329 – there appears to be here a play on the word ἐπιλωκώπτων – similar to Didymus the blind seer.

On occasions, however, something beneficial occurs because of impairment, but the benefit is seen as a fortunate consequence following from impairment, and not as an extra ability deriving from impairment itself. Isaac’s fortunate blindness, which “proved a benefit for Isaac as well as for Jacob. In consequence of his physical ailments, Isaac had to keep at home, and so he was spared the pain of being pointed out by the people as the father of the wicked Esau. And, again, if his power of vision had been unimpaired, he would not have blessed Jacob.” – *LOTJ* 1:415. Cf., Hushim forces the issue re the burial of Jacob: “for he was deaf and had not understood the words that passed between the disputants” – *LOTJ* 2:154. Cf., the rabbi for whom “it proved fortunate for him that his cow was maimed”; as the tale turned out, he was

A further example in this cluster of impairment ability themes is the notion of complementary ability – a person with one impairment assists someone else with a different impairment. The most common example is the proverbial partnership of the lame person and the blind person.

One man was maimed in his legs, while another had lost his eyesight, but each contributed to the other that of which mischance had deprived him. For the blind man, taking the lame man on his shoulders, kept a straight course by listening to the other's orders. It was a bitter, all-daring necessity which taught them all this, instructing them how, by dividing their imperfections between them, to make a perfect whole.⁴⁷⁸

In both Jewish and Christian texts, this partnership of people with impairments was used to illustrate something applicable to all people: the reuniting of body and soul at the resurrection. A lame person and a blind person work together to steal delicacies from the king's garden, and when called to account, they use their impairment to suggest their innocence: "Who, me lord? You see our inability, you know that I cannot see where I walk." In the Christian version, they finally confess, and implicate each other: " 'Did you not carry me and lead me away?' ... 'Did you yourself not become my eyes?' The story is told with humour: together, those with impairments better the powerful able-bodied people – as Hephaistus does on Olympus.⁴⁷⁹

told: 'As the smell of your mouth became unpleasant for the sake of the Torah, so will the fragrance of your learning be diffused from one end of the world to the other.' – *Genesis R.* 42.1.

⁴⁷⁸ Lame person and blind person "dividing their imperfections together": *Greek Anthology* 9.11; Loeb 3:6f; cf., *ibid.*, 9.12; Loeb 3:8f – "Thus the two incomplete beings fitted into each other to form one complete being, each supplying what the other lacked"; cf., *ibid.*, 9:13, 13b; Loeb 3:8f.

⁴⁷⁹ The lame person and the blind person in the garden: *The Apocryphon of Ezekiel* Fr. 1 – Epiphanius, *Adv. haereses* 64.70, 5-17 and Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 91a, b – both quoted in *OTPs* 1:492-494. Cf., the lame and the blind together in early Jewish interpretation of the incident between David and the Jebusites – 2 Samuel 5:6-8 – referring to two monuments on the city walls, "The lame" being Jacob and "the blind" being Isaac: *LOTJ* 6:254f. The blind person and the lame person together was a feature of ancient stories: Wallach, 333-339.

In myth too, those with impairments are set together in partnership. Hephaistus works closely with the one-eyed Cyclopes: together they forge the great metal devices so desirable to the gods. Hephaistus also has a close companionship with the one-eyed Helios – the sun god – and the blinded Orion. It is Helios who reveals to Hephaistus the adultery of Aphrodite and Ares, and when Orion needs assistance to get around, it is Hephaistus who “took pity on him and gave him Cedalion his own servant to guide him. So Orion took Cedalion upon his shoulders and used to carry him about while he pointed out the roads.” Even the story of Hephaistus’ famous victory over Ares is told by the blind singer Demodocus. Interestingly, in the context of telling this story, Demodocus’ epithet is the same as the one in the story for Hephaistus himself: περικλυτός. The only characters in the *Odyssey* that have this epithet are these two figures with impairments. This is no coincidence: the complementary partnership of people with impairments was an established theme.⁴⁸⁰

We perhaps see the theme historically from an incident in the life of Alexander the Great. Alexander discovered a group of eight hundred Greek soldiers, ex-prisoners who

⁴⁸⁰ Mutilated ex-prisoners stay together: Diodorus Siculus, 17.69.6; Loeb 8:316f; cf., Curtius Rufus, 5.5-24; Loeb 1:370-379.

Hephaistus and the Cyclopes work together: Callimachus, *Hymn to Artemis* 46-79; Loeb, 64-67; cf., Hyginus, *Poetica Astronomica* 2.15; Vire, 49, 51; M. Grant, 202; *ibid.*, 2.39; Vire, 86; M. Grant, 225. Hephaistus and Helios associated together: Homer, *Odyssey* 8.270f; Loeb 1:284f. Compare the loss of his daughter to Oedipus: “You villain, who have snatched from me by violence the beloved eye I had, gone like the eyes I had already lost! Therefore may the all-seeing Sun grant that your old age is like mine!” Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 866-870; Loeb 2:512f. Helios the sun-god traditionally one-eyed: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.853; Loeb 4:288f – “soli tamen unicus orbis”. Cf., traditions in Egyptian myth of the Sun as an impaired eye: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De Iside et Osiride* 373b-e; Loeb 5:132-135; also, a similar association in dream interpretation: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.36; Pack, 162; White, 115. Hephaistus and Cedalion together: Hesiod, *Fr. Astronomy* 4; Loeb, 70f – with the twist that the blinded Orion is healed by the one-eyed sun! Cf., Lucian, *De domo* 28-29; Loeb 1:202f; cf., Hyginus, *Poetica Astronomica* 2.34; Vire, 81; M. Grant, 221.

Demodocus with the same epithet as Hephaistus, in the context of telling the story of Hephaistus: Homer, *Odyssey* 8.367; Loeb 1:284f. The epithet is used 9/12 times of these two characters; it is used of no other

had been mutilated by their captors, and offered them the chance to return home. They turned down his offer, choosing rather to stay together so that, “as companions in fortune, they would find an encouragement for their mutilation in the similar mutilation of the others.” The word used here - παραμύθιον - has the meaning of the encouragement experienced from being with others who are having the same experience. The word was used in a similar way by Early Church writers. They applied the word many times to people with impairments who drew encouragement from hearing about, or hearing the words of, others with impairments in scripture, or seeing people with impairments in the churches they went to. Such a visitor to a church where people with impairments in scripture are referred to, or people with impairments in the congregation are seen, “will receive ample encouragement” – λήψεται παραμυθίαν ἰκανήν. The encouragement is to see that they share with biblical characters a common nature – τὴν κοινωνίαν...τῆς φύσεως – so what is true for the biblical characters is true for them too.⁴⁸¹

3.2 Usefulness

person - the remaining three references are to towns, and in the *Iliad*, half its occurrences are of Hephaistus.

⁴⁸¹ Mutilated ex-prisoners, who decide to remain together for mutual encouragement: - Diodorus Siculus, 17.69.2-5 Loeb 8:314-317: παραμύθιον ἔξειν τῆς ἰδίας ἀκληρίας τὴν τῶν ἄλλων τῆς ἀκληρίας ὁμοιοτήτα; cf., Curtius Rufus, 5.5.5-24; Loeb 1:370-379.

A person with an impairment deriving encouragement from biblical characters with impairments, and from people with impairments present in the church – John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 8; *PG* 51:61; *NPNF i* 9:219: λήψεται παραμυθίαν ἰκανήν; cf., John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.14; *PG* 49:24; *NPNF i* 9:336; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:465; *NPNF i* 13:373; cf., Augustine on Paul: “For in like manner also was he made weak...in order that we might not fear to be made weak” – Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 57.16; *CCL* 39:722; Tweed *et al.* 3:117.

Cf., παραμυθία in NT texts: mutual consolation and encouragement from shared experience – John 11:19, 31; cf., 1 Thess 2:11, 5:14; 1 Cor 14:3; Phil 2:1.

The recognition of “a common nature” with scriptural characters: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.1; *PG* 49:28; *NPNF i* 9:340: τῆς τῶν παθῶν κοινωνίας...τὴν κοινωνίαν...τῆς φύσεως.

John Chrysostom writes of people with impairments, “Though lacking in strength, they have an advantage in usefulness.” In this section, we look at how people with impairments were seen not simply as having abilities, but as having usefulness, to the “great benefit” of their communities.⁴⁸²

Firstly, people with impairments were useful to their communities in a demonstrating role. We have seen already Graeco-Roman and early Jewish texts using particular people with impairments to demonstrate recommended ways of living, including magnanimity, true wisdom, good-humour and wit.⁴⁸³ The Early Church used particular people in the same way.⁴⁸⁴ An example is Tobit,

who after the sublime works of his justice and mercy, was tried with the loss of his eyes, in proportion as he patiently endured his blindness, in that proportion deserved greatly of God by the praise of his patience.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² “An advantage in usefulness” (in the context of discussing Paul’s inability paradox of 1 Corinthians 12:22-5) - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.2; *PG* 61:259; *NPNF i* 12:182: ἐλαττούμενοι τῇ δυνάμει πλεονεκτοῦσι τῇ χρείᾳ. People with impairments as “a great benefit” – πολλὴν...τὴν ὠφέλιαν: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:466; *NPNF i* 13:373.

⁴⁸³ Graeco-Roman texts using the experience of people with impairments to demonstrate and teach: Plutarch’s interpretation of Homer’s use of Theristes as teaching “magnanimity, that when we ourselves have met with chances and changes we be not humiliated or even disturbed, but bear [it] gently” - Plutarch, *Mor., Quomodo adul.* 35d; Loeb 1:186f – εἰς μεγαλοφροσύνην...φέρειν δὲ πράως. Cf., Wise person with an impairment: not *miser* but *beatissimus* – Cicero, *De finibus* 5.28.84-86; Loeb 17:486-489. Cf., Agamestor the philosopher, who had a leg impairment, who bettered his able-bodied drinking companions by using his impairment in a way they could not copy: “Thus Agamestor showed himself an urbane gentleman; and, following his example, one should make his ripostes good-natured and merry” – Plutarch, *Mor., Quaestiones convivales* 1.4, 621e-622a; Loeb 8:58-61. Cf., Philo on “things in human life which are confessed to be very difficult to endure” including mutilation: “Those who are full of high thoughts and noble spirits, rise up to struggle against these things, and contend against them with fortitude and exceeding vigour” – Philo, *Virt.*, 2.5; Loeb 8:164, 166; Yonge, 640.

See also the tradition that people with physical deformities seen as useful for distracting the Evil Eye: Dasen, “Dwarfism in Egypt and Classical Antiquity,” 275.

⁴⁸⁴ Early Church discussions of the usefulness of people with impairments in the context of Gospel encounters between Jesus and people with impairments (modelling of discipleship qualities and processes) is presented in Chapter 4: see below pages 349-393. Here the focus is on the usefulness of people with impairments outside the context of the healing encounters.

⁴⁸⁵ Tobit a model of patience: Cyprian, *De bono patientia* 18; *CCL* 3A:128f; *ANF* 5:489. Cf., also of Tobit: “having suffered the loss of his sight, fearing and blessing God in his adversity, by his very bodily affliction increased in praise”- “per ipsam corporis sui cladem crevit ad laudem” - Cyprian, *De mortalitate* 10; *CCL* 3A:21f; *ANF* 5:471. However, Tobit the complainer: “What joy is left for me any more?...Although still alive, I am among the dead” – Tobit, 5:10.

Perhaps because the text was being interpreted with this didactic agenda, Tobit's complaint about his miserable situation was omitted from this re-telling of the story! In other texts too, individual people with impairments were highly respected for their holiness of living, and were portrayed as exemplary. Of Abbot Paul, for instance, John Cassian wrote, "Such grace of goodness proceeded from him...a witness of his purity and a manifestation of his merits." In his pastoral letter to Castrutius, who had gone blind, Jerome used both biblical and near contemporary characters to demonstrate his overall point that Castrutius should not regard his blindness "as due to sin." "If you suppose your blindness is caused by sin," wrote Jerome, what an absurdity it would be to attribute impairment as punishment to all those respected and worthy characters.⁴⁸⁶

People with impairments in general were also seen as useful demonstrators. The presence of people with impairments was said to be a great benefit, encouragement, and instruction, for they remind all people that things do not always turn out according to our plans or our desires, and that no-one can take good health for granted. Thus they shatter arrogant illusions – mere "shadow and smoke" – about human invulnerability. At the same time, by causing this realisation, they enable true worship, "for it is not possible that the one who prays with an arrogant mind should be heard." As well as

⁴⁸⁶ Jerome's letter to Castrutius: Jerome, *Epist.* 68; *CSEL* 54:675f; *NPNF ii* 6:140f; cf., a similar letter to Abigaus, a blind deacon: Jerome, *Epist.* 76.2; *CSEL* 55:35-36; *NPNF ii* 6:156f. Particular people with impairments highly respected for their holiness of living: Abbot Paul – John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.26; *CSEL* 13:204f; *NPNF ii* 11:371f; Abbot Chaeremon – John Cassian, *Collationes* 11.4; *CSEL* 13:316; *NPNF ii* 11:416.

stimulating compassion, they also cause admiration “at the loving-kindness of God... You are taught [by them] that God delights not in riches.”⁴⁸⁷

Secondly, people with impairments were useful as “common teachers.” John Chrysostom talks of them as teachers in two respects, about prayer and about the true use of wealth. People with impairments who are begging praise God, and give thanks to God all day long. Like them, all people should praise God and give thanks to God throughout the day. They do not give up asking passers-by to help them; and even when no one assists them, they do not insult those who ignore them. However, when it comes to asking God for help, we give up easily – and at the same time, we blame God for ignoring us, though we ignore our fellow servant.⁴⁸⁸ Chrysostom’s ironic use of people with impairments to demonstrate persistence is discussed further in Chapter 4, in relation to characters from the healing encounters. We can compare the Gospel parables of persistence in prayer, also with irony, of the Friend in the Night and the Judge and the Widow [Luke 11:5-13, 18:1-8].

⁴⁸⁷ These points about the usefulness and instruction from the presence of people with impairments are found in John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:465-466; *NPNF i* 13:373-375. John Chrysostom uses the experience of people with impairments in a similarly fully developed way elsewhere, e.g. *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.13-28; *PG* 49:23-30; *NPNF i* 9:336-342; cf., the list of Gregory the Great’s admonitions to those with infirmity: *Regula pastoralis* 3.12; *SC* 382:322-330; *NPNF ii* 12:34-36.

Cf., The onset of impairment - not offences, but battles: Cyprian, *De mortalitate* 12; *CCL* 3A:23; *ANF* 5:472; profitable as proof of faith: *ibid.*, 14; *CCL* 3A:24; *ANF* 5:472 – “ad documentum proficit fidei”.
⁴⁸⁸ κοινούς διδασκάλους ἡμῖν τῶν συμφορῶν καὶ παραμυθίαν ἀφῆκε διὰ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὁ Θεὸς ... πολλὴν...τὴν ὠφέλειαν...ἵνα σὺ παιδεύῃ διὰ τῆς τούτων θέας - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:465-466; *NPNF i* 13:373. Cf., “One is forsaken for a season with a view to another’s restoration, in order that others when they see his state may be taught a lesson” - ἵνα τὸ κατ’αὐτὸν σκοποῦντες οἱ ἄλλοι παιδεύωνται – John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 43.2.39; *PTS* 12:101; *NPNF ii* 9:42; cf., Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 2.10; *SC* 381:244; *NPNF ii* 12:21; *ibid.*, 3.12; *SC* 382:322-324; *NPNF ii* 12:35f.

People with impairments in need were also useful for teaching the true and proper use of wealth: only when there can be no expectation of thanks or return can almsgiving be done with true goodness and truly for God's sake.⁴⁸⁹ However, traces of a similar theme have been identified above in other ancient writers also.⁴⁹⁰ In early Jewish texts, giving to those in need, including people with impairments, is to be done "as an offering of religion to God." Almsgiving in such circumstances was described as "lending to God. Mercy saves from death when judgement comes."⁴⁹¹ Looking to one's own future in this way is a powerful motive for responding to the physical needs of someone:

Do not profane the image of God by how you treat it [the body]; for the image of humankind was made like the image of God; and God will treat you accordingly at the time when you see Him face to face.⁴⁹²

In this respect, people who receive alms "will be like a shelter at the time of the test."⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁹ An example is John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 32.6; *PG* 63:223; *NPNF i* 14:513.

⁴⁹⁰ Ancient Near Eastern traditions of protecting the vulnerable: "seen as a virtue of gods, kings and judges": Fensham, 129-139; see further examples above at text pages 211f and footnotes 392-393. Cf., for example: Giving to maimed beggars, but not to philosophers: "they think they may one day be lame or blind, but never expect that they will turn to philosophy" – Diogenes Laertius, *Diogenes* 6.56; Loeb 2:56f; Athens with veterans: pensions for impoverished veterans with impairments – Hands, 100, 202; Demosthenes on the spirit of the commonwealth: "compassion for the vulnerable and resistance to intimidation of powerful" – Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates* 171; Loeb 3:480-483.

⁴⁹¹ "If the poor or the cripple beg food of him, he must give it as an offering of religion to God" – Philo, *Hyp.* 7.6; Loeb 9:426; Yonge, 743f. "Whoever gives alms knows that he is lending to God. Mercy saves from death when judgement comes. God wants not sacrifice but mercy instead of sacrifice. Therefore clothe the naked. Give the hungry a share of your bread. Receive the homeless into your house and lead the blind... Give a hand to the one who has fallen... If you have wealth, stretch out your hand to the poor" – *Sibylline Oracles* 2.80-90; *OTPs* 1:388.

See also: Not blind but sighted riches in Philo: Philo, *Agr.* 13.54; Loeb 3:136; Yonge, 179; Philo, *Rer. Div. Her.* 9.48; Loeb 4:306; Yonge, 280; Philo, *Fug.* 3.19; Loeb 5:18; Yonge, 322; Philo, *Abr.* 4.25; Loeb 6:16; Yonge, 413; Philo, *Jos.* 42.258; Loeb 6:264; Yonge, 457; Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1.27.153; Loeb 6:354; Yonge, 473; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.4.25-26; Loeb 7:112, 114; Yonge, 536; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.5.23; Loeb 7:320; Yonge, 570; Philo, *Virt.* 2.5, 7; Loeb 8:164, 166; Yonge, 640; Philo, *Vit. Cont.* 2.13; Loeb 9:120; Yonge, 699; Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 9.54; Loeb 8:342, 344; Yonge, 669. Cf., "The temperate man will make riches which are usually blind and accustomed to excite and tempt men to luxury, farsighted for the future" – Philo, *Sobr.* 9.40; Loeb 3:464; Yonge, 230.

⁴⁹² "Do not profane the image of God by how you treat it [the body]; for the image of man was made like the image of God; and God will treat you accordingly at the time when you see Him face to face." – *Testament of Isaac* 6.34; *OTPs* 1:910.

⁴⁹³ "Stretch out your hands to the orphan and to the widows, and according to your strength help the wretched, and they will be like a shelter at the time of the test" – *2 Enoch* [A], 50.6; *OTPs* 1:179.

Christian texts develop the theme in a similar way. “The poor, the lame, the maimed, the infirm...convey our riches to heaven, and to the inheritance of goods everlasting.” The hands of the maimed, the lame and the blind were said to be building the imperishable abodes of the saints in the Kingdom, so “on this building let us exhaust all our wealth.” In this way, those with impairments in need of assistance were indispensable to the very people upon whom they themselves call for help: “They procure even a kingdom for us, and give us confidence towards God.” “They guard the King’s Court. Therefore feed them. For the honour passes on to the King.” Drawing on Matthew 25:31-46 and Luke 14:12-14, Chrysostom frequently says that in giving to people with impairments, his listeners are giving to Christ, and that in feasting with them, they are feasting with Christ himself.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ “The poor, the lame, the crippled, the infirm...convey our riches to heaven, and to the inheritance of goods everlasting” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 16.4; *PG* 59:108; *NPNF i* 14:58. The hands of the maimed, the lame and the blind are building the imperishable abodes of the saints in the Kingdom; “On this building let us exhaust all our wealth” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 32.6; *PG* 63:223; *NPNF i* 14:512. And so those with impairments are indispensable to the very people upon whom they themselves are dependent: “For these are certain admirable dogs of the Royal Courts...I call them dogs...highly commending them. They guard the King’s Court. Therefore feed them. For the honour passes on to the King” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:466; *NPNF i* 13:374. “They procure even a kingdom for us, and give us confidence towards God” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 32.6; *PG* 63:223; *NPNF i* 14:513. Cf., John Chrysostom: *Hom. in I Cor.* 20.12; *PG* 61:168-169; *NPNF i* 12:117; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Phil.* 1; *PG* 62:188; *NPNF i* 13:187f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Col.* 1; *PG* 62:304-305; *NPNF i* 13:260f. Drawing on Matthew 25:31-46 and Luke 14:12-14, Chrysostom frequently says that in giving to people with impairments, his listeners are giving to Christ, and that in feasting with them, they are feasting with Christ himself – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 88; *PG* 58:778-779; *NPNF i* 10:522f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 60.6; *PG* 59:336; *NPNF i* 14:221f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 27; *PG* 60:208; *NPNF i* 11:177; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 45; *PG* 60:319; *NPNF i* 11:277; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Col.* 1; *PG* 62:304-305; *NPNF i* 13:260f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:446; *NPNF i* 13:374; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 18.6; *PG* 63:138; *NPNF i* 14:454; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Phil.* 1; *PG* 62:188; *NPNF i* 13:187f. Cf., Gregory of Nazianzen, *In sanctum baptisma* 21; *PG* 36:405; *NPNF ii* 7:372f. Cf., “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you...ye who fed the hungry, received strangers, clothed the naked, who visited the sick, who comforted those in prison, who helped the blind” – Hippolytus, *De consummatione mundi* 42.14; *GCS* 1.2:306; *ANF* 5:253 – οἱ τοῖς τυφλοῖς ἐπικουρήσαντες. “Put it into Christ’s hands through the hands of His poor. He will guard your riches for you against the day when He will raise up your body with great glory” – John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 2.46; *PG* 49:228; *ACW* 31:187. Self-interest: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 27; *PG* 60:208; *NPNF i* 11:177 – “Invite Christ, so that even after the table has been cleared, you may still have this luxury to enjoy.” Cf., Macarius, the priest and administrator of a home

To Early Church writers, people with impairments were identified as having usefulness in a third way: they were indispensable in preventing the disintegration of Christ's Body, the Church. This was an explanation of Paul's image at 1 Corinthians 12:14-26, and was understood in two respects. People with impairments were not prone to the disintegrating diseases of the soul that break the Body apart, and they stimulate the integrating relationship of service that holds the Body together. In an explanation of this Corinthian passage, John Chrysostom writes of a community where the less able part is not incorporated: "As when one is absent, many functions are impeded, so also without the other there is a maim in the fullness of the Church" – *χωλεύει τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*.⁴⁹⁵ Chrysostom interprets the disintegration that follows in particular terms: "Nothing so divides and separates as envy and jealousy, that grievous disease." As a result of the circumstances of their life, people living in conditions of need, including specifically people with impairments, have a prior disposition against such diseases of the soul. Chrysostom puts it in a similar way elsewhere: "Humility is easy to them" for "they find themselves at home with virtue" – *ἐπιτηδείους πρὸς ἀρετὴν*. Their presence holds the Body together, as they are not sick with the diseases of envy jealousy and ambition that break the body apart.⁴⁹⁶

for people with impairments teaches the wealthy that the people being served are priceless emeralds: Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 6.5-6; Bartelink, 34; *ACW* 34:38.

⁴⁹⁵ John Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12:14-26: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.1-6; *PG* 61:257-262; *NPNF i* 12:181.

⁴⁹⁶ Chrysostom explains disintegration in terms of envy: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.6-7; *PG* 61:262; *NPNF i* 12:184; cf., Chrysostom's warnings against ambition, "The cause of all the evils...this grievous pest" - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 72.3; *PG* 58:670; *NPNF i* 10:439. Cf., other texts of John Chrysostom: "In the case of these [the maimed, the halt, and the blind], there is nothing of this sort [envy, malice and slanders]": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:468; *NPNF i* 13:374; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 60.6; *PG* 59:336; *NPNF i* 14:221f; "Who dwelling in poverty and wrestling with hunger, will ever be sick of this disease [of ambition]?" - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 72.4; *PG* 58:671-672; *NPNF i* 10:439. "Humility is easy for them": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.*

At 1 Corinthians 12:25, Paul points out that a relationship of mutual interdependence – τὸ αὐτὸ ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων μεριμνῶσιν τὰ μέλη – between those who are less and more able prevents the Body from disintegrating. In this relationship, those who are less able receive extra honour from God, being indispensable in this cohesive relationship. Applying such a relationship specifically to people with impairments, Chrysostom writes: “There is great equality amongst them...Come thou and learn of them something useful.” Thus the Body is held together also by the appropriate meeting of need: “one tends the wounds of the mutilated, another leads the blind by the hand, a third bears him that is lamed of his leg.” This relationship of service is one in which worldly inequality is removed and Kingdom equality is promoted: “the maimed, the lame, the old...the young and the beautiful” together are received by Christ, and together “thought worthy of the spiritual Feast, and both enjoy the same benefits, and there is no difference” – οὐδεμία ἐστὶ διαφορά.⁴⁹⁷ To Augustine, practical assistance to people with impairments is “the treasure of the poor” – “thesaurus pauperum.”⁴⁹⁸ With these two aspects to the

72.4; PG 58:671-672; NPNF i 10:439. “More congenially disposed...ever low minded and subdued in his whole bearing”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 13; PG 60:111; NPNF i 11:86; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 42; PG 60:302; NPNF i 11:262; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Col.* 1; PG 62:304-305; NPNF i 13:260f; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.28; PG 49:29-30; NPNF i 9:341f. The relationship of mutual interdependence: “There is great equality amongst them...Come thou and learn of them something useful” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 72.4; PG 58:672; NPNF i 10:439.

⁴⁹⁷ On John Chrysostom’s use of the full participation of people with impairments as a foretaste of Kingdom equality, cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 72.4; PG 58:671; NPNF i 10:439; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 10.2; PG 59:75; NPNF i 14:36; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 32.6-7; PG 63:223; NPNF i 14:512f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 60.6; PG 59:336; NPNF i 14:222; John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 2.26-31; PG 49:235-236; ACW 31:181f; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 2.13; SC 50:140; ACW 31:48; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; PG 62:467; NPNF i 13:374.

⁴⁹⁸ People assisting people with impairments – “with the poor and the maimed do they associate, and their tables are full of these guests, so that for this they are worthy of the heavens. And one tends the wounds of the mutilated, another leads the blind by the hand, a third bears him that is lamed of his leg” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 72.4; PG 58:671; NPNF i 10:439; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 59.4; PG 59:328; NPNF i 14:216. Augustine on responding to the requirements of people with impairments in terms of “good-will, the treasure of the poor” – Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 36.2.13; CCL

usefulness of people with impairments, not to incorporate them fully would be an act of self-mutilation. John Chrysostom presents this in terms of self-interest:

If we are a building, whatever part is weakened, it affects the whole...As in the case of a bodily disease, if, when the foot is mortified, the hand does not sympathise by cleansing the wound, washing away the discharge, and applying a plaster, it will suffer the like disease of its own; so the one who will not minister to another when he is not himself afflicted, will have to bear sufferings of his own ...He that will not relieve others, will be a sufferer himself.⁴⁹⁹

3.3 The Mute Lamb Ambiguity of Isaiah 53

As we have seen, ancients understood the effects of impairment in both negative and positive terms. Impairment brought great difficulties and inabilities; at the same time people with impairments clearly had great abilities and usefulness. A biblical passage that makes full use of this ambiguity of impairment is the Suffering Servant description in Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. Several impairment words are used of the Suffering Servant, with the mute lamb image as the epitome: “like a sheep that before its shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth.”⁵⁰⁰ The paradox of the Servant is explicit: in appearance,

38:356; Tweed *et al.*, 2:29 - cf., *ibid.*, 125.12; *CCL* 40:1853f; Tweed *et al.*, 6:13-15. Cf., Gregory the Great: in context of criticising the envious – description of the parts of the body serving each other – *Regula pastoralis* 3.10; *SC* 382:310; *NPNF ii* 12:32.

⁴⁹⁹ Cutting off from the Body those who are less able as an act of self-mutilation: - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.3-6; *PG* 61:259-262; *NPNF i* 12:182-4; cf., “Their ruin would have divided the body” - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.3; *PG* 61:259; *NPNF i* 12:182.

Service of others as self-interest: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 7; *PG* 62:637, 642; *NPNF i* 13:501, 504.

The theme is also applied with Luke 14:12-14 in mind: for example, just as God gives those who are less able extra honour, so their company at feasts is to be preferred to those who are powerful and wealthy - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 31.2-6; *PG* 61:257-262; *NPNF i* 12:181-184; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:468; *NPNF i* 13:374; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Col.* 1; *PG* 62:305; *NPNF i* 13:261.

⁵⁰⁰ Several words of impairment are used of the Servant making those who see him believe him to be struck by God: Isaiah 52:14 – מְשֻׁחָת; Isaiah 53:4 – מְזוּחָה; Isaiah 53:5 – מְדֻכָּח; Isaiah 53:10 – מְדָבֵר.

the Servant is rejected by God and powerless; in fact, he was the instrument of God and highly effective [Isaiah 53:3-5, 10]. As we have seen, given its ambiguous nature, impairment was an excellent resource for expressing paradox. In their appropriation of the Servant passage, Early Church writers focussed on this mute lamb image and drew on the impairment ambiguity to establish two key paradoxes: Christ the mute Word, and muteness as paradoxically admirable. However, this ambiguity of impairment at the heart of the Servant image and its ancient interpretation is overlooked by modern commentators, who focus simply on impairment's inabilities. Consequently, the energy of the paradox clear to the ancients, is lost to moderns.

One understanding of muteness in ancient cultures was that it indicated powerlessness. A common example is the mockery of idols – their muteness shows their impotence. Creation before the existence of living creatures was described in similar terms: “The mute and lifeless water produced living creatures, as it was commanded, that thereafter the nations might declare thy wondrous works.”⁵⁰¹ Muteness also indicated a state of being oppressed or despised:

Stand and be established, you who were once brought low. You who were in silence, speak, for your mouth has been opened. You who were despised, from henceforth be raised, for your Righteousness has been raised.⁵⁰²

How the Servant is treated at Isaiah 53 is a point of identification for people with impairments: e.g., Wilke, *Creating the Caring Congregation*, 24; Wilke, “The Church Responding,” 154; Mitchell-Innes, 11; Moltmann, 116f; that the Servant's experience is described by Isaiah in impairment terms makes this identification for people with impairments even more significant.

⁵⁰¹ Muteness of creation before living creatures: *4 Ezra* 6.48; *OTPs* 1:536. Cf., silence at the beginning of creation, and the effect of the Word / speech: Pseudo-Philo, 60.2; *OTPs* 2:373; cf., references *ad loc.* at footnotes 60 a, b. see also, in relation to the lamb, a Canaanite text describes Baal as a lamb in the mouth of Mot, indicating his powerlessness: Gibson, 76.

⁵⁰² Muteness showing a state of being oppressed and despised: *Odes of Solomon* 8.3-5; *OTPs* 2:741. Cf., “I remain silent [...] my arm is broken at the elbow, my feet sink in the mud, my eyes are blind from having seen evil, my ears through hearing the shedding of blood, my heart is horrified at wicked schemes” – *The Hymns*, 1QHymns^a (1QHodayoth^a [1QH^a]), XV 1-3; Martinez, 342f; cf., *ibid.*, XVI 33-36; Martinez, 347.

In Egyptian texts, muteness was “a common expression...for the submissive or humble.” It was in these terms that the muteness of animals was understood, as indicated at their naming by Adam: “He subjected everything to him in subservience under his hand, both the mute and the deaf, to be commanded and for submission and for every servitude.” The Early Church were well aware of this association: Origen had to defend the mute lamb image against Celsus’ claim that it showed Christ’s inability to help himself.⁵⁰³

This association of powerlessness was not only defended by early Christian writers, it was appropriated by them positively: they interpreted the image as showing Christ’s humanity. This fitted nicely with Christ’s divinity as Logos. The mute lamb image became very useful in expressing the paradox of the incarnation: “As a lamb he is mute, yet he is the Word.” As the Word, Christ is the one who gives speech, yet he is mute: “He who bestowed speech on all is compared to a lamb mute before his shearer.” Christ is also the mute healer of the mute: “As like one mute and deaf in the presence of His revilers was He by whom the mute spoke and the deaf heard.” There was also a contrast drawn between Christ mute before the judgement seat of Pilate and Christ who would be far from mute at his own coming in judgement: “It behoved Him to be silent in His passion, though not hereafter in judgement.” In addition, even in his muteness,

⁵⁰³ “Thou art Amon, the lord of the silent man” – explained in footnote 5 *ad loc.*: “A common expression at this time for the submissive or humble” - Egyptian hymn, *ANET* 380. Animals brought to Adam for naming: *2 Enoch* [J] 58.3; *OTPs* 1:184; cf., “The Lord left them with him, and he subjected everything beneath him, in the second place, having likewise made it deaf, for all submission and for obedience to man” – *2 Enoch* [A] 58.3; *OTPs* 1:185. Origen writes against Celsus’ use of the verse to show the inability of Christ to help himself: Origen, *C. Celsus* 2.59.11; *SC* 132:424f; *ANF* 4:455. Inability to speak as powerlessness elsewhere in the HB: Isaiah 35:6, Habakkuk 2:19, Psalm 32:3. Imagery associated with muteness in HB: see Baumann in *TDOT* 3:260-265

Christ did not “cease to proclaim the truth.” For example, “Now He is silent in not taking vengeance: He is not silent in giving warning.” Also, though mute, he is not silent in giving instruction, not least in how to bear infirmity.⁵⁰⁴

The second way in which Early Church writers used the impairment ambiguity embedded in the mute lamb image was to state that the muteness paradoxically demonstrates admirable qualities. Muteness was not generally seen as admirable: it indicated lack of power, submission, oppression even. There were associations of muteness with being in the divine presence, but these reinforced the submissive place of humans before gods. This could be in fear, as we see in the reaction to the Eumenides: “These awful maidens, whom we are afraid to name, and whom we pass without looking, without sound, without speech [ἄφώνως], moving our lips in respectful silence.” It could also be a sign of humility: “And let no speech come out of your

⁵⁰⁴ Muteness of the lamb standing for Christ’s human nature: Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 6.53.273; *SC* 157:336; *FC* 80:242; cf., Origen, *C. Celsum* 7.55-53; *SC* 150:138-140; *ANF* 4:632f; Theodoret, *Eranistes*, *Florilegium* 3.289; Ettlinger, 234; *NPNF ii* 3:236; *ibid.*, 1.97; Ettlinger, 105; *NPNF ii* 3:180; Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 12.29; *GCS* 40:132f; *ANF* 10:465; Eusebius, *De laudibus Constantini* 15; *PG* 20:1422; *NPNF ii* 1:605.

Mute lamb who is the Word: ὡς ἄμυτος ἄφωνος ἀλλὰ Λόγος ἐστὶ - Gregory of Nazianzen, *De Filio* 20; *PG* 35:102f; *NPNF ii* 7:309; cf., “The Word of God is led silently to the slaughter” – “Dei sermo ad victimam tacens ducitur” – Cyprian, *De bono patientia* 7; *CCL* 3A:132; *ANF* 5:486; cf., Eusebius, *De laudibus Constantini* 15; *PG* 20:1422; *NPNF ii* 1:605.

The bestower of speech mute: Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 1.32.233; *SC* 120(I):174; *FC* 80: 80. The healer mute and deaf: Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* 22; *CCL* 46:165; *NPNF i* 3:307f; cf., Gregory of Nazianzen, *De Filio* 20; *PG* 35:102f; *NPNF ii* 7:309.

Christ whose judgement will not be mute: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 38.20; *CCL* 38:420; Tweed *et al.*, 2:87f; - cf., *ibid.*, 57.8; *CCL* 39:715f; Tweed *et al.*, 3:109; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.24; *CCL* 48:746; *NPNF i* 2:445; Cyprian, *De bono patientia* 23; *CCL* 3A:132; *ANF* 5:490.

Even mute, Christ proclaims the truth: Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.30; *CCL* 48:756; *NPNF i* 2:450.

Not silent in giving warning: Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 4.2; *CCL* 36:31f; *NPNF i* 7:26. As the mute lamb He is not silent in giving instruction: *Epist. Barnabae* 5; Loeb 1:354-357.

As the mute lamb, he knew how to bear infirmities: “The Saviour... was a man under suffering, and who knew how to bear sickness” - εἰδὼς φέρειν μαλακίαν - Origen, *C. Celsum* 1.54; *SC* 132:22; *ANF* 4:420; Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 28.19.165f; *SC* 385:142f; *FC* 89:326 - Christ alone knew how to bear infirmity.

This experience of Christ as exemplary for others with the same experience of infirmity: Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 3.12; *SC* 382:330-332; *NPNF ii* 12:36.

mouth, because we are unworthy to entreat the Lord since our lips are not clean.”⁵⁰⁵ In

Qumranic and Gnostic texts, silence was the medium of true worship:

The cherubim lie prostrate before him, and bless when they rise. The voice of a divine silence is heard...And (there is) a silent voice of blessing in the uproar of their motion...The voice of glad rejoicing becomes silent and there is a silent blessing of the gods in all the camps of the gods.⁵⁰⁶

Drawing on similar themes, Habakkuk contrasts the muteness (through powerlessness) of idols with the muteness (in reverence) of creation [Habakkuk 2:19f].

However, the Early Church appropriated the muteness of the lamb as an image of powerlessness to be an image of admiration of Christ in his passion and of emulation for all people to follow. The paradox fitted well both with the humanity of Christ as God become human, and also with Christian discipleship as counter-cultural. The muteness of the lamb was seen to declare Christ’s gentleness: “In his meekness He did not cry”,

⁵⁰⁵ No speech before God: *Life of Adam and Eve* 6.2; *OTPs* 2:260; cf., *Life of Adam and Eve* [Apocalypse], 29.12; *OTPs* 2:61: “Do not let three words come out of your mouth, for we are unworthy and our lips are not clean. But cry silently to God (saying), ‘O God, be gracious to me.’”; cf., *ibid.*, *ad loc.* footnote e: manuscript (Christianized) – “Pray to God, and keep the lips silent that we might be baptized in the water with all your heart.” Compare HB prophets: Isaiah 6:6-8; cf., Daniel, 10:15; Jeremiah 1:4-10; also Amos in Rabbinic tradition: *LOTJ* 4:261; cf., Preuss, 89. Eumenides: Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 131; Loeb 2:426f.

⁵⁰⁶ Divine silence in Qumran texts: 4QSongs of the Sabbath Sacrifice^f (4Q405 [4QShirShabb^f]) 20-21-22.7-13; Martinez, 429; cf., 11QSongs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (11Q17 [11QShirShabb]) I 7; Martinez, 430: “the [serene] sound [of silence, the gods blessing...the king...]”; “[Ps 37:7 Be si]lent before [YHWH and] hope in him, do not be annoyed with one who is affluent, with someone who [hatches] plots” – Commentaries on the Psalms, 4Qpsalms Peshet^a 94Q171 [4QPPs^a]; Martinez, 203. Cf., “Trumpets! Lightnings! Earthquakes! But into the Virgin’s womb thou didst descend with noiseless tread” – ἄψοφον ἴχνος - *Greek Anthology* 1.37; Loeb 1:22f.

See also Gnostics’ use of divine Silence – Σίγη – Layton: 32, 80, 98, 102, 106, 225, 278; cf., Bauer, 749f; MM, 574.

Muteness used of God – self-restraint at blasphemy of Titus: Talmud, *Gittin* 56b; cf., silences as a virtue: “There exists nothing better than silence. Being silent is at all times a virtue. Even if a fool is silent, he is counted wise” - *Sentences of the Syriac Menander* 2.311-313; *OTPs* 2:601; cf., “Since no human voice is strong enough to be heard in such a disturbance [the confusion of the Churches through lack of discipline], I reckon silence more profitable than speech” – Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 30.78.1; F. H. Johnson, 154f; *NPNF ii* 8:50; Muteness in preference to curses, perjury, impiety when arguments are weak – Philo, *Dec.* 19.92; Loeb 7:52; Yonge, 526.

Ambivalence of silence / inactivity with Isaac: “While some would call him kind and obedient, others might say he was weak” – Moore, 153.

for “He bore scourges in silence...[and] when adored in mockery He held His peace”,
 “more mute than the fishes.”⁵⁰⁷ It also showed his patience and endurance:

He speaks not, nor is moved, nor declares His majesty even in His very passion itself. Even to the end, all things are borne perseveringly and constantly, in order that in Christ a full and perfect patience may be consummated.⁵⁰⁸

The muteness was used too for his innocence: “The metaphor of the lamb is supplied, in order that in His silence He might be accounted not as guilty but as innocent.”⁵⁰⁹

Chiefly, however, the lamb’s muteness was a sign of Christ’s willing obedience: “He submitted with reverence to the arrangements of Providence.” “The Gospel testifies that He opened not His mouth...[and] went voluntarily to encounter His sufferings.”⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ “mansuetudine non clamavit” - Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 20.30; *CCL* 48:756; *NPNF i* 2:450; Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 3.12; *SC* 382:332; *NPNF ii* 12:36; more mute than fishes: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 3; *PG* 62:25; *NPNF i* 13:61; cf., Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* 22; *CCL* 46:165; *NPNF i* 3:307f. See also on the muteness of the lamb as showing Christ’s gentleness: John Chrysostom, *Adv. Judaeos* 6.5.1-3; *PG* 48.910; *FC* 68:162f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 86.1; *PG* 58:763; *NPNF i* 10:511; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 19; *PG* 60:149; *NPNF i* 11:121; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 3.7; *PG* 61:416; *NPNF i* 12:293; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 3; *PG* 62:25; *NPNF i* 13:61; cf., Origen, *C. Celsum* 7.55; *SC* 150:142f; *ANF* 4:633.

⁵⁰⁸ Cyprian, *De bono patientia* 7; *CCL* 3A:122; *ANF* 5:486; cf., “admirante Pilato patientissimum silentium tenuit” – *ibid.*, 23; *CCL* 3A:132; *ANF* 5:490; cf., Tertullian, *Adv. Judaeos* 9.29, *CCL* 2:1374; *ANF* 3:164; also, in the NT: Matthew 27:14, Mark 15:5. Cf., The words of Christ: “But I endured and held my peace and was silent, that I might not be disturbed by them” – *Odes of Solomon* 31.10; *OTPs* 2:763.

⁵⁰⁹ Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 38.11; *CCL* 36:345; *NPNF i* 7:221; as the Gospels themselves indicate - Luke 23:9, 14f.

⁵¹⁰ Muteness as obedience: εὐαρεστουμένου δὲ τοῖς συμβαίνουσι καὶ προτιμῶντος τὰ ἀπὸ προνοίας περιστατικὰ; his silence “spoke more for His firmness and submission than all that was said by the Greeks when beset by calamity...he received the scourgings with silent firmness, and bore with meekness all the insults” - ἀπὸ καρτερίας...σιωπήσαντα καὶ ἀπὸ πραότητος πάντα ὑπομένοντα.: Origen, *C. Celsum* 7.55; *SC* 150:142f; *ANF* 4:633. He gave himself willingly: Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.59; *SC* 132:422-428; *ANF* 4:455. Cf., Inability to speak as obedience elsewhere in the HB: Psalm 38:14-16, Psalm 37:7, Exodus 14:14.

See also, muteness of the lamb as evidence of Christ’s humility: Clement of Rome, *Epist. 1 ad Corinthianos* 16.7.4; Loeb 1:34f - ταπεινοφρονούντων γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός; cf., Tertullian, *Adv. Judaeos* 9.29; *CCL* 2:1374; *ANF* 3:164; - *ibid.*, 13.21; *CCL* 2:1388; *ANF* 3:171; Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 28.19.167; *SC* 385:142f; *FC* 89:326; Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 8.18; F. H. Johnson, 41f; *NPNF ii* 8:12; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 86.1; *PG* 58:763; *NPNF i* 10:511; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 19; *PG* 60:149; *NPNF i* 11:121; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 3; *PG* 62:25; *NPNF i* 13:61.

As with the Isaiah use of the paradox, these admirable qualities of Christ and their effectiveness were unseen to those present.⁵¹¹

Not only was the image applied to show Christ's humanity and particular qualities that Christ demonstrated at his passion, it was also applied to link Christ with God's people, as the New Testament states at 1 Peter 2:21-25.⁵¹² John Chrysostom used the image as a model for all people, and made parallels with Isaac as a boy about to be sacrificed by Abraham. With Christ as his type, Isaac is mute, refusing to criticise God, and thereby proving his exemplary gentleness and meekness:

Do not then only admire this righteous man, but also imitate him...[Isaac] endured all in silence, like a lamb, yea, rather like the common Lord of all. For of Him he both imitated the gentleness and kept to the type.⁵¹³

The image was also directly linked to the martyrs, whose experience was said to illustrate “the distinctive character of him who was led as a sheep to slaughter and was mute as a lamb before its shearer.”⁵¹⁴

These positive qualities that became associated with muteness through the lamb image occur elsewhere in Early Church texts, especially through the Septuagint version of Psalm 38:13 – “I was mute and humbled myself” – ἐκωφώθην καὶ ἐταπεινώθην.

Do you see the extraordinary degree of [the Psalmist's] wisdom, how he survived difficult ways? While his opponents were concocting schemes, he even blocked his ears so as not to hear; while they at no time ceased sharpening their tongue and uttering gossip and lies, he checked their folly with silence. Why did he cast himself in this role, giving the impression of

⁵¹¹ These qualities and the identity of Christ unseen: Theodoret, *Eranistes*, *Florilegium* 3.289; Ettliger, 234; *NPNF ii* 3:236; Origen, *C. Celsus* 7.46; *SC* 150:124f; *ANF* 4:630. Cf., the mute lamb despised and effective: Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 4.2; *CCL* 36:31f; *NPNF i* 7:26..

⁵¹² *Epist. Barnabae* 5; Loeb 1:356f.

⁵¹³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 3.7; *PG* 61:415-416; *NPNF i* 12:292f.

⁵¹⁴ Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 6.55.284; *SC* 157:344; *FC* 80:245.

being a deaf mute?...Listen to his explanation for such wisdom: ‘Because I had placed my hope in You, Lord’.⁵¹⁵

A particular link was made between muteness and obedience. Proverbially mute

creatures were used paradoxically to emphasise this association:

A fish does not resist God’s law, and [yet] we cannot endure His precepts of Salvation! Do not despise fish because they are mute and quite unreasoning; rather, fear lest, in your resistance to the disposition of the Creator, you have even less reason than they. Listen to the fish, who by their actions all but speak.⁵¹⁶

John Chrysostom applied the theme in a combination of clay’s muteness with clay’s malleability:

Just as the clay follows the potter’s hands in whatever way he draws or turns it, so you must be mute and silent as the clay whenever God wishes to accomplish some purpose of His.⁵¹⁷

Silence as an indicator of obedience was also a significant theme in texts relating to the Desert Fathers.⁵¹⁸

In Isaiah 53, the ambiguity associated with impairment was used for the paradox of the Servant apparently rejected by God and powerless, but in fact willed by God and effective. The mute lamb image was an epitome of this ambiguity and paradox. By applying the image to Christ, the Early Church appropriated the image, along with its

⁵¹⁵ John Cassian, *Collationes* 16.26; *CSEL* 13:459; *NPNF ii* 11:459; cf., *ibid.*, 14.9; *CSEL* 13:408; *NPNF ii* 11:439; John Cassian, *De institutis* 4.41; *CSEL* 17:76; *NPNF ii* 11:232.

⁵¹⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 7.4; *GCS* nf 2:120; *NPNF ii* 8:92 - Ἰχθὺς οὐκ ἀντιλέγει νόμῳ Θεοῦ...Μὴ καταφρόνει τῶν ἰχθῶν ἐπειδὴ ἄφωνα.

⁵¹⁷ John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 2.37; *SC* 28:170; *FC* 72: 85f.

⁵¹⁸ Silence associated with obedience amongst the Desert Fathers: Paul and Antony – *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 24; Festugiere, *Historia*, 44f; *LDF* 114; Ammon and the Tabennisiots - *ibid.*, 3.5; Festugiere, *Historia*, 39; 65; Theon - *ibid.*, 6.3; Festugiere, *Historia*, 33; 68. Muteness and trust: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Gen.* 29.3; *PG* 53:261; *FC* 82:200. Muteness as not speaking one’s own praise, and only opening one’s mouth for the praise of God: Augustine, *De spiritu et littera* 36.66; *CSEL* 60:229; *NPNF i* 5:114. See also, Greenberg, “On Ezekiel’s Dumbness,” 101-105.

Perhaps these associations of muteness in reaction to and as response to God are the origins of Christian liturgical appropriation of Psalm 51:15 - “O Lord, open thou our lips”.

impairment ambiguity, for two key paradoxes: Christ the mute Logos, and muteness as showing qualities for admiration of Christ and emulation by all. Modern commentary passes over completely the energy in this image. This is a classic example of the impoverishment of uncritical modern interpretation that focuses simply on the difficulties and inabilities associated with impairment. To people of the ancient world, impairment was ambiguous, having both inabilities and abilities, bringing difficulties but also usefulness to their communities. These ancient understandings critique modern perceptions of impairment as monochrome and inadequate; they also stimulate us to make new readings of these ancient texts, reclaiming as the proper focus the experience of those who live impairment – people whose experience of impairment is similarly ambiguous.

4.0 *Impairment and Priesthood*

In the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 21 and 22 contain instructions that impaired priests may not draw near to the holy places, and that impaired animals are not acceptable as sacrificial offerings. These instructions are often seen as problem texts in the attempt to incorporate people with impairments in the Church, and in the development of a theology of impairment and disability. It is regularly asserted that these texts deny the acceptability of people with impairments to God and show that, to ancients, impairment

and holiness were incompatible.⁵¹⁹ In this section of the chapter, we see that these modern assertions are without critical basis. The Leviticus restrictions on priests, and sacrifices, hold very specifically. On occasions, impairment was seen as a reason for someone not to be a priest, but this was not a widespread or general view, nor was it a view held in a straightforward way. Early Jewish and Christian texts both show that, to ancients, impairment and holiness were by no means incompatible.

4.1 Ancient Impairment Restrictions for Priesthood

In some ancient cultures, there were restrictions on the functioning of priests with impairments. Any candidate to become a Vestal Virgin, for instance, “must be free from any impediment in her speech, must not have impaired hearing, or be marked by any other bodily defect.” However, the assertion by some modern scholars that “the requirement that priests and sacrifices should be without blemish was common to all ancient civilisations” gives a misleading picture of ancient attitudes towards impairment and holiness.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹ Cooper, 173. See also: Monteith, 26, ABD 6:13; Govig, 35f; Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 71-75; Barnes, *Disabled People in Britain*, 12; Black, 48-50; Govig, 35f; Wilke, *Creating the Caring Congregation*, 22-25; Fontaine, Roundtable Discussion, 111-113; Cooper, 173f; Webb Mitchell, 54f; Melcher, 55-71; Fontaine, “Disabilities and Illness,” 292f; Wilke, “The Church Responding,” 153f; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 191f; Davies-Johns, 36f; Humphries and Gordon, 12; Barnes, “Legacy of Oppression,” 15f; Wink, 14-16; Senior, 9; Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 52f; Selway and Ashman, 432f; A. Rose, 395-405; R. K. Harrison in C. Brown, *New International Dictionary* 2:415.

The influence of Douglas’ study in *Purity And Danger* is traced by Brian Morris, who also gives a thorough critique of her position: B. Morris, 203-218. Douglas has more recently re-presented her views: “forbidden animals are to be honoured as symbols of the victims of injustice, enacting Isaiah’s concern for the fatherless and oppressed” – Douglas, “Forbidden Animals,” 23.

⁵²⁰ Vestal Virgins: Aulus Gellius, 1.12.3; Loeb 1:58f; Snaith quotes an Ancient Near Eastern equivalent, of a disqualified soothsayer in Sippar, “Not perfect in stature and in the members of his body” – Snaith, 146. Cf., “Once a man becomes priest, more careful watch must be paid for any disability; if a priest is maimed, the gods must be angry. The gods obviously do not favour a priest whom they don’t preserve

Firstly, other factors besides impairment were taken into account in the selection of priests. While Plato declares that those selected by lot for the priesthood should be tested to see if they are “sound” – ὀλόκληρον – their family background and personal character are of equal importance. Similarly, a Hittite text requires of a priest before the god blameless personal character and physical cleanliness. The model used was of a servant before his master:

And because he, his master, eats (and) drinks, he is relaxed in spirit and feels one with him. But if he (the servant) is ever remiss, (if) he is inattentive, his mind [the master’s] is alien to him.⁵²¹

At both Aegium and Thebes, priests were chosen not for any absence of physical impairment, but for physical attractiveness: the one chosen for priesthood was the boy “who had won the prize for beauty. When his beard began to grow the honour for beauty passed to another boy.”⁵²² Impairment was not the only factor, even when physical criteria were being used.

Secondly, in many ancient cultures impairment was not a consideration at all in the selection of priests. Egyptian funerary art, for instance, shows priests with obvious

even after he has preserved them.” – Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 4.2; Loeb 1:438-441; cf., reference to deliberately impaired child perhaps having destiny to be priest: *ibid.*, 10.4.3; Loeb 2:424f. However, these *Controversiae* texts are debating exercises: they indicate arguments but not opinions, and do not show the extent of any view put forward.

Assertion that impairment was a factor common to all ancient civilisations in exclusion from the priesthood: *EJ* 4:1081; cf., Gerstenberger, 317; Garland, “Deformity and Disfigurement,” 39. Compare Kee’s reference to Basilides, a freedman of Vespasian, “whose ailments (he was blind and lame) had kept him out of the shrine of Sarapis”: Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*, 130.

⁵²¹ Plato’s selection of priests – other factors in addition to impairment taken into account: Plato, *Leges* 6, 759c-d; Loeb 10:418-421; cf., Romulus’ regulations: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.21.3; Loeb 1:368-371; Akkadian myth, *ANET*, 101. Master and servant model in Hittite text: *ANET*, 207-210; cf., a priest required to be “blameless, the clean of hands...the observer of rites” – Akkadian myth, *ANET*, 101.

impairments. A recent study across several ancient cultures has concluded: “physical irregularities do not seem to have disqualified people from fulfilling public and priestly offices.”⁵²³ Even in relation to the Temple of Vesta mentioned above, the tradition relating to impairment was understood not simply in physical terms:

When the temple of Vesta was on fire, the high priest Metellus lost his sight grabbing the image of Pallas. How worthy he would be of being made a priest – were he not priest already! – The law alludes to a whole mind, not a whole body.⁵²⁴

4.2 Leviticus 21

In Leviticus 21, the restriction of impaired priests and offerings is made very specifically. A priest with any impairment, referred to collectively as a blemish [מַדְּמָה], may not “offer the food of his God” [Leviticus 21:17, 21], i.e. “the Lord’s offering by fire” [Leviticus 21:21]. He is also restricted from drawing near to the holy places [Leviticus 21:23]. As the duties of the priests are summarised as “everything pertaining to the altar, and to what is behind the curtain” [Numbers 18:7], his impairment prevents him from carrying out these duties. However, the impaired priest does not lose the privileges of his priesthood, neither for himself nor for his family. Explicitly, the impaired priest is not prevented from partaking of the sacrifice, a priest’s privilege: “He

⁵²² Prize-winning beauty the criterion - at Aegium: Pausanias, 7.24.4; Loeb 3:312-315; at Thebes, “A boy of noble family, who is himself both handsome and strong, is chosen priest of Ismenian Apollo for a year”: Pausanias, 9.10.4; Loeb 4:214.

⁵²³ Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 101f; with examples of ancient cultures where “physical irregularities” did not disqualify a person from the priesthood. Compare also 18th Dynasty stela (1551-1310 BCE) showing “the lame priest Ruma with a disfigured leg, typical of polio” - ABD 4:136.

⁵²⁴ The blinded priest Metellus at the temple of Vesta: Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 4.2; Loeb 1:438-441. Cf., lameness of Agesilaus no hindrance to his performing sacrificial duties – Pausanias, 3.9.4; Loeb 2:52f; so too with the “debilis” Sergius serving as praetor: Pliny (the Elder), *HN* 7.28.105; Loeb 2:574f.

may eat of the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy” [Leviticus 21:22; cf., Numbers 18:10]. His impairment diminishes neither his family relationship to Aaron [Leviticus 21:17; cf., Leviticus 22:13] nor the privilege for his household to eat the holy things [Leviticus 22:11]. Marrying out of the family of a priest leads to loss of this privilege; but having an impairment does not [Leviticus 22:12].⁵²⁵

In addition, there is no sense that the impaired priest is cut off from God: repeatedly, God is referred to as “his God” [Leviticus 21:17, 21, 22]⁵²⁶. Allowed to eat the holy things, the impaired priest is not seen as unclean, nor is he is אֲרֵי, “a lay person” [JPS: Leviticus 22:13]. Similarly, in contrast to non-priests, by being impaired he does not cause the holy things to “bear iniquity and guilt” [Leviticus 22:16]. The impaired priest is also different from the priest with leprosy, with a discharge, or who has had contact with anything unclean; any one of these “may not eat of the holy things until he is clean” [Leviticus 22:4,7]. The fact that the impaired priest is explicitly allowed to retain the “sacred donations”, while not being allowed to enter the sacred places does not suggest that impaired priests were considered unacceptable to God. As a recent

⁵²⁵ In his inability to offer the food, it would seem that Leviticus 21:7 does not apply to the impaired priest: “You must treat [the priests] as holy, since they offer the food of your God.” However, the verse continues by showing that priests are to be treated as holy not solely because they offer the food of God: because God is holy, and because God makes his people holy, therefore “they shall be holy to you” (Leviticus 21:8b). The people must treat the priests as holy because of the obligations God has put upon his people. This could be an explanation why impaired priests are not to be treated as unholy. The privileged status of priests is highlighted by Whybray, p. 243.

On these specific restrictions for priests with impairments: Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 186f, 395, 430, 613f

⁵²⁶ In Ancient Near Eastern texts, people with impairments are seen as no less potentially pious than others: “The blind one whom the god blesses, his way is open; the lame one whose heart is on the way of the god, his way is smooth” - *AEL* 3:194. Compare Babylonian texts: Samas stands at the side of the weak and oppressed - *BWL*, 131; Samas responds to worship and supplication, specifically of the destitute, “The feeble man calls you from the hollow of his mouth, the humble, the weak, the afflicted, the poor...You do not obstruct those that confront you” - *BWL*, 135. Also, *AEL* 2:112: of the king of the gods “the Bull great of strength, who loves strength...Helmsman of the weak”. Another indication that impaired people were not seen as unacceptable or punished is the frequent boast of powerful people that

specialist study points out: “The priest’s physical defect does not render him ritually impure. If he were impure, he would be unable to eat from the holy or most holy portions.”⁵²⁷

In a similar way, the unacceptability of an impaired offering is finely drawn. At Leviticus 22:23 a distinction is made between freewill offerings, for which impaired animals may be used, and vows, for which they may not. It is emphasised that for vows “they shall not be accepted in your favour.” This phrase is repeated with the other offerings for which impaired animals may not be used (as at Malachi 1:9,10,13). It seems that where an offering is being made which the offerer wants to be acceptable in their favour, impaired animals are not allowed. For offerings where this specific intention is not present, such as freewill offerings, impaired animals may be used. We can compare the key role of intention in David’s reply to Araunah when he gave as a gift an animal for sacrifice: “No, but I will buy it of you for a price; I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing” [2 Samuel 24:24].⁵²⁸

Early Jewish texts interpret these specific restrictions for priests with impairments similarly. In addition, priests with impairments stood alongside priests without

they supported the weak and destitute, something pleasing to the gods: *AEL* 1:17, 64, 122, 130, 136, 206; *ibid.*, 2:150, 151; *ibid.*, 3:27, 211; *BWL*, 87, 101, 119, 131, 167.

⁵²⁷ Compare the duties outlined at Ezekiel 42:13. It has been established by recent scholarship that priests with impairments were not seen as impure: Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 721, 753; D. P. Wright, 150-181; Jenson, 78, 225f; Harrington, 24, 33f, 38, 283-291; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 310, 319f, 388f; Melcher, 58f, 65f.

That the Leviticus texts show impairment as rendering impure (a false assertion) is promoted by Douglas, *Purity and Danger* – a study criticised: Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 721; Jenson, 78; Harrington, 24f; D. P. Wright, 172f; B. Morris, 203-218. Despite this, the influence Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, is enduring, e.g., Barnes, “Legacy of Oppression,” 15f; Shakespeare, “Cultural Representation,” 231; Turner, “The Body in Western Society,” 17.

impairments who were not in the process of officiating. Even in Qumranic texts, which “tend to intensify the purity standards in the Hebrew Bible and to reinterpret the Bible’s stipulations to apply to the community’s particular situation”, similar restrictions applied. Those who are blind or deaf, like the priests of Leviticus 21, were restricted from cultic practices, but were nonetheless able to eat the sacred food. People with impairments were not permitted to enter the congregation to give their opinion, but their opinions could be stated in private to congregation members. Also, someone with an impairment was registered and expected to contribute to the community as anyone else: they were assigned tasks “matching their strength...to the extent of their ability.”⁵²⁹

Modern commentators suggest a variety of reasons for these Leviticus restrictions for priests. Through the priest’s “elevated level of holiness”, the wholeness of the priest

⁵²⁸ We can compare the emphasis in modern Judaism on intention in relation to the Leviticus texts: Sacks, 918-923.

⁵²⁹ Restrictions on priests with impairments: Josephus, *C. Apionem* 1.30.284; Loeb 1:278; Whiston, 791. Priests with impairments, and their families, retain the privileges associated with priesthood: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 3.12.2.279; Loeb 2:452; Whiston, 98; Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.5.7.228-229; Loeb 3:270; Whiston, 708; Talmud, *Yevamoth* 75a; *EJ* 4:1082, 1083; Rosner, *Medicine in the Mishneh Torah*, 126-134; Plaut, 911; Levine, 145: “since it is through no fault of their own that they suffer from such defects” (cf., *ibid.*, 141, 146); Noth, 156f; Wenham, 292; Gerstenberger, 317; Cf., in Rabbinic tradition, a priest with learning disability may be fed with sacred food: Talmud, *Nidah* 13b. All priests, impaired and not impaired who are not officiating stand together: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.5.7.228-229; Loeb 3:270; Whiston, 708; cf., Priests with impairments may not enter the holy precincts when sacrifice was being offered; this “underscores the spatial factor, [and raises] the question of where the defective priests would have been stationed were they officiating in the cult” – Levine, 146. Qumran texts relating to impairment discussed in Melcher, 67-69. Opinions heard in private: The Rule of the Congregation, 1QSa II 5-12; Martinez, 127. Registered and assigned tasks according to ability: The Rule of the Congregation, 1QSa I 19-22; Martinez, 126. Compare Monteith on H. H. Wilke’s “findings from the Talmud [that] appear to support a...compassionate case for the disabled” including the allowing of impaired priests to serve their duties: Monteith, 26. Impaired priest not impure: Melcher, 65f; cf., *ibid.*, 58f.

As a political act, Hyrcanus was deliberately mutilated by Antigonos in order to disqualify him as high priest: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 1.14.9.270; Loeb 2:126; Whiston, 564: as he knelt in supplication at his feet, Antigonos lacerated his ear “in order to disqualify him for ever, under any change of circumstances, from resuming the high priesthood”.. However, in a similar context, it was mutilation of soul and not of body that rendered a person unfit for priesthood: 2 Maccabees 4:13; cf., the ungodly Alcimus as High Priest: 1 Maccabees 7:9-25, 9:54-57, (cf., 7:5) – wilfully defiled himself: 2 Maccabees, 14:3-13; cf., the High Priest Menelaus, 2 Maccabees 4:23-29, 32-50, 5:15 – his death appropriate: 2 Maccabees 13:5-8; cf., mutilation of evil Nicanor: 1 Maccabees 7:47, 2 Maccabees 15:30-33.

“corresponds to and bears witness to the holiness of the sanctuary and the holiness of God...[and] to the holiness of his task.” Such “holiness finds physical expression in wholeness and normality.” “God’s holiness is profaned by anything less than perfect.” Such reasoning may indicate modern presuppositions about impairment, but it does not correspond with mainstream ancient views relating to these Leviticus texts, whether Jewish or Christian.⁵³⁰ The brief survey of ancient interpretations of these Leviticus chapters that follows will show that, ironically, these modern interpretations that impairment and holiness were incompatible resemble most closely the minority view of a particular strand within Qumranic material:

No blind person shall enter it [the city of the temple] throughout his whole life; he shall not defile the city in the centre of which I dwell because I, YHWH, dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever and always.⁵³¹

⁵³⁰ Special rules for priests because of their “elevated level of holiness” – Steinsaltz, 161; cf., *EJ* 4:1081 – since priest was “standing before the Lord”. Cf., Stricter standards of behaviour and more exacting requirements for physical purity, with the goal of “preserving the divine presence in the sanctuary” – Melcher, 56; on higher standards for priests: Hartley, 346: “this knowledge about the rules for a holy priesthood provides the congregation greater insight into the nature of holiness”; also, from the priests’ leadership role: *ibid.*, 351; *ibid.*, 349f: “His bodily perfection is an external expression of the idea of holiness. Any bodily defect renders a person imperfect, unfit to function as a priest. The wholeness of the priest, just like the wholeness of an animal acceptable for sacrifice, corresponds to and bears witness to the holiness of the sanctuary and the holiness of God” (cf., *ibid.*, 360, 363); “His physical wholeness corresponds to the holiness of his task”: *ibid.*, 351. Impaired priests are “less than perfect physically and thus would not reflect divine holiness adequately” – R. K. Harrison, 213; see also, Gerstenberger, 327f; “Holiness finds physical expression in wholeness and normality” – Wenham, 192; cf., *ibid.*, 295, 296f. “God’s holiness is profaned by anything less than perfect.” – R. K. Harrison, 211f; cf., *ibid.*, 210f: Priests are most effective in God’s service “only when they are in ordinary health and free from physical imperfection.” Cf., Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 32, 36, 41-57. A modern interpreter makes a supporting link for the exclusion of people with impairments in HB society through the proverbial saying at 2 Samuel 5:8: “Therefore it is said, ‘The blind and the lame shall not come into the house’” (in the context of the Jebusites’ taunt of David) – Fontaine, *Traditional Sayings*, 240.

Compare perhaps in Egyptian texts: when comparing kings to gods, physical wholeness is mentioned: the king is “of perfect form like Atum” – *AEL* 2:62; cf., the king compared to the primordial god: “No bone in him will be broken” – *AEL* 1:47. A possible rationale for the modern notion that priests with impairments may not draw near the holy place on the grounds of profaning God’s holiness: “Impairment results from sin, therefore an impaired priest is unacceptable to God: he may not approach the holy place, because of the sins that are understood to cause impairment.”

⁵³¹ Those with physical impairments unable to enter because of the abiding presence of YHWH: The Temple Scroll, 11Q19 XLV 12-14; Martinez, 167. Similar prohibitions relating to people with impairments are given on the grounds of the presence of holy angels and that it is in such a congregation that “[God] begets the Messiah with them: The Damascus Document, CD XV 15-17; Martinez, 39; God begets the Messiah: The Rule of the Congregation, 1QSa II 5-12; Martinez, 127. Priests with impairments and sancta: Melcher, 66f.

4.3 Some Restriction But Not Unholiness

Ancient interpreters of these Leviticus chapters understood the verses in terms of impairment of the soul. As we saw above, impairment of the body was used to illustrate impairment of the soul. To Philo, for instance, the Leviticus restrictions did not refer to bodily impairment at all. The commandment that priests with impairments may not draw near to the holiest place stood for the fact that those who are “impious and unholy” may not draw near: “For this passage (if there is any passage at all in the whole of scripture which does so) admits of an allegorical interpretation.”⁵³² Elsewhere, Philo makes this explicit:

God designed to teach the Jews by these figures, whenever they went up to the altars, when there to pray or give thanks, never to bring with them any weakness or evil passion in their soul, but to endeavour to make it wholly and entirely bright and clean, without any blemish, so that God might not turn away with aversion from the sight of it.⁵³³

⁵³² Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.60.325-327; Loeb 7:288, 290; Yonge, 565; cf., in sacrificing: “The hands which are laid upon the head of the victim are a most manifest symbol of irreproachable actions, and of a life which does nothing which is open to accusation...his [the priest’s] life shall consist of most virtuous actions” – Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.37.202-204; Loeb 7:214, 216; Yonge, 553.

⁵³³ Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.34.166-167; Loeb 7:192, 194; Yonge, 549; cf., Philo, *Sacr.* 40.139; Loeb 2:194; Yonge, 111; Philo, *Quaest. in Exod.* 1.7; Loeb Supplement 2:14. Cf., improper intention of the priest can render the sacrifice unfit – Steinsaltz, 214; cf., priests not intent upon their service – 2 Maccabees, 4:14. Simon made High Priest because of his faithfulness, justice and loyalty – 1 Maccabees, 14:35; but, as a serving soldier, would he not have some injury from battle?; cf., in hymn: Simon “gave help to all the humble among his people” – 1 Maccabees, 14:14; cf., blameless priests – 1 Maccabees, 4:42. Cf., Blemish: used metaphorically of behaviour – *EJ* 4:1081f, 1084; Gerstenberger, 317. A soul is blemished by a person’s thoughts: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 7.32; *SC* 50:245-246; *ACW* 31:118.

See also in Qumranic texts: Mobility impairment used of soul impairment: 1QS XI 10; Martinez, 18; Rule of the Community, 1QS XI 11-12; Martinez, 18; Apocryphal Psalms, 11QPsalms^a (11Q5 [11QPs^a]), XIX 2-3; Martinez, 305; The Hymns, 4Q427 (4QHodayot^a [4QH^a]), 7.I 18-19; Martinez, 364f; cf., those “who walk without a defect before the Lord” – 2 *Enoch* 9.1; *OTPs* 1:117f. Blindness used of soul impairment: 4QOrdinances^b (4Q513 [4QOrd^b]); Martinez, 91; Commentary on Hosea, 4QHosea Pesher^a II 5-6 (4Q166 [4QP^aHos^a]); Martinez, 192; The Damascus Document, CD I 8-11; Martinez, 33; Rule of the Community,

Philo applied the same interpretation to the sacrifices: “The one who is about to offer a sacrifice ought to examine and see, not whether the victim is without blemish, but whether his mind is sound, and entire, and perfect.”⁵³⁴

For Josephus too, impairment and holiness were not incompatible:

What ground was there for attributing the invisibility of the gods to the presence of people maimed in body or with leprosy? For the gods are not angry at the mutilations of bodies but at wicked practices.⁵³⁵

On occasions, however, Josephus interpreted the Leviticus restrictions as referring to impairment both of body and of soul. Moses, he said,

ordered that the priest, who had any blemish, should have his portion indeed among the priests; but he forbade them to ascend the altar, or to enter into the holy house. He also enjoined them, not only to observe purity in their sacred ministrations, but in their daily conversation, that it might be unblamable also; and on this account it is that those who wear the sacerdotal garments are without spot, and eminent for their purity and sobriety.⁵³⁶

We see this double interpretation also in the Qumranic texts:

And no lame, blind, paralysed person nor any one who has an indelible blemish on their flesh...none of these will go out to war with them. All these shall be volunteers for war, perfect in spirit and body, and ready for the day of vengeance.⁵³⁷

Similarly in early rabbinic tradition, the Israelites were “eager to receive the Torah” in the wilderness but had physical impairments from their building work in Egypt. God

1QS IV 8-11; Martinez, 7; not always with criticism: 4Q Damascus Document^c 8-9 (4Q271 [4QD^f]); Martinez, 57.

⁵³⁴ Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.51.283; Loeb 7:262, 264; Yonge, 561; cf., *ibid.*, 1.48.260; Loeb 7:250; Yonge, 559. See also: “Does the Lord demand bread or lamps or sheep or oxen or any kind of sacrifices at all? That is nothing, but God demands pure hearts, and by means of all these things He tests people’s hearts” – 2 *Enoch* [J] 45.3; *OTPs* 1:172. See also: Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 48; D. P. Wright, 161-165, 177-181; M. J. Davidson, 185f, 230f, 278.

⁵³⁵ Josephus, *C. Apionem* 1.28.256; Loeb 1:266; Whiston, 789.

⁵³⁶ Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 3.12.2.279; Loeb 4:452; Whiston, 98.

⁵³⁷ The War Scroll, 1QM VII 4-5; Martinez, 100; cf., 4QBless, Oh my Soul^a (4Q434 [4Qbar^eki Napshi^a]), 1.I.1-4; Martinez, 436; 1QS VII 1-4; Martinez, 12; 1QS VIII 10, 25; Martinez, 12, 13.

decided to heal them, since “the Torah is without a blemish,” with the result that “not only physically was this generation free from blemishes, but spiritually, too.”⁵³⁸

These different ways of understanding the relation of impairment to holiness are reflected in other biblical texts. It is a familiar restriction on those approaching the holy place to be unblemished in heart:

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to
what is false, and do not swear deceitfully [Psalm 24:3f].

With the offering of sacrifices, as with priests with impairments, it is not the impairment that is unacceptable: intention and motivation are paramount.⁵³⁹ This is the reason why Malachi criticises the offering of impaired victims. “Thinking that the Lord’s table may be despised” [Malachi 1:7] is what makes the offering polluted, not the impairment of the offering. What is unacceptable is the attitude of offerer expressed in the blemished

⁵³⁸ Impaired Israelites, “Eager to receive the Torah”: *LOTJ* 3:213. Impairments resulting from building work in Egypt: *LOTJ* 3:212; *Numbers R.* 7.1, 13.8. Cf., Apion’s quoting of the alleged Egyptian version of the Exodus: Israelites expelled from Egypt for their bodily infirmities – Josephus, *C. Apionem* 2.2.8-2.3.28; Loeb 1:294-302; Whiston, 794f: Dismissed by Josephus as a “novel account...no better than a contrivance of his own.” God’s healing, so that no physical or spiritual blemish: *LOTJ* 3:79. In early rabbinic tradition, it is not always clear whether the disqualifying blemish is being understood in physical, moral, or even ancestral terms – Marx: 609f; e.g., debates about bodily or moral impairment restriction in relation to priests: Preuss, 193; Talmud, *Berachoth* 7, 43a, 44a; relating to the sacrificing of victims: Talmud, *Sukkah* 33a, 33b, *Bechoroth* 14b. Many extra blemishes (physical and moral) in Talmud – *EJ* 4:1083; Rosner, *Medicine in the Mishneh Torah*, 126-134.

⁵³⁹ This interpretation fits an understanding of Temple sacrifice in Orthodox Judaism, for whom the complexities of Torah are a living heritage: Sacks, 918-923; “In contrast to other Divine precepts, motivation is all-important,” *ibid.*, 919; cf., modern interpretation of Leviticus 7:16 that freewill offerings were unconditional and “presumably brought without prior commitment,” Plaut, 786. Compare also the allowance made for unwitting breaking of the law, Leviticus 22:14, recognition of the importance of intention (cf., motivation paramount in dealings with impaired people, Luke 14:14). The importance of the intention behind vows is seen from the injunctions to fulfil vows quickly, e.g. Deuteronomy 23:22-24; to the letter, even if above what is required, Numbers 6:21; annulments are rare, Numbers 30; cf., Jeremiah 44:25, Judges 16:30, 39 (Jephthah), Ecclesiastes 5:4-5: “It is better not to vow at all than to vow and not fulfill.” In contrast, freewill offerings are described at Psalm 119:108, 111 as “my heart’s delight.” In Deuteronomy 16:10, they are a response of thanksgiving made for what has already been received, “According as the Lord your God has blessed you.” This is in contrast to a vow, asking for something to be received in the future.

offering, not the blemished offering itself [Malachi 1:9,10,13]. They are cheats, holding back from the vow what is not impaired [Malachi 1:14], sniffing contemptuously at God and finding their sacrifice tedious [Malachi 1:13].⁵⁴⁰ Here the motivation is clearly the major factor in God finding the impaired offerings unacceptable.⁵⁴¹ It may be that the offerings were made figuratively impaired by the offerers' attitude, hence their puzzled questions, "How have we despised your name?...How have we despised your altar?" [Malachi 1:6f].⁵⁴²

The Leviticus restrictions were also understood in terms of inability – an ancient impairment theme discussed above. In one of the Qumranic texts, people with impairments having contact with the holy places was criticised on the grounds of their inability to fulfil the law's requirements: "for whoever neither sees nor hears, does not know how to apply [the laws of Israel]; but these are approaching the purity of the temple." Similarly, while deliberating whether to give the Torah to the Israelites in the wilderness with impairments, God holds back on the grounds that they "are burdened

⁵⁴⁰ Malachi 1:14 verbally echoes Leviticus 22:19. There may also be an echo of Nathan's parable against David, in which a rich man kills the beloved and only lamb of a poor man, rather than take one from his own large flocks, 2 Samuel 12:4.

⁵⁴¹ cf., true sacrifice, acceptable and pleasing to God, is an impaired heart: Isaiah 66:2, Psalm 51:19. For motivation blemishing the offering, see Sirach 34:21f: "If one sacrifices ill-gotten goods, the offering is blemished; the gifts of the lawless are not acceptable."

⁵⁴² Cf., Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.34.166-167; Loeb 7:192, 194; Yonge, 549: "And the accuracy and minuteness of the investigation is directed not so much on account of the victims themselves, as in order that those who offer them should be irreproachable."

Victims with impairments - can be accepted under some circumstances – such as when refusal would endanger Jews (as happened to start the Jewish War: *EJ* 4:1083 – Talmud, *Gittin* 55b, 56a; Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, 3:87f, 3:297; valid for some offering, such as freewill – *EJ* 4:1082; Steinsaltz, 198, 211; Preuss, 261; Rosner, *Medicine in the Mishneh Torah*, 229-232; Plaut, 786, 789, 916; Levine, 151; Noth, 162f; Budd, 309f, 311; Wenham, 295; Hartley, 359; Gerstenberger, 328, 330; also, once disqualified, a victim may not be consecrated, but it remains sacred – Steinsaltz, 245. Cf., victims with impairments in Qumranic texts: The Temple Scroll, 11Q19 LII 7-11; Martinez, 171.

See also in Greco-Roman texts: "Hermippus, addressing Dionysus, says: 'The poor, indeed, are already sacrificing to thee small maimed cattle' - ἀνάπηρα - Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 12.551; Loeb 5:500f; When sacrificing in India: "neither do they cut the throat of the victim, but strangle it, in order that it may

with defects.” Inability was seen as a restriction in the context of holiness elsewhere: Josephus states that officiating priests did not drink wine “out of this fear, lest otherwise they should transgress some rules of their ministration.”⁵⁴³ This inability could also be seen in terms of vulnerability: the altar and holy place were places of God’s presence, and, as the Hebrew Bible frequently states, there is danger in God’s presence. In the descriptions of Aaron and his descendants putting on and removing the clothes for the holy places, they resemble warriors with armour: for a priest, being in the presence of God can lead to death and protection is needed [Exodus 28:35, 43]. On this understanding, priests with impairments were restricted because they were unable to do their task or because they were additionally vulnerable, not because their impairment rendered them unholy.⁵⁴⁴

In early rabbinic interpretation of the Leviticus impairment chapters, the emphasis is on the visible nature of the priest’s impairment, and to what extent this distracted worshippers. Jewish halakhic interpreters point out how Talmudic literature focuses on the appearance of the priest with an impairment:

Since this was a public performance of great solemnity, there was concern not to detract from the concentration of the congregation upon the gravity of the ritual. Thus in addition to disqualification of ‘kohanim’ for serious moral

be given to the god in its entirety and not mutilated” – μή λελωβημένον ἀλλ’ ὀλόκληρον - Strabo, 15.1.54; Loeb 7:90f.

⁵⁴³ The blind and the deaf unable to fulfil the law’s requirements: Halakhic Letter, 4QMMT 52-58; Martinez, 78. No wine on duty for officiating priests: Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 5.7.228-229; Loeb 3:270; Whiston, 708; cf., Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 3.12.2.279; Loeb 4:452; Whiston, 98. Israelites burdened with defects: *LOTJ* 3:78f. Moses’ choice of priests to a Graeco-Roman observer: Diodorus Siculus, 40.3.4; Loeb 12:282f.

Debates in early Judaism as to whether priests with impairments resulting from old age are disqualified or not: Talmud, *Chullin* 24a.

⁵⁴⁴ Danger in God’s presence: Genesis 32:31, Exodus 33:20, Jeremiah 30:21, Ezekiel 38:20. God’s presence at the altar is expressed at Amos 9:1, and in the holy places, at Leviticus 9:7. My thanks to Dr S. Weeks of the University of Durham for suggesting this interpretation. Cf., Melcher, 66; Wink, 15; Gorman, 147-149

lapses, there was also disqualification for physical deformities that might distract the community from attending to the ritual... It is not a judgement on the spiritual competence of the priest [with impairment], rather a concession to the fragile attention capacity of the congregation, easily distracted.⁵⁴⁵

Similarly, in the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides lists fifty blemishes that disqualify a priest from Temple service, a much larger list than is found in Leviticus. However, according to Maimonides' interpretation

Only blemishes that were externally visible rendered a person unfit; but blemishes that were in the interior of the body... did not render his ministry invalid, even though they made him organically diseased.⁵⁴⁶

We see this emphasis on the visible in other contexts relating to practice at the altar:

“Nor are you to climb to my altar by steps, in case you reveal your nakedness” [Exodus 20:26].⁵⁴⁷

With the priestly blessing, the same rationale for restriction, and for remedy, is made clear:

It is explicitly stated [in Talmudic literature] that a priest so disqualified could and did participate in reciting the priestly blessing. It was, however, laid down that if a kohen had a disfiguration which caused people to stare at him, he was not to recite the priestly blessing, not because the blemish disqualified him but because it would distract the recipients of the blessing. Thus as far as physical blemishes were concerned, this applied only to the hands... [although another tradition] extends this prohibition to the feet, and even to speech impediments. The test was purely pragmatic; thus if the kohen was so well-known that his blemish raised no curiosity, the ban was removed.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ Marx, 339; cf., *ibid.*, 339-346; Preuss, 208, 263f, 289f; cf., Gerstenberger, 316. Emphasis on, for example, prominent and visible eye impairment blemishes: Talmud, *Bechoroth* 36b; cf., only open blemishes count (footnotes, 30, 31): Talmud, *Bechoroth* 39a.

⁵⁴⁶ Rosner, *Medicine in Mishneh Torah*, 126f; with full listing of the fifty blemishes that rendered unfit for Temple service: *ibid.*, 127-134; cf., *EJ* 4:1082f.

⁵⁴⁷ See also on the prohibition of steps: cf., 4QReworked Pentateuch^a (4Q158 [4QRP^a]), 7-8.8; Martinez, 220; for this reason ramps were required in the Temple: Steinsaltz, 202. Cf., a person is not considered to be ritually impure if the impurity is in concealed parts of the body, that is, parts of the body not seen even when the person is naked: Steinsaltz, 170. See also: Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary,” 391f: with an inadvertent offence, it is not the act itself which contaminates, but the consequences of the act.

⁵⁴⁸ *EJ* 4:1083; cf., Steinsaltz, 173, 202, 211; Talmud, *Megilah*, 24b.

We see from the remark of an observer of priests at work in the Temple that this scrupulous attention to the visual dimension of worship brought about the desired effect: “Everything is carried out with reverence and in a manner befitting supreme divinity... Their appearance makes one awe-struck and dumbfounded.” This emphasis in halakha on the visible chimes well with analysis of the Leviticus impairment texts themselves: “the signs of appearance are so dominant in the text that they infuse the text with visual connotations.”⁵⁴⁹

As we have seen, many of these early interpretations of the Leviticus texts drew on themes from other biblical texts. The Hebrew Bible itself also alludes to this Leviticus tradition and apparently reverses it. It is explicitly stated that outwardly correct ritual is rejected, while impairment of heart is required. “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a maimed spirit, a maimed and crushed heart” [Psalm 51:17]. In a similar way, the impaired heart is where God’s presence is: “I dwell on high, in holiness; and also with those whose hearts are crushed and maimed” [Isaiah 57:15]. “The Lord is near to those whose hearts are crushed” [Psalm 34:18]. The imagery here of the crushed heart is an image of impairment: as we saw above, the crushing of a limb resulted routinely in permanent impairment.⁵⁵⁰ The Leviticus tradition is also used to emphasize the paradox

⁵⁴⁹ Awe-inspiring effect of this visual emphasis: *Letter of Aristaeus* 95, 99; *OTPs* 2:19 (ironically, this effect is described in terms of impairment!).

Modern halakhic interpretation continues this emphasis on the visual: Abraham, 201f; cf., Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, 3:146. In Melcher’s analysis, the Leviticus texts are infused “with visual connotations”: Melcher, 63; cf., *ibid.*, 55, 56f, 62-64, 68f. “Decisions about physical purity / impurity have a strongly visual basis”: *ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁵⁰ “This is the one to whom I will look, the one that is humble and crushed in spirit”: Isaiah 66:2 – רִיבָה נִכְהָה. Cf., Psalm 51:17 – נִשְׁבַּר וְנִדְכָה לֵב נִשְׁבַּרָה לֵב נִשְׁבַּרָה; Isaiah 57:15 – רִיבָה נִשְׁבַּרָה לֵב נִשְׁבַּרָה; Psalm 34: 18 – קָרוֹב יְהוָה לְנִשְׁבָּרֵי לֵב וְאֵת דְּכָאֵי.

Impairment and paradox are associated together to demonstrate the unexpectedly effective work of God’s Servant - several different impairment words are used of the Servant: Isaiah 52:14, 53:5, 53:7, 53:10 – see discussion above at text pages 260-268.

of reversal under God's re-established covenant. Those unable to draw near under the former covenant will be able to do so under the restored covenant, even in a priestly role: "Some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord" [Isaiah 66:21]; "Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar." [Isaiah 56:7].⁵⁵¹

New Testament writers also make use of the Leviticus tradition, and do so in order to emphasise Christ's unique nature and action: Christ alone was unblemished and unimpaired as both sacrifice and priest. Also, they draw on the particular image of 'drawing near' to show the effects of Christ's unique action: through what Christ has done, the action of drawing near to the holy place has been universalised. What was previously only available to the few, is now open to all. The imagery alludes explicitly to the Leviticus impairment chapters. All people, even the priests who draw near, are described in terms of blemish through "infirmity" - ἀσθένεια - a word deliberately ambiguous between infirmity of body and of soul. The deficiencies of the old covenant are described in similar terms – the old law is simply incapable of removing this universal human infirmity: "The Law cannot make whole those who draw near" [Hebrews 10:1].⁵⁵² The word for drawing near - προσέρχομαι - is an allusion to the

⁵⁵¹ At Isaiah 56:8, God says that He will gather "yet others...besides those already gathered" (the outcasts of Israel). These include specifically foreigners and eunuchs, whose "burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar" Isaiah 56:7. In the synoptics, the second part of this verse was quoted by Jesus in the Temple: Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46. Both these groups were excluded in the sacrifice passages in Leviticus 21:20, 22:10. Similarly, at Isaiah 66:21- "all your brethren from all the nations" will be brought "as an offering to the Lord"; of these, "Some I will take for priests and for Levites" - Isaiah 66:21. The verse immediately following is quoted in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1, which, with the verse in Isaiah 56 above, suggests that the alternative understanding of acceptable priests and offerings in the HB would have been known to the Early Church.

⁵⁵² Descriptions of Christ's unique nature and action by allusion to the Leviticus impairment chapters: Hebrews 9:14, 7:26, 7:28; cf., Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 1:22. Jesus as High Priest is in contrast to the former High Priests: he does not need to offer sacrifices for himself and for the people: "He did this once

Septuagint version of the Leviticus impairment chapters. It occurs with striking frequency in Hebrews, most famously in the verses adopted in some modern eucharistic liturgy: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” [Hebrews 10:22; cf., *ibid.*, 4:16]. With its technical use of the approach of the worshipper to God, it is used of the believing community who, as a result of the action of Jesus the High Priest, may now draw near (e.g. Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:22; cf., Jude 24).⁵⁵³

The implication of these New Testament passages is that all are blemished. The image of impaired priests who may not approach, until the action of Christ is done, is applied to all people – a familiar use of an impairment theme, as we saw above. The Leviticus 21 and 22 impairment passages are often referred to as a difficulty for the acceptance of people with impairments in theology, as elsewhere. The allusion to these passages in Hebrews shows that this perceived difficulty is empty. Firstly, all people, prior to the action of Christ, are described with the image of the impaired priests who may not approach. Secondly, after the action of Christ, all people – whatever their infirmity – may now draw near.⁵⁵⁴

for all when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:27). Unlike the former High Priests who had ἀσθένειαν (their own sins, *ibid.*, 7:27f) Jesus was made perfect, τετελειωμένον (Hebrews 7:28): “holy, blameless and unstained” (Hebrews 7:26). These writers reinforce their allusions to the Leviticus passages through echoes of the Septuagint Old Testament. The allusion to Leviticus 21 and 22 is made not by the use of technical terms for sacrifice (used in the Septuagint version of Leviticus 21 and 22) but the paradox of Christ being both the unblemished priest who makes the offering which enables others to draw near, and also the offering without blemish who is sacrificed. The two together, with the contrasts of blemished and unblemished, recall the passages of impaired priests and offerings set together in Leviticus.

⁵⁵³ προσέρχομαι as a technical term for a worshipper’s approach to God: MM, 547. Cf., Hebrews 4:16, 7:25, 10:1, 10:22, 11:6; Leviticus 21:16-23; 22:17-25. We can compare also Jeremiah 30:21: “I will make him draw near, and he shall approach me, for who would dare of himself to approach me?” Modern commentators on the Epistle to the Hebrews identify the significance of “drawing near” but not of the relation of this phrase to Leviticus: Attridge, 141, 142, 271, 288, 310, 318, 372; Ellingworth, 269f, 391f, 522f, 669-671, 677f; L. D. Hurst, 94-98; J. Schneider in *TDNT* 2:683f.

⁵⁵⁴ The image of the action of Christ removing blemish is repeated elsewhere in the NT, with the additional message that having been made unblemished, it is possible for believers to make themselves again blemished through misconduct: Colossians 1:23; 1 Peter 1:22; Jude 24; Revelation 14:5.

Early Church writers developed this image of ‘drawing near’ in allusion to the Leviticus impairment chapters. Chrysostom uses the image for the confidence now possible through Christ. As mentioned above, Chrysostom describes people in the Gospels with impairments as “an ample source of encouragement.” An example of such encouragement is that by drawing near to Christ, Gospel characters with impairments give to all people, whatever their bodily or spiritual infirmity, confidence to draw near to Christ: “God wanted to bring us nearer through the gift of baptism... Then infirmity was a hindrance to whoever desired to be healed, now each has power to draw near.” Chrysostom makes the Hebrews allusion explicit: “Let us now then draw near with faith, every one that has an infirmity.” Continuing these allusions, Chrysostom also states that it is both in our own power to be beautiful and unblemished in soul, and also a requirement. With our souls being like a body affected by blemishes, Chrysostom outlines ways of making our hearts clean so that we may “with confidence draw nigh to God”: through repentance, making apologies, driving away wrath, wiping clean the tongue, and alms-giving.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁵ Chrysostom’s allusion to the Leviticus chapters through his use of people with impairments “drawing near” in the context of impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 14.5; *PG* 57:221; *NPNF i* 10:89; *ibid.*, 66.1; *PG* 58:625; *NPNF i* 10:404; *ibid.*, 67.4; *PG* 58:638; *NPNF i* 10:413; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:204; *NPNF i* 14:126 – “now each has the power to draw near”; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 8; *PG* 51:61; *NPNF i* 9:219; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 25.2; *PG* 57:328; *NPNF i* 10:172; *ibid.*, 51.5; *PG* 58:516; *NPNF i* 10:319; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 27.7; *PG* 61:230; *NPNF i* 12:162; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 20.1; *PG* 49:197; *NPNF i* 9:472; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:466; *NPNF i* 13:374.

In a similar way, Chrysostom describes how the woman who came to the house of Simon the leper found confidence to draw near despite her defilement in soul, when she saw that the man with defilement in his body had himself drawn near to Jesus: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 80.1; *PG* 58:723; *NPNF i* 10:480. In our power to be unblemished in soul: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 4; *PG* 62:525; *NPNF i* 13:422; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 20; *PG* 62:138; *NPNF i* 13:145; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 20; *PG* 60:596-597; *NPNF i* 11:496f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 17.9; *PG* 63:134; *NPNF i* 14:150. Particular ways of becoming unblemished: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 51.5; *PG* 58:516; *NPNF i* 10:319; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 67.4; *PG* 58:638; *NPNF i* 10:413; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 20; *PG* 60:596-597; *NPNF i* 11:496f.

Other Early Church writers also made use of this allusion to the Leviticus impairment chapters. Referring to the Gospel examples of people with impairments drawing near to Jesus, Early Church writers used the same image to emphasise the effects of acting with faith: “It is impossible to draw near to God unless faith mediate, and bring the seeking soul into union with the incomprehensible nature of God.” Paul, as a blind person, was able to draw near to God’s presence through his trust and willingness to obey:

“Although Paul was struck and taken up and was terrified because blindness had befallen him, he still began to draw near when he said, ‘Lord, what will You have me do?’” Baptism itself was described in the same way – as those who are blind drawing near to God.⁵⁵⁶

As we have seen, the Leviticus tradition that priests with impairments were not to serve at the altar was interpreted and used in the rhetorical dynamic in various ways – by other Hebrew Bible writers, by New Testament and Early Church writers, and in early Jewish tradition. With the exception of a minority strand within Qumranic material, there is little evidence that impairment was understood in the ancient world to be

⁵⁵⁶ Gospel allusions through the use of “drawing near” – the two blind men draw near to Jesus in faith: Matthew 9:28; the blind and the lame draw near to Jesus in the temple: Matthew 21:14. Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 2.91; Jaeger, 1:253; *NPNF ii* 5:259: “It is impossible to draw near to God unless faith mediate, and bring the seeking soul into union with the incomprehensible nature of God.” Ambrose: in his blindness, Paul “still began to come near when he said, ‘Lord, what will You have me do?’” – “inciperet tamen adpropinquare” – Ambrose, *De Joseph* 10.58; *CSEL* 32.2:110; *FC* 65:225. Two blind men “draw near” with confidence – Jerome, *Comm. in Matt.* 1.1409f; *CCL* 77:60f.

Baptism as a drawing near after the healing of soul impairment – Gregory of Nazianzen, *In sanctum baptisma* 31; *PG* 36:404; *NPNF ii* 7:371.

Some other Early Church allusions to the Leviticus chapters: “Thus in the animals, by the law, as it were, a certain mirror of human life is established” – Novatian, *De cibis iudaicis* 3.9; *CCL* 4:95; *ANF* 5:647 - on this parallel analysis, believers are clean, Jews are blemished, and Gentiles are unclean. Priests’ impairments of body nothing compared to their impairments of soul: Jerome, *Epist.* 64.2; *CSEL* 54:589f. The lack of wholeness that restricts priesthood, from Leviticus 21, understood as referring to the soul not the body: Origen, *Hom. in Leviticum* 12.1.2-3, 12.3.2; *GCS* 29:455-456, 458-459; *FC* 83:219, 222.

incompatible with holiness. In what follows we see this also in the way that ancient writers described and used the mutilation of martyrs, and applied impairment even to God.

4.4 Impairment No Restriction

In both Jewish and Christian texts, with martyrs mutilated under persecution, impairment was seen in terms of respect and honour. This is not without precedent: as we saw above, in Graeco-Roman tradition, soldiers who had received mutilating wounds were, at least on occasions, publicly honoured.⁵⁵⁷ For our purpose here, we will be focusing on how the martyrs' mutilation shows that impairment was not seen as incompatible with holiness. In early Jewish tradition, the priest Eleazar was tortured and martyred by Antiochus. In his mutilation he is described in these terms:

O priest worthy of your priestly office...O mind in perfect unison with the Law, and philosopher of the divine life!...Through your deeds you have ratified your words of divine philosophy. O aged man, mightier than torture...But most wonderful of all, though he was an old man, and the sinews of his body were already unstrung, his muscles all relaxed and his nerves weakened, by means of reason he became youthful again in spirit and by reason like Isaac's prevailed over many-headed torture.⁵⁵⁸

The mutilation of the seven brothers who were tortured with Eleazar is described in a similar way: "Gladly, for the sake of God, do we allow the limbs of our body to be

⁵⁵⁷ Soldiers with mutilating wounds honoured: see above on Athenian provision – Hands, 100, 202; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 49.4; Loeb 20:136-139. Herodotus' praise of Hegestrtaus: Herodotus, 9.37; Loeb 4:202-205. Mutilation received from an enemy not always held in respect: Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 1.4.3; Loeb 1:108f; cf., the mutilation of prisoners, see above at text pages 111-113 and footnotes 183-186.

⁵⁵⁸ *4 Maccabees* 7.6-7, 9-10, 13-14; *OTPs* 2:552f; *2 Maccabees* 6:18-31; cf., Eleazar: "of priestly stock, expert in the Law and advanced in age" – *4 Maccabees* 5.4; *OTPs* 2:549. Cf., the mutilation of Onias: 2

mutilated.” The inscription for their memorial shows how their mutilation was interpreted as demonstrating how they were worthy of national honour: “Through the violence of a tyrant bent on destroying the polity of the Hebrews they vindicated their race, looking unto God and enduring torments even unto death.”⁵⁵⁹

In the early Church too, the mutilation of martyrs was interpreted as evidence of their closeness to God. The blinding and maiming of Christian martyrs was not uncommon during the persecutions. It was explicitly stated that the mutilation of these martyrs’ bodies did not impair their souls.⁵⁶⁰ Augustine went so far as to say that in the Kingdom, such mutilations might not be removed, for they are badges of honour for all to see and respect:

The love we bear to the blessed martyrs causes us, I know not how, to desire to see in the heavenly kingdom the marks of the wounds which they received for the name of Christ, and possibly we shall see them. For this will not be a deformity, but a mark of honour, and will add lustre to their appearance, and a spiritual, if not a bodily beauty...the places where they have been wounded or mutilated shall retain the scars...we are not to reckon or name these marks of virtue blemishes.⁵⁶¹

Maccabees, 15:12-14. We can compare the comment on the priest of Vesta blinded in the temple fire while saving the divine image - see above text at page 271.

⁵⁵⁹ The mutilation and martyrdom of the seven brothers: 2 Maccabees 7:1-42; 4 Maccabees 10.18-21; *OTPs* 2:556; the full story: *ibid.*, 8.1-12.19; *OTPs* 2:553-557. Their memorial: *ibid.*, 17.9-10; *OTPs* 2:562. Cf., Herod’s murder and blinding of the rabbis, for which the great temple that Herod built was an atonement: “As you have extinguished the light of the world, [for so the Rabbis are called] as it is written, For the commandment is a light and the Torah a lamp, go now and attend to the light of the world [which is the Temple, of which] it is written, And all the nations become enlightened by it” – Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 4a; cf., Preuss, 272.

⁵⁶⁰ On maimed and blinded martyrs: Augustine, *Epist.* 88.8-12; *CSEL* 34, 2:414-418; *NPNF i* 1:372f; - cf., *ibid.*, 139.1; *CSEL* 44:148; *NPNF i* 1:488; cf., Cyprian, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate* 11.135; *CCL* 3:253; *ANF* 5:504; Cyprian, *Ad Fortunatum* 11.135; *CCL* 3:207; *ANF* 5:504; Eusebius, *HE* 10.4.32.4; Loeb 2:416-419; Ambrose, *De Jacob et vita beata* 2.11.48; *CSEL* 32.2:63; *FC* 65:177; Athanasius, *Apologia contra Arianos* 15.1.4; Opitz, 98f; *NPNF ii* 4:108. Having eyes gouged out was a characteristic of martyrdom – Musurillo, 100f.

⁵⁶¹ Augustine: *De civitate Dei* 22.19; *CCL* 48:838f; *NPNF i* 2:498 – “non enim deformitas in eis, sed dignitas erit, et quaedam, quamvis in corpore, non corporis, sed virtutibus pulchritudo fulgebat...non sunt tamen deputanda vel appellanda vitia virtutis indicia”.

Augustine uses closely similar terms to describe Christ on the cross: “deformitas Christi te format...pendebat ergo in cruce deformis, sed deformitas illius pulchritudo nostra erat...haec est deformitas Christi...huius deformitas signum in fronte portamus...de ista deformitate Christi non

A further dimension emerges in Early Church descriptions of the martyrs' mutilation. Martyrs were said to mimic Christ. "He firmly held forth his hands to be cut off, greatly happy...since it was his lot to imitate, by stretching forth his hands, the form of his Lord's passion."⁵⁶² In the Christian histories of the persecutions, martyrs were frequently associated with Christ, "the true martyr", and with Stephen, "the perfect martyr" (just as in the Acts of the Apostles also close parallels are made between Stephen and Jesus).⁵⁶³ However, it was not only in their sufferings and deaths that martyrs were associated with Christ. There is a manuscript variation in the institution narrative of 1 Corinthians 11:24, altering Jesus' words at the Last Supper that the bread as his body is not "given" as the regular text has it, but "broken." The Eucharist was originally known as *κλάσις* – the Breaking – which commentators explain as an allusion to the feeding miracles. However, there seems to be a further element to this breaking image for the Eucharist. The phrase in the Eucharistic prayer, that Christ's body is "broken" rather than "given", is widespread in early Eucharistic liturgy. Given that there was at this time a freedom for presidents at the Eucharist to pray *extempore*, and that the phrase declines in frequency in the 4th century CE, why was there this association in liturgy, during a particular period, that Christ's body was broken –

erubescamus" – Augustine, *Sermones* 27; *CCL* 41:365. Augustine is developing a theme also apparent in the paradoxes of Latin love poetry: "Deformem quidam te dicunt, Crispa...mi pulchra es" – Ausonius, 88; Loeb, 296f.

⁵⁶² Cyprian, *Ad Fortunatum* 11.135; *CCL* 3:207; *ANF* 5:504 – Cyprian appropriates the martyrdom of Jews under Antiochus.

⁵⁶³ Martyrs mimic Christ: Eusebius, *HE* 5.2.2; Loeb 1:436f; cf., *ibid.*, 4.15.42; Loeb 1:356f; *ibid.*, 5.2.2f; Loeb 1:436-439; *ibid.*, 8.10.3; Loeb 2:280f; cf., Polycarp, *Martyrdom of Polycarp* passim; Loeb 2:313-343. Christ the true martyr: Eusebius, *HE* 5.2.3; Loeb 1:438f. Stephen the perfect martyr: Eusebius, *HE* 5.2.5; Loeb 1:438-441. Stephen paralleled with Christ: Acts 6-7; martyrs linked to Stephen: Eusebius, *HE* 5.2.5 Loeb 1:438-441; cf., Stephen appearing at the torture of Florentinus: P. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 102.

especially as it is stressed in John's Gospel that in fulfilment of prophecy Jesus' body was not broken [John 19:36]?⁵⁶⁴

It appears that during a particular period, perhaps because martyrdom was current or fresh in the Church's memory, parallels were made between the martyrs and Christ, not simply in their sufferings and deaths, but also in the broken bodies of the martyrs and the broken body of Christ. The broken body of Christ as represented in the bread of the Last Supper was seen by the early Church as a figure for the broken bodies of the martyrs.⁵⁶⁵ The paradox was drawn out that the martyrs' broken bodies were powerful,

⁵⁶⁴ Manuscript variation of 1 Corinthians 11:24 - κλωμενον and θρυπτομενον: Nestle-Aland, 460. These same words occur in early Eucharistic liturgies: in Hanggi, *Prex Eucharistica*, of the 48 early liturgies given, 31 use the variation of Christ's body "broken" rather than "given." The additional phrase included in Early Church institution narratives, until 4th century: Jasper and Cuming, 35, 48, 56, 65, 77, 92, 110, 119, 126, 132, 140, 142, 145, 150, 157. Eucharist known as κλάσις - the Breaking: Bauer, 433; Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 755; *TDNT* 3:727-730. Eucharistic presidents pray *extempore* - recorded by Hippolytus: Jasper and Cuming, 36.

Contemporary eucharistic liturgies that include the image of Christ's body broken: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 87; Church of Scotland, 10; Moravian Church, 51; Presbyterian Church, 71; Morley, *All Desires Known*, 47, 49. Contemporary eucharistic hymns also including the phrase – a few examples: *Rejoice and Sing*, Hymn numbers 443, 449, 460; *Hymns Ancient & Modern*, Hymn numbers 403, 409; *Mission Praise*, Hymn numbers 66, 214, 260, 622, 635. Compare also the title and contents of Vanier, *The Broken Body*.

⁵⁶⁵ At crucifixion, a person's body is broken on the cross: διακοπόμενος – John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 4.28; *SC* 50:197; *ACW* 31:77. The same word is used of the mutilation or amputation of limbs: *LSJ*, 398.

Association of martyrs and the Eucharist:

- a) in liturgy: Jasper and Cuming, 49; see also *ibid.*, *passim* in eucharist intercessions.
- b) in location: - the doctrine of the communion of saints arising from a sense of the presence of martyrs at their tombs during the Eucharist: Perham, 20f, 70, 82.
- c) in cult: "The saint in heaven was believed to be present at his tomb on earth": P. Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 3; cf., *ibid.*, 4, 8, 11, 50-68.

Verbal associations of breaking between martyrs' bodies and Eucharistic bread: θρύπτω and κλάσις both used of Eucharist and bodies: Bauer, 364, 433; cf., διακλάω, συνθράνω, συντριβώ. In LXX, these are used of שבר as impairment, e.g. Leviticus 21:19; cf., Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 350, 1331, 1343. κλώμενος is used of Jewish martyrs under torture, 4 Maccabees 9:14. In the introduction to the Apocrypha in NRSV it is pointed out that the early Church canonised the Maccabean martyrs: NRSV, xii. Eusebius uses neither θρύπτω nor κλάσις but specific terms of torture, e.g. *HE* 3.36.9, Loeb 1:282f; *HE* 4.15.31, Loeb 1:352f; *HE* 5.1.23, Loeb 1:416f; *HE* 6.41.18, Loeb 2:106f. However, compounds of the Eucharist words do appear in Eusebius' descriptions of torture, e.g. διακλάσαντες: Eusebius, *HE* 6.41.8, Loeb 2:102. Other possible Eucharistic imagery is also used: e.g. the burning body of Polycarp is "as bread that is being baked" - *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 15.2, Loeb 2:332f; Irenaeus is "true bread...the wheat of God ground by the teeth of the beasts" – Eusebius, *HE* 3.36.12, Loeb 1:284f. Sated with the number of martyrs' deaths, torturers at Pontus turned to mutilation, removing both eyes and a foot; Eusebius

despite all appearances, just as the broken body of Christ at the crucifixion was paradoxically powerful: “Dare we think of His pierced body in that pain and weakness, from which the spirit of faith in Him rescued the glorious and blessed martyrs?”⁵⁶⁶ In the interaction of the experience, scriptural interpretation and liturgy of the Early Church, a significant theme emerged: the power that comes from broken bodies. As we have seen above, this paradox associated especially with impairment was already familiar to the Early Church, both in ancient culture in general, and in Paul’s Epistles in particular. In addition, as we saw above, in the reversal of the Leviticus tradition by other Hebrew Bible writers, broken bodies were the place of God’s presence – where God dwells. Similarly, Paul boasts in his infirmities, because it is in his infirmities that Christ makes his dwelling [2 Corinthians 12:5-10]. From these various uses of impairment imagery in the context of holiness, by Hebrew Bible writers, by New Testament and Early Church writers, and by early Jewish writers, it is clear that the Leviticus impairment chapters did not at all influence ancient interpreters into seeing impairment as incompatible with holiness.

The view that “God’s holiness is profaned by anything less than perfect” was not a mainstream one in the ancient world: impairment was linked to the divine on many occasions and in many different ways, as we have seen above. In Egypt, people of

explicitly counts these impaired people as equal to those who underwent death: “Their brave and good deeds surpass all reckoning” Eusebius, *HE* 8.12.10, Loeb 2:292f. Compare martyrs at Cappodocia whose legs were smashed, Eusebius, *HE* 8.12.1, Loeb 2:286-289.

⁵⁶⁶ Christ’s body pierced in weakness on the cross: Hilary, *De Trinitate* 10.46; *CCL* 62A:499f; *NPNF* ii 9:146. Cf., paradoxical power of martyrs’ broken bodies: e.g. Sanctus’ body – “wrenched and torn out of human shape, but Christ suffering in him manifested great glory, overthrowing the adversary” – Eusebius, *HE* 5.1.23, Loeb 1:416f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 4.7; *PG* 61:35; *NPNF* i 12:19f. Broken body of Christ on the cross as powerful in NT: 2 Corinthians 13:4. Christ crucified in weakness – paradoxically powerful, for “there is nothing more powerful than the humility of God” – Augustine, *Epist.* 232; *CSEL* 57:516; *NPNF* i 1:587.

restricted growth were held in high regard because of the positive associations with the gods of small stature. Impairment imagery was also used of gods in Graeco-Roman traditions. The war god Ares was said to be blind as a way of describing war's indiscriminate destruction, just as wealth's haphazard nature was portrayed in the proverbial blindness of the god Plutus. The gods were also said to be blinded by anger, just as humans are. Hephaistus famously was the lame god. However, as we have seen, especially with Hephaistus, impairment was applied to the gods in similar ways to the use of impairment in other respects: in terms of difficulties, inability, abilities and usefulness. There is no indication that there was any sense that impairment applied to the gods was profaning the gods' holiness. Even when Hephaistus was being mocked by Christian writers as an example of the emptiness of pagan deities, he was ridiculed for his lameness in the course of the Olympian shenanigans, but there was no suggestion that a god with an impairment profanes divine holiness.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁷ Imperfection profanes God's holiness: R. K. Harrison, 211f. Egyptian gods of small stature: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 9-98. Ares the blind: Sophocles fragment quoted in Plutarch, *Mor.*, *Amatorius* 757b; Loeb 9:352f. The gods blinded by anger: Apollonius Rhodius, 4.816f; Loeb, 350f. Wealth blind: Diogenes Laertius, *Demetrius* 5.82; Loeb 1:534f; cf., Zeus' daughters, the *Litae*, the Prayers – are lame: Homer, *Iliad* 9:503; Loeb 1:418f. Egyptian god Horus as maimed, and the sun god blind: Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De Iside et Osiride* 373b-e; Loeb 5:132-5; the blind son of Poseidon, Orion: Hesiod, Fr. *Astronomy* 4; Loeb, 70f; Hyginus, *Poetica Astronomica* 2.34; Vire, 81; M. Grant, 221. Another blind son of Poseidon, Polyphemus: Homer, *Odyssey* 9.318-402; Loeb 1:324-331. The god-emperor Claudius was lame and sight impaired – Claudius' impairment mocked by Seneca (the Younger) in *Apocolocyntosis* 5, 6, 11, 12; Loeb, 380f, 382-385, 394f, 398f; however, in Seneca's parody of Claudius' apotheosis, his impairment is mocked, but it is not a focus. Hephaistus – his lameness not unsightly: Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.30.83; Loeb 19:80f. The lame Hephaistus as highly skilful: Hesiod, *Opera et Dies* 70, 60-71; Loeb, 6f; Hesiod, *Theogonia* 571; Loeb, 120f; Hesiod, *Scutum Herculis* 318-320; Loeb, 242f; Homer, *Iliad* 1.607f; Loeb 1:48f; cf., *ibid.*, 14.238-241; Loeb 2:84f; *ibid.*, 14.338f; Loeb 2:90f; *ibid.*, 18.368-615; Loeb 2:314-335; Homer, *Odyssey* 8.300; Loeb 1:278f. Hephaistus as teacher of humankind: *Homeric Hymn to Hephaistus*; Loeb, 446f. Hephaistus in dreams as a sign of good fortune: Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 2.37; Pack, 172; White, 121. Hephaistus mocked by Graeco-Roman writers: e.g., Lucian, *De sacrificiis* 6; Loeb 3:160f. Early Church mockery of Hephaistus - Athanasius uses Hephaistus' impairment to attack the pagan deities in general: "Who will fail to recognise their feebleness?...Who that sees...Hephaistus hurled down and going lame, will not recognise their real nature?" - Athanasius, *C. gentes* 12; *PG* 25:28; *NPNF ii* 4:10; cf., Ps-Justin Martyr, *Oratio ad Graecos* 3; *PG* 6:235; *ANF* 1:272; Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 3; *PTS* 43-44:109f; *ANF* 2:112; Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 76; *PG* 26:949; *NPNF ii* 4:216; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*

Early Church writers discussed impairment and infirmity explicitly in relation to God, especially in the light of the Isaiah 53 image of the mute lamb, and of Paul's phrase from 1 Corinthians 1:25 that the weakness of God is greater than human strength. They did so for different purposes. In an apologetic context, impairment and infirmity were rejected as inappropriate of God or Christ, but the reasons given do not suggest that impairment or infirmity were seen to desecrate God.⁵⁶⁸ However, at other times, impairment and infirmity were useful tools for Early Church writers to apply directly to Christ:

The strength of Christ created thee, the weakness of Christ created thee anew. He fashioned us by His strength, He sought us by His weakness. As weak, He nourishes the weak, as a hen her chickens... Jesus was weak in the flesh: but do not thou become weak; but in His weakness be strong.⁵⁶⁹

4.50; Marcovich, 77f; ANF 2:185; Gregory of Nazianzen - γέλωτος ἀμετρίαν ὁ καταχωλεύων θεός - C. Julianum imperatorem 121; PG 35:661.

Plutus the god Wealth is also ridiculed for his impairment, as both blind and blinding: Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.2.10.2; SC 158:28; ANF 2:273; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.5; PG 8:1236; ANF 2:413.

⁵⁶⁸ Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 22.5; SC 199:346f; NPNF ii 4:48 – “It was unfitting for sickness to precede His death, lest it should be thought weakness on the part of Him that was in the body” – ἵνα μὴ ἀσθένεια τοῦ ἐν τῷ νομισθῆ. Gregory of Nyssa, *Adv. Macedonianos de Spiritu Sancto* 36; Muller, 3.1:91; NPNF ii 5:316 – If Deity fails and comes short of perfection in any single point, in that point the conception of Deity will be impaired, so that it cannot, therein, be or be called Deity at all – χωλεύσει καὶ ὁ τῆς θεότητος λόγος. “He is self-sufficient, and self-maintained, and free from infirmity” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 4; PG 62:523; NPNF i 13:421. “Dare we allege infirmity in that nature, whose natural force could counteract all the natural infirmities of man?” – Hilary, *De Trinitate* 10.28. 6, 9; CCL 62A:483f; NPNF i 9:189. “Was He Himself weak, whose faith even through the instrumentality of others reigned over all things?” – John Cassian, *De Incarnatione Domini* 7.19; CSEL 17:376; NPNF ii 11:614. But: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 10; PG 60:85; NPNF i 11:64: “If He that was crucified effects such great things, and makes the lame to walk, we fear not these men.” Also, “Condemn Him not then of weakness for permitting us to fall into it [persecution]. So powerful is He that after our fall, He is able to snatch us out again out of the flame” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 18.6; PG 61:150; NPNF i 12:104.

⁵⁶⁹ Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 15.7; CCL 36:153; NPNF i 7:100f.

Cf., Taking flesh as the best means of displaying the bounty and power of God – Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 9.12; CCL 2:932; ANF 3:552. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 1.11.8; CCL 32:12; NPNF i 2:525 – “Wisdom condescended to adapt Himself to our weakness, and to show us a pattern of holy life in the form of our humanity... And since we when we come to Him become strong, He when He came to us was looked upon as weak” – “cum ad nos venit, quasi infirma existimata est”. “It was necessary that He should come in such form that He might bear our sins and suffer pain for us; for it did not become Him in glory to bear our sins and suffer pain for us” – Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 12.29; GCS 40:132f; ANF 4:465. “Infirmum Dei” – human nature of Christ as weakness (born of Mary):

Similar images were used in the context of describing the crucifixion: believers hold in their inner selves “this so great mystery, and honour inwardly in the heart this weakness and foolishness of God.” Impairment and infirmity used of Christ are paradoxical – that is the power of the image – but taking flesh and entering death were seen to perfect Christ’s holiness, not to pollute it. And like Augustine’s vision of martyrs in the Kingdom, even in His resurrected body, Christ is known by his wounds, not shamefully, but with honour.⁵⁷⁰

In the Hebrew Bible, and in early Jewish tradition, impairment imagery was applied directly to God – again with no sense of profaning God. Rather, as with early Christian uses of impairment and infirmity imagery, the effect was to express paradox about God. Firstly, God is able to see all things, but God is also said to be unable to look on

Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 8.9; *CCL* 36:87; *NPNF i* 7:61; - *ibid.*, 15.7; *CCL* 36:153; *NPNF i* 7:100f; cf., Augustine, *C. Faustum* 12.23; *CSEL* 25:351; *NPNF i* 4:190; Augustine, *De Trinitate* 13.14; *CCL* 50A:407; *NPNF i* 3:177; Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 10.28.34; *CCL* 47:303f; *NPNF i* 2:198f; Hilary, *De Trinitate* 3.8; *CCL* 62:78-79; *NPNF ii* 9:63f; Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 5.5; *CSEL* 47:587; *ANF* 3:440. See also in NT: Philippians, 2:5-8 – the *kenosis* of Christ.

Christ at the crucifixion: “There is nothing more powerful than the humility of God” – “nihil...potentius humilitate divina” – Augustine, *Epist.* 232.6; *CSEL* 57:516; *NPNF i* 1:586f.

See also: Savage, *passim*; cf., Hanson, *passim*.

⁵⁷⁰ “The elect hold in their inner self this so great mystery, and honour inwardly in the heart this weakness and foolishness of God” – Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 16.2.60, 67; *CCL* 48:500; *NPNF i* 2:310; cf., *ibid.*, 10.28.34; *CCL* 47:303f; *NPNF i* 2:198f. “Thinking only of the power of the Messiah, they did not understand His weakness, in which He died for us” – Augustine, *C. Faustum* 12.44; *CSEL* 25:372; *NPNF i* 4:197; cf., Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 59.9.39; *CCL* 39:761; Tweed *et al.*, 3:170; Novatian, *De Trinitate*, 15.35; *CCL* 4:37; *ANF* 5:624; Hilary, *De Trinitate*, 10.46; *CCL* 62A:499f; *NPNF ii* 9:194; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 51.2; *PG* 59:284; *NPNF i* 14:184; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.*, 10; *PG* 60:85; *NPNF i* 11:64; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 4.6; *PG* 61:34-35; *NPNF i* 12:19f; “And thus whatever had belonged to a twofold substance, has become attached to a single Power. Since there is no sort of doubt that Christ, who was crucified through human weakness lives entirely through the glory of His Divinity” – John Cassian, *De Incarnatione Domini* 3.3; *CSEL* 17:264; *NPNF ii* 11:564. Martin emphasised that Christ will be known at His coming in glory, not by the purple and crown, but by the wounds of the cross – Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini* 24; *SC* 133:308; *NPNF ii* 11:16. “Infirmum Dei” also applicable to Christ “since He is subjected to the limitation of ignorance” – Hilary, *De Trinitate* 9.58; *CCL* 62A:437; *NPNF ii* 9:175 – “inbecillum in ignorantiae eum infirmitate detineat”.

unrighteousness: “When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you”

[Isaiah 1:15]. This gives rise to appeals being made to God not to be unable:

You whose eyes are too pure to look on evil, Who cannot countenance wrongdoing, why do You countenance treachery, and stand by unable to speak [תִּהְרִישׁ] while the one in the wrong devours the one in the right? [Habakkuk 1:13].

Using words for the various inabilities of being speechless, unable to hear, and unable to see, worshippers call on God to punish wrongdoers and protect the righteous: “To thee, O Lord, I call; my rock, be not deaf to me” [Psalm 28:1]. Early Jewish writers applied impairment to God in a similar way: for example, an image of muteness was used of God’s self-restraint in the face of Titus’ blasphemy in the Holy of Holies. From these passages it is clear that impairment was not seen to profane holiness: it would make no sense at all for people wanting God to intervene for them to use words in addressing God that were profaning Him!⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷¹ God able to see all things: Job, 34:21, Jeremiah 32:19; cf., Job 14:3, Lamentations 3:56.

God unable to look on unrighteousness: Isaiah 1:15; cf., Isaiah 33:15: “He who walks in righteousness...stops his ears against listening to infamy, shuts his eyes against looking at evil.” God hides his eyes - אָן / עֵלַם עֵינַי: Isaiah 1:15; this image used positively – of past troubles forgotten: Isaiah 65:16. God is unable to see - אָן / עֵלַם עֵינַי: Psalm 10:1 (answered in vv. 14-15); cf., Psalm 94:7-11. That ‘hiding eyes’ is understood as impairment is seen from the description of Satan as the Blind One, because he “sees not the righteous”: *LOTJ* 4:121.

God without the ability to hear - הִרְשָׁה: Psalm 28:1-2; Psalm 83:2 (this is the Rabbinic word used of deaf-mutism); אָן / עֵלַם עֵינַי: Lamentations 3:56; cf., Isaiah 1:15, Psalm 69:18. The reference to God as rock in the context of not being deaf at Psalm 28:1 may have some quasi-taunting link to the image of stones as mute: see above at text pages 215-216 and footnote 401. Deafness of God understood positively by deaf people: Wenig, 133f. Wenig quotes, *ad loc.*, Christine Smith: “One of the challenges of the disabilities communities will surely be to suggest that God is paralysed, blind or deaf.” As has been recently said: “One of my abiding impressions in writing biblical commentaries is that there is nothing new under the sun; few modern discussions add anything that is wholly unanticipated in the ancient versions” - Goldingay, *After Eating the Apricots*, 237.

God silent – דָּמָם / דִּמְמָה: Psalm 83:2. God admits being silent for too long - הִרְשָׁה: Isaiah 42:14 (cf., modern Jewish liturgy: Yom Kippur service – in the context of the Holocaust, “Let us ask ourselves about silence, the silence of God and the silence of man”: Raynor and Stern, 299f). Silence of God asked for - דָּמָם / דִּמְמָה: Jeremiah 47:6-7.

Many of these examples are of the impairment as inability / refusal theme identified above. Elsewhere, in an ironic way, God is asked to be impaired: “When will you be quiet at last? Withdraw...and be silent!” (דָּמָם / דִּמְמָה: Jeremiah 47:6). Suggesting that the imagery and the word-play itself was a familiar device, in several psalms impairment is applied to God within a formal structure. Psalm 39: I was silent (vv. 2-3), I will not be silent! (v. 4) I was silent (v. 9) Do not be deaf! (v. 13) [הִרְשָׁה, אָלַם]. Psalm 50: God is not silent

Secondly, the imagery of maiming, of shattering, is applied by God to Himself: “I was crushed [נִשְׁבַּרְתִּי] by their wanton heart that turned away from me” [Ezekiel 6:9 – NRSV translation]. The image is a violent breaking, from שָׁבַר – used in the Leviticus impairment chapters of a disqualifying injury to a priest [Leviticus 21:9]. The same image, as we have seen, is used of the shattering of hearts that is the human place where God dwells. Here Ezekiel has God use the image of Himself, to describe the effect on Him of what His people are doing. The reading does have difficulties: textual critics, commentators, and translators are divided on the verse, and there is no conclusive solution. Even so, in the latest mainstream Christian and Jewish translations, the impairment image applied by God to Himself is maintained. Similar examples can be found in rabbinic texts. God’s glory or likeness were said to be impaired by false teaching, by a person not fulfilling the human function of being in relationship, by the shedding of blood, and by the fact that Israel is in exile. Whatever energy these images carry – the paradox of God impaired – the fact that impairment imagery was applied to God demonstrates that impairment was not seen to be incompatible with, nor profaning, even God’s own holiness.⁵⁷²

(v. 3), God will speak judgement (v. 7), “I was silent, and you thought I was like you” (v. 21), “I will speak judgement against you” (v. 21) [הִרְעִי].

Muteness used of God of self-restraint at blasphemy of Titus: Talmud, *Gittin* 56b.

⁵⁷² The same word is used, for example, of a smashed jug: Isaiah 30:14. LXX reading is described as “impossible textually”: Greenberg, 134; see also: Cooke, 74.

Among the commentators, Zimmerli (189f), Brownlee (100), Carley (42), and Cooke (74) favour an active sense. In contrast, Greenberg suggests that “how God was grieved at them is a fitting penitential thought,” and refers to Genesis 6:6 as an example of God’s similar reaction to the behaviour of his people: Greenberg, 134.

The translators similarly differ: “I am broken” (Authorised Version); “I have been broken” (Revised Version); “I was brokenhearted” (*Tanakh*, 899); diluted versions: “I was grieved” (New English Bible, New International Version); “I was disgraced” (Good News Bible in footnote *ad loc.*). The verb taken actively, i.e. God is said to cause the injury to the people: (Revised Standard Version, Jerusalem Bible, Good News Bible). “Gross and improbable” is Westermann’s comment on the notion of God’s

Finally, whatever interpretation of the Leviticus impairment chapters different groups adopted, there are records of priests with impairments who did serve at the altar. There was Eli the priest, in tradition the High Priest, “whose eyesight had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see” [1 Samuel 3:2, 4:15]. His family had been chosen by God to be a priestly family from the time in the Wilderness, or even in Egypt [1 Samuel 2:27f]. As a blind priest he used to sleep in the Temple “in his own place” [1 Samuel 3:2], which tradition interpreted as in the sanctuary. In a prophecy spoken to Eli, he is told: “I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind” [1 Samuel 2:35]. This fits the understanding outlined above that a priest was to be unblemished not in body but in soul, especially as Eli’s sons are described as “worthless men...[who] treated the offering of the Lord with contempt” [1 Samuel 2:12-17]. Also, in the context of discussing Moses’ speech impairment, it was said of Moses: “He performed a priest’s service in the Tabernacle.” Moses was even said to have been “a High Priest, and [he] received a share of the holy sacrifices.” Michael the Archangel complains to God of the unseemliness of Jacob’s priesthood when he is lame. God replies to Michael affirming the priesthood of Jacob, impairment and all: “Thou art my priest in heaven, and he is my priest in earth.” With the

impairment, although he uses the same notion to interpret Isaiah 42:18-2, where he also compares Isaiah 40:27: Westermann, 109.

We can compare the remarks of commentators on Paul’s paradoxical statement that God’s inability is greater than human ability in NT: 1 Corinthians 1:25.

God’s glory / likeness impaired – by false teaching: *Genesis R.* 1.5; by not fulfilling the human function of being in relationship: *Genesis R.* 17.2, 17.3; by shedding blood: *Genesis R.* 34.14; by Israel in exile: *Numbers R.* 11.7.

synagogue seen in Talmudic texts as “the Temple in miniature”, we might also include the many rabbis with impairments.⁵⁷³

In Christian tradition too, when Zechariah the priest became impaired while serving at the altar, the worshippers reacted not with shock at his impurity, that his presence at the altar was profaning God’s holiness. Rather, they assumed correctly that Zechariah had experienced a vision. With this impairment, Zechariah continued to carry out his priestly duties until “his time of service was ended” [Luke 1:22f]. We have already seen particular priests with impairments mentioned by Early Church writers, such as Bishop Maris who was blind, and Acacius, Bishop of Caesarea, who was blind in one eye and nicknamed “One-Eye.” Jerome himself was a priest, and he describes his own impairments in old age – loss of sight, hand tremor and speech impairment. In a similar way, Bishop Augustine refers to his own infirmities from his “very many years”; they are unspecified, but they impaired his mobility. Institutionally in the Early Church, a candidate for the priesthood was not excluded on the grounds of impairment: “he may be ordained, for the defect of the body does not defile a man, but the pollution of the soul.”⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷³ Eli the High Priest: *LOTJ* 4:59, 4:157. Eli, specifically as a blind priest, slept by the doorpost of the Temple: *Exodus R.* 33:4; in the sanctuary: *EJ* 6:613f. Despite his speech impairment, Moses “performed a priest’s service in the Tabernacle” – *LOTJ* 2:326; however, at *LOTJ* 3:168: God says to Moses at his disappointment at not being made high priest that he, Moses, can make the appointment of Aaron (though God could have done it Himself without informing Moses), “That thou mayest have an opportunity of showing the people thy humility, in that thou dost not seek this high office for thyself.” Moses as High Priest: Talmud, *Zevachim* 101b. God confirms the lame Jacob as His priest: *LOTJ* 1:385. Synagogues as the temple in miniature: Steinsaltz, 169.

⁵⁷⁴ Blind Bishop Maris: Socrates, *HE* 3.12; *GCS* nf 1:206f; *NPNF* ii 2:85; Sozomenos, *HE* 5.4.8-9; *GCS* 50:198; *NPNF* ii 2:329. Bishop Acacius, blind in one eye: Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 98; *PL* 23:700; *NPNF* ii 3:380. Jerome’s own impairments – loss of sight: Jerome, *Epist.* 33.5; *CSEL* 54:259; *NPNF* ii 6:46; - cf., Jerome, *Epist.* 4.1; *CSEL* 54:20; *NPNF* ii 6:6; also, hand tremor and speech impairment: Jerome, *Epist.* 60.1; *CSEL* 54:549; *NPNF* ii 6:124. Augustine’s own infirmities: Augustine, *Epist.* 269; *CSEL* 57:654; *NPNF* i 1:593. Abbot Paul: John Cassian, *Collationes* 7.26; *CSEL* 13:204f; *NPNF* ii 11:371f; cf., Abbot Chaeremon: John Cassian, *Collationes* 11.4; *CSEL* 13:316; *NPNF* ii 11:416. Bodily

The Leviticus impairment chapters were interpreted in many different ways by ancient writers. Some, like Philo, saw the references to impairment as having no reference to bodily impairment at all. Others, such as Josephus, interpreted the texts as referring to impairment both of body and of soul. The Qumranic texts also interpreted the chapters as including both, with a minority strand that saw bodily impairment as incompatible with the presence of holiness. Several Hebrew Bible writers alluded to and reversed the tradition of the Leviticus texts, declaring that the impaired heart is the place of holiness to which God Himself draws near. Early Christian writers universalised the texts in order to emphasise the unique nature and action of Christ, and focussed on the particular image of drawing near. Rabbinic tradition interpreted the texts as emphasising the visible nature of impairment, distracting to those unfamiliar with a particular person's impairment. In both Jewish and Christian texts, with the mutilation of martyrs under persecution by pagans, impairment was seen as a badge of honour. All the ancient interpreters we have been investigating, except a minority strand within Qumranic material, interpreted the Leviticus texts in ways that show clearly that bodily impairment was not seen as unacceptable to God, nor as incompatible with holiness, even God's own holiness.

impairment not a defilement for priesthood candidates: quoted from a canon "compiled by the middle of the 4th century": Plumlee, 113f.

5.0 *Conclusion*

This chapter questions the modern assertion that impairment was viewed by people in the ancient world as negative in its effects. It is misleading to state that people with impairments were in general regarded with disdain and were socially marginalised, and that this was reflected in ancient texts through characterisation that lacked depth and through predominantly negative imagery. The difficulties and inability of impairment were not underestimated; but they were not the sole ancient perspective on impairment. The abilities and usefulness of impairment were also well established themes.

The assertion that the ancients found impairment incompatible with holiness is also false. On occasions and in specific ways, impairment did restrict the function of priests. The relationship between impairment, priesthood and public worship was understood in various ways – but impairment itself was not, even in these contexts, regarded as impure or unholy. The Leviticus impairment texts were interpreted to a great extent in terms of impairment of the soul rather than bodily impairment. Through the martyrs' mutilation, and the linking of impairment imagery even to God, impairment was associated explicitly with holiness. Modern preoccupation with the negative effects of impairment impoverishes the interpretation of ancient texts and alienates people with impairments – and does so without critical basis.

The breadth of ancient understanding about impairment's effects resulted from a common knowledge of impairment – impairment was widely experienced. With this authority, ancient perspectives on the effects of impairment provide a stimulation to the

preconceptions of people in the modern era who themselves experience impairment as mainstream. Given that the negative emphasis ascribed to the ancients is so partial, what current appropriation can be made of the ancients' experience of impairment as one of ability, paradox, usefulness and benefit? What of the imagery used by the Early Church to describe the unique nature and action of Christ, the Eucharist, and the holding together of the Church – can any of this be appropriated today? And in what ways can the experience and analysis of ancients inform the tentative modern attempts to understand God as impaired and disabled?

CHAPTER 4

ANCIENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE TAKING AWAY OF IMPAIRMENT

1.0 Introduction

For modern interpreters, the predominant focus for interpreting the impairment healings is their historicity: whether or not impairment healings occurred in biblical times and whether or not they occur in the modern era. For some interpreters, there is and was nothing miraculous: the impairment healings of the Bible did not occur – they were simply “a primitive way of expressing reality.” Biblical texts making such historically false assertions are therefore held as suspect in other respects.⁵⁷⁵ Other interpreters maintain that the healing of impairment did occur in biblical times, and that “there is no reason that what happened then should not still happen in the Church today.”

Sometimes this assertion is made with great confidence even in relation to impairment:

“It is God’s response to your faith that brings healing...Claim God’s miracle today!”⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ Miracles as a primitive expression: quoted in MacNutt, 44-46. Summaries of such arguments and of responses to them: Kelsey, *passim*; Mackie, 13-29; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 193f; C. Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind*, *passim*; Craig, 9-48; Dayton, 115-127; Addinall, 25f, 38, 135-137, 152-154; Green and McKnight, 304f; Ruthven, 13-111; Houston, *passim*; McGrath, 230-250; Kent, 251-271; Lindras, “Elijah, Elisha,” 75; G. F. Woods, 21-42; Kallas, 77-102; Richardson, “Miracle Stories,” 20-37; Hendrickx, 1-33; Clements, 282; Macquarrie, “The figure of Jesus,” 920; Kydd, *passim*; Lay, *Seeking Signs*, 53-57.

⁵⁷⁶ Impairment healing no less possible now: Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*, 171; cf., *ibid.*, 168-171. “Claim God’s miracle today!”: Hinn, 189f; see also *ibid.*, *passim*. Cf., Frost, 7-9, 362-376; Osman, 181-194; Tee, 197-209; Wimber, *Power Healing*, 77f, 86, 109f, 139-158, 255; Dale, 53-74; Cowley, 85-104, 130-132; Huggett, 135-155, 175-177; Green and McKnight, 300-306; Greig and Springer, *passim*; Ruthven, *passim*; D. Roberts, 35, 63, 72-74, 76, 86f; Price and Price, 91-118; Kydd, 19-59, 202-215; H.

For other modern interpreters, a tone of apology hints at the unease felt by those who accept truth in the biblical texts, but do not see similar impairment healings occurring in the modern era: “Did Jesus really heal?”⁵⁷⁷

Argument about whether or not the biblical impairment healings actually did take place is not a modern peculiarity. Origen, for instance, refers to the heretical belief that the miraculous impairment healings were not of the body at all, but of the soul.⁵⁷⁸

However, in the modern era, the historicity of the biblical healing miracles has become the primary focus in the interpretation of the biblical impairment texts. We saw in Chapter 1 how movements within the Church have arisen in reaction against the secularism and rationality of modern medical science. An important weapon for these combative movements has been the curing of the incurable, epitomised by the healing of impairment.⁵⁷⁹

Cox, 223f; Hunter and Hunter, *How to Heal*, passim; Lee, passim; D. Roberts, 35, 63, 72-74, 76, 86f, 91f, 97-99, 173, 175; Kinnaman, passim; Blue, passim.

⁵⁷⁷ “Did Jesus really heal?” – title of a chapter in Remus, *Jesus as Healer*, 104-118. See also: McEwen, 133-152; Kelsey, 52-103, 129-359; C. Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind*, 281-325; Blomberg, “Concluding Reflections,” 443-457; Robertson, *Biblical Bases*, 106-125; Maddocks, *Twenty Questions*, passim; Goldingay, *Signs, Wonders and Healing*, 13-23, 179-184; P. May, 34-37; Lees, 105-129; Hacking, 156-174; Maddocks, *Christian Healing*, 9-16; Kinnaman, 151-165; Macquarrie, “The figure of Jesus,” 917; Price and Price, 277-300; van der Loos, 6-113; Osman, 180-185; Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*, 1-41; Blomberg, “The Miracles as Parables,” 327-359; Black, passim; Lay, *Seeking Signs*, passim.

⁵⁷⁸ Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 20.20.166; *SC* 290:238; *FC* 89:241. Cf., Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.3; *SC* 132:286; *ANF* 4:431; *ibid.*, 4.49.19; *SC* 136:310; *ANF* 4:520; *ibid.*, 2.48.24; *SC* 132:390-394; *ANF* 4:450. See also: M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 57-60; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 116-119; B. Ward, 539.

⁵⁷⁹ The modern emphasis on the historicity of the healing miracles: Frost, 162-195; S. L. Davies, 7-21; Remus, *Jesus as Healer*, 106-118; Cf., the emphasis on the historicity of the medical conditions healed: Wilkinson, *Health and Healing*, passim; Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, passim.

The emphasis on historicity a peculiarity of modernity: Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 78-81, 116, 136f, 165-169, 172, 187-189, 193-195, 207, 253; B. Ward, 539.

Movements within the Church of reaction to the rationality of modernity: Ruthven, 13-40; Kepel, passim; Percy, passim; S. Bruce, 129-234; Nash, 37-45. On a similar reactions within the Church to the ascendancy of medical science, see above at text page 88 and footnote 126. The curing of the incurable, including impairment, a significant factor in these movements: Maddocks, *Christian Healing*, 99-112. In the Pentecostal tradition: Hollenweger, 353-376; Dayton, 115-141; Land, 112-117; H. Cox, 108-110, 254-258, 271-280; see also, Pattison, *Alive and Kicking*, 50-75. Note however this recent frank comment

Whatever the different motives for this modern emphasis on the healing of impairment in the modern period, its effects for people with impairments have been highly damaging.

They are telling disabled people, you are unacceptable as you are and nobody wants you and neither does God...[They] are saying that if you cannot achieve physical perfection then you are an outcast.⁵⁸⁰

For those who hold the view that impairment healing can in principle happen in the modern era, why does it not happen? Time and again, the inability to cure the incurable is projected onto those who are not cured. People with impairments are themselves blamed, in terms of failure, most commonly for their alleged lack of faith and sinful life.

Much damage has been done also to the Church. The perception that Christianity desires and intends the removal of impairment is a key reason why Christianity is ignored by people with impairments. The fact that Christians are incapable of fulfilling their objective adds injury to insult, and fuels the widespread view that Christianity is misdirected and irrelevant. To many people with impairments, the difficulties they encounter do not stem from their impairment, but from their disability, from their exclusion from full and fulfilling participation in society. The Church's ineffectual

from a Black Pentecostal: "The oppression of disabled people is an issue for Black Churches. Many Black Churches fail to see the wholeness of God in disabled people: consequently, prayer for healing is the only response to disability" – Beckford, 30. See also: Pattison, *Alive and Kicking*, 62-75.

⁵⁸⁰ A disabled person quoted in Howard, 62; cf., Beckford, 30.

People with impairments directly blamed for the incurability of their condition – Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 70-75; Horne, "Making the Body Whole," 121-123; Lay, *Seeking Signs*, 13-15, 24-26, 64-69, 71-80, 96, 101, 108, 111, 116, 170f, 176f, 181-185; see also, Black, 19-33, 43-56, 58, 66, 73, 75-77, 84, 85f, 89, 94-96, 99-102, 118-120, 181-183. Carers receiving a similar projection: "What on earth have the parents done to have children like this?": Young, *Encounter With Mystery*, 121; cf., C. C. Grant, 72-79.

People with impairments indirectly blamed for the incurability of their condition: Wimber, *Power Healing*, 169f, 195, 106, 211, 215f, 239; MacNutt, 38-48, 169-177, 248-261.

See above, people told that their impairment is caused by their sinful life: pages 1-3 and footnotes 2-4.

focus on getting rid of impairment is beside the point; getting rid of disability is what the Church should be doing: “Rights not Miracles!”⁵⁸¹

Getting rid of impairment is not the point for people with impairments; getting rid of impairment was also not the point for the Early Church. In this chapter, we see that to the Early Church, entanglements of historicity did not arise, let alone predominate. Rather, in the rhetorical dynamic between implied author and implied reader in the Early Church, the taking away of impairment was being used in a wide and imaginative range of ways, drawing on and developing themes about the taking away of impairment that were current in the ancient world.

Firstly, the Early Church used these themes to demonstrate the nature of Jesus. In the Graeco-Roman tradition, everyone knew that impairment was beyond healing: neither medicine nor magic claimed this ability. Impairment could only be healed in the power and will of the gods. So when Jesus of Nazareth cured the incurable, he was clearly above physicians and magicians: he was acting in God’s power and will – he was even himself divine. To those in the Jewish tradition also, the impairment healings showed that Jesus was divine. He was surpassing the prophets and was fulfilling the prophecies of the age of restoration to be brought in by the one promised and anointed.

Secondly, the Early Church used impairment healing themes to illustrate what was beyond impairment healing. The taking away of bodily impairment may have been

⁵⁸¹ “Rights not Miracles!” – daubed by disabled people on the advertisements for Morris Cerullo’s Mission to London in 1992: Howard, 62.

impossible to human ability, but the New Testament impairment healings illustrate abilities even more remarkable – the taking away of impairment of the soul. Jesus' ability to do this was greater even than his ability to remove bodily impairment.

Similarly, when the apostles healed bodily impairment, by far the greater achievement was their taking away of soul impairment and the qualities they demonstrated – these were the “yet greater works” promised by Jesus. Amazingly, these works yet greater than taking away impairment were shown to be within the capability of all people, even current followers.

Thirdly, the Early Church developed themes about the taking away of impairment to illustrate specific discipleship qualities and discipleship processes. Early Church writers led the people they were addressing to identify with the characters with impairments: it was they who modelled qualities essential to the discipleship of all Christians. Early Church writers used the nature and experience of the characters with impairments who encounter Jesus in the Gospels to illustrate, interpret and articulate the experience of all Christians in their encounter with Jesus. These uses of the impairment healings were widespread in the Early Church: liturgists and artists also used people with impairments from the Bible in similar ways.

The modern preoccupation with the event and historicity of healing in the interpretation of the biblical impairment healings not only damages people with impairments, and the Church, it also overlooks the range of uses that these stories within the rhetorical dynamic of the earliest Christian communities. It impoverishes, it damages and it is uncritical. With their broader experience of impairment, the Early Church had a

broader understanding of impairment. As we see in this chapter, the taking away of impairment was used in a process of engaging the past with the present to interpret the divine and to encourage discipleship.

2.0 *Themes Of Impairment Healing In Ancient Texts*

2.1 **Curing Impairment and the Limits to Healing**

Ancient medical writers were well aware of the limits to medicine. They even defined medicine and medical practice in terms of medicine's limits:

In general term, it is to do away with the sufferings of the sick, to lessen the violence of their diseases, and to refuse to treat those who are overmastered by their diseases, realising that in such cases medicine is powerless.⁵⁸²

A central medical skill was the ability to identify whether a disease was “permanently disabling to some part of the body or not” and “to recognise the ones that cannot be treated.”⁵⁸³ Having identified an incurable condition, it was an acceptable practice not to make any attempt at curing the condition: “One should especially avoid such cases if one has a respectable excuse, for the favourable chances are few, and the risks

⁵⁸² τὸ μὴ ἐνχειρῆν τοῖσι κεκρατημένοις ὑπὸ τῶν νοσημάτων εἰδότας ὅτι ταῦτα οὐ δύναται ἰητρικῆ: Hippocrates, *De arte* 3; Loeb 2:192f; cf., Celsus, *De medicina* 5.26.1c; Loeb 2:66-69.

⁵⁸³ The ability to recognise a permanently disabling disease: Hippocrates, *Morb.* 1.1; Loeb 5:98f – with examples of permanently disabling disorders – ἔμπηροι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶνδε γίνονται: strokes, muteness, paralysis, lameness, blindness, deafness - *ibid.*, 1.3; Loeb 5:104f.
The ability to recognise untreatable diseases: Hippocrates, *Morb.* 1.6; Loeb 5:110-113 (using the translation of Prioreshi, p. 342).

many.”⁵⁸⁴ The incurability itself counted as a respectable excuse for withholding treatment: “In such cases, the physician can decline and deny his assistance, alleging as an excuse the incurable nature of the disease.”⁵⁸⁵

Refusing treatment, however, was not the only option available for a physician facing someone with an incurable condition. The physician could provide relief: “The physician can produce a respite from pain, intervals in the disease, and render the disease latent.”⁵⁸⁶ In such terms, incurable conditions were seen as a proper object of medical study: “to know why they cannot be [cured], and, in this case, to strive to ameliorate the patient’s condition as much as their disease allows.”⁵⁸⁷ For other reasons too incurability was a concern for physicians:

⁵⁸⁴ Hippocrates, *Fract.* 36 Loeb 3:182f – discussed in Prioreshi, 343-345.

Modern commentator on this text, with reference to the refusal to treat: “Our first reaction is one of shocked astonishment. Indeed, this admonition conflicts violently with modern medical ethics... This inhumane clause was not at all shocking to the ancients” – Gourevitch, 501; cf., “Incurability undoubtedly was a more conspicuous feature of the ancient physician’s clinical experience than of his modern counterparts” – von Staden, “Incurability and Hopelessness,” 75; “To think the Hippocratic physicians, our direct professional ancestors, could advocate the withholding of treatment from incurable patients, [is] a position that, is at first sight, repugnant to us” – Prioreshi, 345.

Cf., Augustine on someone with an impairment – following the Hippocratic approach, no treatment was attempted: “secundum hippocratis ut ferunt sententiam omnis est omittenda curatio” – Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.8; *CCL* 48:818; *NPNF i* 2:486.

Discussion of views that the Hippocratic corpus is not unanimous in non-intervention of incurable cases: von Staden, “Incurability and Hopelessness,” 103-111.

⁵⁸⁵ Deny assistance on the grounds of incurability: Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases* 1.5; Adams, 222, 476; cf., Hippocrates, *Art.* 58; Loeb 3:338f; *ibid.*, 63-66; Loeb 3:350-357; Hippocrates, *Fract.* 35; Loeb 3:178-183.

⁵⁸⁶ Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases* 1.5; Adams, 222, 476 – ἀπορίην δὲ καὶ διαλείψιας καὶ νούσων ἐπικρύψιας δρῆν θέμις ἰητρού; cf., from Early Church: “It is inhuman to neglect the sick.’ Very well; then we must compassionate them, and do our best to heal them” - Theodoret, *Eranistes*, *Dialogue* 3.116; Ettliger, 118; *NPNF ii* 3:185.

⁵⁸⁷ Hippocrates, *Morb.* 1.6; Loeb 5:110-113 (using the translation of Prioreshi, p. 342). These texts, and others relating to incurable conditions, are discussed in Prioreshi, 341-349, and von Staden, “Incurability and Hopelessness,” 75-112. They draw parallels with other ancient medical texts, and conclude that non-treatment of incurable cases was common.

In curable cases we must contrive to prevent their becoming incurable, studying the best means for hindering their advance to incurability; while one must study incurable cases so as to avoid doing harm by useless efforts.⁵⁸⁸

However, whatever physicians believed, others understood a condition's incurability as keeping it outside medicine's ambit:

Some...from ignorance of the present and what will come at last, are content to live on with the condition. For since in most cases they do not die, so neither do they fear death, nor, for this reason, do they entrust themselves to the physician.⁵⁸⁹

Although the views of patients were an important factor in medical practice, physicians who went too far and attempted to cure the incurable were strongly criticised. Their promises are empty: they “say that what cannot be cured will be cured” – τὰ ἀδύνατα φάναι ἐξλήσασθαι – and they collude with the false hopes of patients. Rather, a physician should make it clear in advance of any treatment that the condition cannot be removed completely, so that their skill, and medicine in general, are not brought into disrepute.⁵⁹⁰ Disrepute and ridicule were common risks for physicians, arising not least from fruitless attempts to cure the incurable:

Socles, promising to set Diodorus' crooked back straight, piled three solid stones, each four feet square, on the man's curved spine. He was crushed and died, but he has become straighter than a ruler.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁸ Hippocrates, *Art.* 58; Loeb 3:338f. Cf., physician's inactivity renders a disease incurable: Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases* 1.1; Adams, 205, 457.

⁵⁸⁹ Some patients do not come forward: Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases* 1.1; Adams, 205, 457.

⁵⁹⁰ Criticism of physicians who attempt to cure the incurable – saying that what cannot be cured will be cured: Hippocrates, *Morb.* 1.6; Loeb 5:110-113 (using Prioreshi's translation, p. 342). Collusion: “Sometimes physicians persuade themselves and their patients that they can heal a condition that is incurable” - Hippocrates, *Fract.* 35; Loeb 3:182f. Incurable result of treatment to be predicted so that the impairment is not seen as the consequence of the surgeon's lack of skill: Hippocrates, *Fract.* 15; Loeb 3:134f; cf., Hippocrates, *De arte* 4, 8-9; Loeb 2:194f, 202-207.

Cf., iatrogenic incurability – von Staden, “Incurability and Hopelessness,” 85-88; patient behaviour as rendering a condition incurable – von Staden, “Incurability and Hopelessness,” 90f. Those who attempt to treat incurable cases bring medicine into disrepute – Hippocrates, *De arte* 8; Loeb 2:202-205.

⁵⁹¹ *Greek Anthology* 11.120; Loeb 4:128f. Cf., “Agelaus, by operating killed Acestorides, for he said, ‘If he had lived the poor fellow would have been lame!’ ” – *Greek Anthology* 11.121; Loeb 4:128f; cf.,

Medicine's inability to cure all was inevitable: "It is impossible to make all [who have chronic diseases] well, for a physician would thus be superior to a god." It was to be expected that medicine had limits: "The power of the art [of medicine], when it raises a patient from an obscure disease, is more surprising than its failure when it attempts to treat incurables."⁵⁹² Plato portrayed medicine's limits and inabilities in mythical form: Asclepius did not give medicine to humankind for all conditions:

If someone was incapable of living in the established round and order of life, he did not think it worth while to treat them, since such a person is of no use either to themselves or to the state.⁵⁹³

These limits to medicine were seen especially in the context of impairment. In the discussions of medicine's response to incurable conditions mentioned above, impairments were frequently used as illustrations. Under particular circumstances, it was true, some forms of impairment could be treated. Muteness that resulted from specific diseases, for instance, was seen as sometimes treatable. With a mild attack of apoplexy, or if treatment was given early in the condition's onset, there was seen to be "a modest chance of survival."⁵⁹⁴ For an improvement of spinal curvature critical

physicians' attempts to heal poor sight that result in blindness: *Greek Anthology* 11.112, 115, 117, 126; Loeb 4:124-127, 130f. In Aesop's fable, an old woman is cured by a doctor of her blindness; his deception of her during the treatment is the story's basis: Aesop, 57; Hausrath and Hunger, 78-81; Vernon Jones, 13.

⁵⁹² Impossible to make all well: Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases* 1.5; Adams, 222, 476. Inability to treat incurables not surprising: Hippocrates, *De arte* 12; Loeb 2:212f.

Philo emphasises the inability of physicians (in contrast to God) as "mortals...unable to secure health even for themselves" – Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.46.252; Loeb 7:246; Yonge, 558. However, in early Jewish tradition there was no perceived conflict between faith and medicine: "My healing and my treatment are from the Lord, who also created the physicians" – *Testament of Job* 38.8; *OTPs* 1:858.

⁵⁹³ Plato mythologizes medical inability: Plato, *Respublica* 3.15 407c-e; Loeb 5:278f; cf., Edelstein and Edelstein, 69.

⁵⁹⁴ Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* 2.41; Westerink, 228f - μετρία...δοκεῖ

factors included the direction of curvature, its cause, the age of the person, and the position in which the person holds their back.⁵⁹⁵

In general however, impairment was deemed to be incurable. In various medical texts, for apoplexy, paralysis, limb fractures, blindness, deafness and muteness, the conclusion was the same: “No cure is possible” – τὸ τῆς θεραπείας ἀδύνατον. Egyptian and Syrian medical texts describe spinal injuries as “an ailment not to be treated” and blindness as extremely difficult and beyond treatment. For people with arthritis it was said, “although there is a possibility of some alleviation, [they] are never entirely cured.” Despite elaborate machinery devised to align spinal curvature, Hippocrates expressed the opinion: “no treatment helped.” When a wound became untreatable, amputation was the final resort – technically defined in terms of incurability: “such as cannot grow again when completely removed.” In the specific context of debunking superstition, epilepsy was identified as any other condition: not “hopeless or incapable of treatment.” In general, however, epilepsy too was seen as beyond healing: “We declare that there is no cure, because the disease was inherent in the seed itself at the moment of conception.”⁵⁹⁶

σωτηρίας ἐλπίς. Cf., if treatment is given early in the condition’s onset: Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 2.12; Adams, 118-120, 362-364; Celsus, *De medicina* 2.8.14; Loeb 1:136-139.

⁵⁹⁵ Specific factors for improvement of spinal curvature - Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 32, 36-37; Loeb 3:428-431, 434-437; Hippocrates, *Art.* 62; Loeb 3:346f; scepticism about the motives of those who use contrivances to straighten the back: Hippocrates, *Art.* 42; Loeb 3:282-85. Some forms of muteness from disease can be treated – Celsus, *De medicina* 4.4; Loeb 1:370f. Cf., Tobit’s blindness healed by fish-gall – Tobit 11:5-15; discussed in Papayannopoulos, Laskaratos and Marketos, 181-186.

⁵⁹⁶ Some examples of impairments described by medical writers as incurable: Apoplexy – “No cure is possible” - Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* 2.41; Westerink, 230f; Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Acute Diseases* 1.1; Adams, 205, 457; Hippocrates, *Flat.* 13; Loeb 2:246-249; Hippocrates, *Aph.* 2.42; Loeb 4:118f – “It is impossible to cure a violent attack of apoplexy, and not easy to cure a slight one” – λύνειν ἀποπληξίην ἰσχυρὴν μὲν ἀδύνατον; Hippocrates, *Morb.* 2.25; Loeb 5:234f. Cf., Schrage, 273, 275.

However, the rational medicine of physicians was not widely available. Most people made use of the remedies of folklore and of magic. Here too, the picture is the same: impairments were not seen as treatable conditions. In the main collection of Greek and Demotic magical papyri, there are 577 spells, of which the largest proportion, 90 spells, relates to the healing of various ailments. However, the healing of impairment hardly features at all. Of the 90 healing spells, 21 are concerned with “shivering fever” (probably malaria), 9 are headaches, a further 9 are bites and stings, with 7 demon possessions, 4 eye diseases, 2 stiff feet and a fracture. There is also a reference to protection from a mute *daimon*. The remainder are individual conditions, including one

Paralysis - Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 1.7; Adams, 62, 65, 305, 308; Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases* 1.5; Adams, 221, 475f; Celsus, *De medicina* 2.8.40; Loeb 1:152f; *ibid.*, 2.4.7; Loeb 1:104f; *ibid.*, 3.27.1a-b; Loeb 1:344f; *ibid.*, 8.4.1; Loeb 3:504f; *ibid.*, 8.14.1-3; Loeb 3:566-569.

Limb fracture: Celsus, *De medicina* 8.2.5; Loeb 3:496f; *ibid.*, 8.10.5b; Loeb 3:548f.

Blindness - Galen, *De Usu Partium*, 10.3; Helmreich 2:67f; M. T. May 473f; see also, Celsus, *De medicina* 7.7.14a; Loeb 3:348f – “quae curationem non admittunt”; Celsus, *De medicina* 7.7.15a; Loeb 3:352f; *ibid.*, 6.6.1d; Loeb 2:186f; *ibid.*, 6.6.9b; Loeb 2:202f; see also Ruttimann, 61; *cf.*, *ibid.*, 67, 102. Deafness - Celsus, *De medicina* 7.8.2; Loeb 3:360f.

Muteness following fever: Hippocrates, *Acut.* (Appendix), 28; Loeb 6:292f.

Arthritis - Aretaeus, *On the Treatment of Chronic Diseases* 2.12; Adams, 236, 493; Celsus, *De medicina* 2.8.28; Loeb 1:146f – “although there is a possibility of some alleviation, [they] are never entirely cured,” 4.29.1; Loeb 1:452f; *ibid.*, 4.31.1; Loeb 1:454f.

Spinal Curvature - Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 36-38; Loeb 3:434-437; Hippocrates, *Art.* 41; Loeb 3:278f; *ibid.*, 42; Loeb 3:282f; Hippocrates, *Epid.* 7.71; Loeb 7:372f – “no treatment helped”.

Mutilation: “such as cannot grow again when completely removed” - Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 5.27 1024a; Loeb 17:282f; Celsus, *De medicina*, 7.9.1; Loeb 3:362f.

Amputation the resort to turn to when a limb condition is incurable: Celsus, *De medicina* 7.32.1-7.33.2; Loeb 3:468-471.

Joint dislocation: Hippocrates, *Mochlicon* 33; Loeb 3:430f.

Epilepsy – “We declare that there is no cure, because the disease was inherent in the seed itself at the moment of conception” – οὐκ ἐνδεχέται θεραπευθῆναι - Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates*, 2.44 ; Westerink, 236f; *cf.*, *ibid.*, 2.44; Westerink, 238f - ἀνίατον; Hippocrates, *Aer.* 14; Loeb 1:168f; Celsus, *De medicina*, 2.8.11; Loeb 1:136f; *ibid.*, 2.8.29; Loeb 1:146f – “medicinae locus non est”. Contrast, Hippocrates, *Aer.* 21; Loeb 1:182f: “Each [disease] has a nature and power of its own; none is hopeless or incapable of treatment.”; *cf.*, Hippocrates, *Morb. sacr.* 5; Loeb 2:150f; Hippocrates, *Aph.* 2.45; Loeb 4:119; Hippocrates, *De arte* 11; Loeb 2:210f.

Impairment identified as incurable in ancient Egyptian and Syrian texts: a) Papyrus Ebers – Ebell, 133f, 148f; b) Edwin Smith Papyrus – Breasted 1:327f: “An ailment not to be treated”; *cf.*, *ibid.*, 1:323-332, 7f; c) The Book of Medicines – Wallis Budge 2:9f, 2:11f, 2:40, 2:81, 2:125, 2:130, 2:144f - (in contrast, “Miscellaneous native prescriptions” for blindness: *ibid.*, 2:659-663).

(and possibly two others) relating to epilepsy. Interestingly, there is mention of a non-bodily impairment being removed: eyes being opened for divination.⁵⁹⁷

A similar picture emerges from the Elder Pliny's collection of magical and folklore remedies in his *Natural History*. The amount of material is massive: 37 books (ten volumes in the Loeb edition). Yet there are very few references to any remedies for impairment.⁵⁹⁸ A handful of chapters relate to epilepsy or to various eye and ear disorders.⁵⁹⁹ There are some isolated references to specific conditions such as 'nyctalops', 'lippitudo', 'oculorum caligines', and 'aurium dolores et vitia'. Paralysis and arthritis are also occasionally mentioned. However, even in these very few mentions of impairment, there is a distinction between prevention, treatment and cure. Sometimes the words used are "medetur", "sanantur" or "discutit", implying removal of the condition. At other times, an easing of the condition is suggested through words

⁵⁹⁷ Eye diseases: *PGM* vii.197f; Betz, *GMP*, 121; *PDM* xiv 1097-1103; Betz, *GMP*, 247; *PDM* xiv 1104-1109; Betz, *GMP*, 247; *PGM* xciv.22-26; Betz, *GMP*, 304f; possible reference to eye disease: *PGM* xcvi.1-6; Betz, *GMP*, 306.

Stiff feet: *PDM* xiv 1021-1023; Betz, *GMP*, 244; *PDM* xiv 1024-1025; Betz, *GMP*, 244.

Fracture: *PGM* xiii.247f; Betz, *GMP*, 179.

Protection from a mute *daimon*: *PGM* cxiv.1-14; Betz, *GMP*, 313.

Epilepsy: *PGM* cxiv.1-14; Betz, *GMP*, 313; possible references to epilepsy – *PGM* xcv.7-13; Betz, *GMP*, 305f; *PGM* xcv.14-18; Betz, *GMP*, 306.

Figurative use of impairment removal, in relation to divination: *PDM* xiv 1110-1129; Betz, *GMP*, 247; cf., similar figurative use of impairment for all humankind in relation to divine matters and the future, see above at text pages 226-229 and footnotes 427-433.

An impairment healing is linked to a demon at Talmud, *Gittin* 69a.

⁵⁹⁸ I include this summary of the material in Pliny's *Natural History* relating to the cure or treatment of impairment partly because I have included all references to impairment healing from the other magic and folklore collections that I have used, and partly as a means of showing how tiny the proportion of Pliny's 37 books relating to ancient folklore and magic is that has any mention of the taking away of impairment. These references are classified according to cure, treatment or prevention in order to show that, like ancient medicine, there was little claim to the ability to remove impairment, but rather to ameliorate a person's condition.

⁵⁹⁹ Chapters relating to various eye disorders: *HN* 24.52.89; Loeb 7:66f; *HN* 25.91.142-25.103.163; Loeb 7:234-253; *HN* 28.47.167-28.47.172; Loeb 8:114-119; *HN* 29.38.117-29.38.132; Loeb 8:256-267.

Chapters relating to various ear disorders – "aurium dolores et vitia": *HN* 28.48.173-177; Loeb 8:118-123; *HN* 28.39.133-143; Loeb 8:266-275; *HN* 32.25.77-78; Loeb 8:510f. Chapters mentioning various

such as “iuvat”, “utile est”, or “prodest.” At other times again, the sense is the prevention of the condition arising, with the use of “caventibus.” Although there are several eye ailments discussed, the one reference in the context of healing to blindness as such states that the condition is permanent: the mole is said to have “caecitate perpetua.”⁶⁰⁰

treatments for epilepsy: *HN* 28.63.224-226; Loeb 8:150-153; *HN* 30.27.87-92; Loeb 8:334-337; *HN* 32.14.35-37; Loeb 8:486f.

⁶⁰⁰ Other individual references to the prevention, treatment and cure of impairment across the *Natural History*:

- a) “Nyctalops” – Cure: *HN* 8.76.203; Loeb 3:142f; *HN* 28.47.170 Loeb 8:116f; *HN* 29.38.127; Loeb 8:264f; *HN* 32.24.71; Loeb 8:506f.
- b) “Lippitudo” – i) Treatment: *HN* 16.71.180; Loeb 4:504f; *HN* 23.81.160; Loeb 6:522f; *HN* 28.17.64; Loeb 8:46f; *HN* 28.27.103; Loeb 8:72f; *HN* 28.33.130; Loeb 8:90-93; *HN* 29.38.130; Loeb 8:266f. ii) Cure: *HN* 28.27.94; Loeb 8:66f; *HN* 29.10.39; Loeb 8:208f; *HN* 29.38.128; Loeb 8:264f; *HN* 31.47.125; Loeb 8:456f. iii) Prevention: *HN* 27.81.105; Loeb 7:454f; *HN* 28.5.29; Loeb 8:20-23; *HN* 28.7.37; Loeb 8:28f; *HN* 28.9.42 Loeb 8:32f; *HN* 28.9.44; Loeb 8:32-35; *HN* 28.14.56; Loeb 8:40f; *HN* 31.46.115; Loeb 8:448f.
- c) “Oculorum caligines” – i) Treatment: *HN* 20.33.80; Loeb 6:48f; *HN* 20.34.88; Loeb 6:52f; *HN* 21.86.150; Loeb 6:268f; *HN* 23.47.92; Loeb 6:474f; *HN* 23.58.108; Loeb 6:486f; *HN* 24.11.19; Loeb 7:16f; *HN* 24.83.134; Loeb 7:96f; *HN* 28.28.108f; Loeb 8:76f; *HN* 29.38.119; Loeb 8:258f; *HN* 29.38.122; Loeb 8:260f; *HN* 32.31.97-98; Loeb 8:522f; *HN* 34.32.126; Loeb 9:220f. ii) Cure: *HN* 18.34.130; Loeb 8:272f; *HN* 20.20.39; Loeb 6:24f; *HN* 20.26.61; Loeb 6:36f; *HN* 20.51.135; Loeb 6:78f; *HN* 20.86.234; Loeb 6:136f; *HN* 20.93.253; Loeb 6:148f; *HN* 24.10.16; Loeb 7:14f; *HN* 24.80.131; Loeb 7:94f; *HN* 24.92.146; Loeb 7:104f; *HN* 25.22.54; Loeb 7:176f; *HN* 27.20.40; Loeb 7:412f; *HN* 28.27.94; Loeb 8:66f (also prevention). iii) Prevention: *HN* 29.38.128; Loeb 8:262f; *HN* 34.27.114; Loeb 9:212f.
- d) Paralysis – “paralysis” / “paralytici”: i) Treatment: *HN* 20.7.14; Loeb 6:10f; *HN* 20.34.85; Loeb 6:50f; *HN* 20.40.104; Loeb 6:62f; *HN* 20.59.166; Loeb 6:98f; *HN* 22.49.105; Loeb 6:368f; *HN* 22.50.108; Loeb 6:370f; *HN* 23.26.53; Loeb 6:450f; *HN* 23.42.86; Loeb 6:470f; *HN* 24.24.40; Loeb 7:32-35. ii) Cure: *HN* 24.56.94; Loeb 7:68f; *HN* 25.22.54; Loeb 7:176f; *HN* 27.66.92; Loeb 7:444f; *HN* 28.33.128; Loeb 8:90f; *HN* 31.32.59; Loeb 8:414f; *HN* 32.13.29; Loeb 8:482f; *HN* 32.14.39; Loeb 8:488f. iii) Prevention: *HN* 20.59.165; Loeb 6:96f; *HN* 30.26.86; Loeb 6:332f.
- e) Arthritis – “articulariis morbus” – i) Treatment: *HN* 20.3.9; Loeb 6:6f; *HN* 20.33.81; Loeb 6:48f; *HN* 20.73.195; Loeb 6:112f; *HN* 21.86.150; Loeb 6:268f; *HN* 22.15.34; Loeb 6:316f; *HN* 22.54.115; Loeb 6:376f; *HN* 22.75.158; Loeb 6:406f; *HN* 23.3.3; Loeb 6:416f; *HN* 23.9.16; Loeb 6:424f; *HN* 23.81.162; Loeb 6:524f; *HN* 28.62.223; Loeb 8:150f; *HN* 29.25.79; Loeb 8:234f; *HN* 31.33.64; Loeb 8:418f; *HN* 32.14.39; Loeb 8:488f; *HN* 32.31.96; Loeb 8:522f; *HN* 32.36.110; Loeb 8:530f. ii) Cure: *HN* 25.22.54; Loeb 7:176f; *HN* 28.33.127; Loeb 8:90f. iii) Prevention: *HN* 21.89.157; Loeb 6:272f; *HN* 23.37.75; Loeb 6:464f.
- f) Epilepsy – “comitialis morbus” – i) Treatment: *HN* 8.49.111; Loeb 3:78-81; *HN* 16.92.244; Loeb 4:546f; *HN* 20.13.25; Loeb 6:16f; *HN* 20.15.31; Loeb 6:20f; *HN* 20.51.138; Loeb 6:80f; *HN* 20.54.154; Loeb 6:90f; *HN* 20.66.174; Loeb 6:102f; *HN* 20.73.191; Loeb 6:110f; *HN* 20.79.208; Loeb 6:120f; *HN* 20.81.213; Loeb 6:124f; *HN* 20.84.227; Loeb 6:132f; *HN* 20.87.237f; Loeb 6:138f; *HN* 21.103.175; Loeb 6:284f; *HN* 22.9.21; Loeb 6:308f; *HN* 22.49.105; Loeb 6:368f; *HN* 22.64.133; Loeb 6:390f; *HN* 22.72.148; Loeb 6:398-401; *HN* 23.16.23; Loeb 6:430f; *HN* 23.28.59; Loeb 6:454f; *HN* 23.63.122; Loeb 6:494f; *HN* 23.75.144; Loeb 6:510f; *HN* 24.2.6; Loeb 7:6f; *HN* 24.13.21; Loeb 7:18f; *HN* 24.16.25; Loeb 7:22f; *HN* 24.32.47; Loeb 7:38f; *HN* 25.106.69; Loeb 7:256f; *HN* 27.12.29; Loeb 7:406f; *HN* 27.66.92; Loeb 7:444f; *HN* 28.2.4; Loeb 8:4f; *HN* 28.2.7; Loeb 8:6f; *HN* 28.10.44; Loeb 8:32f; *HN* 28.17.63; Loeb 8:44-47; *HN* 28.23.83; Loeb 8:60f; *HN* 28.24.88; Loeb 8:62f; *HN* 28.28.109; Loeb 8:76f; *HN* 28.33.127;

We know that impairment was widespread and familiar in the Graeco-Roman world. A significant proportion of the magical and folklore texts that survive relates to healing, yet only a minute fraction relates to the healing of impairment. Put alongside the medical material, it is clear that the healing of impairment was deemed not only beyond the ability of medicine, but also beyond the ability of magic and the remedies of folklore. Everyone understood that impairment could not be cured.

2.2 Curing Impairment: Beyond the Limits to Healing

Medicine and religion were closely intertwined in the ancient world. Medical writers often referred to the role in healing played by the gods.⁶⁰¹ The gods were particularly

Loeb 8:90f; *HN* 28.78.258; Loeb 8:172f; *HN* 28.78.259; Loeb 8:174f; *HN* 30.12.34; Loeb 8:300f; *HN* 32.13.29; Loeb 8:482f; *HN* 32.37.112; Loeb 8:530-533; *HN* 36.40.152; Loeb 10:120-123; *HN* 37.57.157; Loeb 10:292f. ii) Cure: *HN* 20.23.56; Loeb 6:34f; *HN* 20.34.87; Loeb 6:52f; *HN* 21.76.130; Loeb 6:256f; *HN* 22.29.59; Loeb 6:334f; *HN* 24.6.12; Loeb 7:10-13; *HN* 25.21.52; Loeb 7:174f (“liberatum”); *HN* 25.24.60; Loeb 7:180f; *HN* 26.70.113; Loeb 7:348f; *HN* 28.6.34; Loeb 8:26f; *HN* 28.25.90; Loeb 8:62f; *HN* 28.26.91; Loeb 8:64f; *HN* 28.27.99; Loeb 8:70f; *HN* 32.14.33; Loeb 8:484f. iii) Prevention: *HN* 8.50.115; Loeb 3:82f; *HN* 10.33.69; Loeb 3:336f; *HN* 20.73.192; Loeb 6:110f; *HN* 20.98.261; Loeb 6:154f; *HN* 21.89.156; Loeb 6:274f. iv) Detection (“deprendit”): *HN* 35.50.175; Loeb 9:390f; *HN* 35.51.182; Loeb 9:394f.

g) Blindness – “caecitas”: Cure: *HN* 11.54.149f; Loeb 3:523-527.

h) Deafness – “surdi”: Treatment: *HN* 20.2.4; Loeb 6:4f.

i) Muteness – “paralysi in lingua”: Treatment: *HN* 31.46.120; Loeb 8:452f.

j) Sudden muteness – “obmutescere”: i) Treatment: *HN* 20.54.154; Loeb 6:90f. ii) Cure: *HN* 20.20.40; Loeb 6:26f.

“Caecitate perpetua” of the mole: *HN* 30.7.19; Loeb 8:290f.

I have also analysed a third collection of ancient magico-medical material: the Coptic texts in *ACM*.

These results also support the thesis that impairment healing was seen as beyond the scope of magic: see below at text pages 338-339 and footnotes 649-652.

⁶⁰¹ On the inter-relation of medicine, religion and magic: Behr, *Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, 32-195; Edelstein, 87-110, 205-246, 349-400; Edelstein and Edelstein 2:101-213; Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 21-72; R. Jackson, 138-186; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 78-145; Kudlein, 117-130; Nutton, “Murder and Miracles,” 23-53; H. D. Betz, *GMP*, xli-lvii; *ACM*, 79-82; Ruttimann, 2-21; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 3-94; M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, passim; Mathews, 54-91.

identified in the context of incurable conditions: “All the greater ills, the gods only can remedy” – ἰῶνται μόνουι θεοί.⁶⁰² The activity of the gods in such circumstances was put forward as a reason for physicians sometimes to apply their skills, despite the risks. In the case of a minor stroke, for example, “You must attempt the cure; for if it is the will of the Higher Power and if chance is favourable, perhaps he might recover.”⁶⁰³

In Galen’s view, the healing god worked in accordance with, and not in any way contrary to, the rationality of medicine: the god did not do things “naturally impossible.” Galen disagreed with religious texts that stated all things are possible for a deity: “Some things are naturally impossible...God does not attempt these things at all but chooses from among the possible what is best to be done.”⁶⁰⁴ As a result of his own rational study, Galen was able to treat conditions deemed incurable, including various

Discussion of relation of cult of Asclepius and medicine: Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 37-39, 100; Kudlein, 117-130; Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 165-172; Ruttimann, 34, 61, 67, 85, 107, 115-121, 183-191; LiDonnici, 1-14; Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 37-98. Asclepius defended “so vigorously” by Celsus: Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 97, 104-135.

The healing god and the use of dreams in ancient Greek medicine: Oberhelman, “Interpretation of Prescriptive Dreams” and “Diagnostic Dreams,” passim; Behr, *Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, 171-204; Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 165-172; Kudlein, 117-130; Aristotle, *Peri enupnion* 1-3, 458a-462b; Loeb 8:348-371; Aristotle, *De divinatione per somnia* 1-2, 462b-464b; Loeb 8:374-385; Hippocrates, *Peri enupnion* 86-93; Loeb 4:420-447; Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.6; Pack, 16; White, 21: dreams as “god-sent”- “I use the word in the same way that we call all unforeseen things god-sent.”

⁶⁰² Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 2.1; Adams, 92, 95, 333, 337.

⁶⁰³ Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* 2.41; Westerink, 230f - ἐὰν γὰρ ἐπιτάσσοσαν σχοίης καὶ τὴν ὑπερτέραν δύναμιν καὶ τὴν τύχην ἐπιλάμπουσαν. See also Hippocrates, *Decorum* 6; Loeb 2:288f. Cf., other ancient texts describing conditions as incurable except in the power of the gods – Ugaritic text: *ANET* 148; Mesopotamian laws: *ANET* 180; Hittite texts: *ANET* 357, 358; Egyptian text (Papyrus Beatty I): *ANET* 468f; Akkadian texts: *ANET* 598; Egyptian incantation: *ANET* 369. Impairment incurable except by the power of the gods in an Akkadian text – specifically blindness, deafness, muteness and spinal curvature, *ANET* 599f; see also: an Egyptian incantation to the god Amon as “a physician who heals the eye without having remedies, opening the eyes and driving away the squint,” *ANET* 369.

This notion of the incurable seen as curable by the gods is discussed with reference to medical texts and to inscriptions by Gourevitch, 502-505.

⁶⁰⁴ Galen, *De Usu Partium* 11.14; Helmreich 2:159; M. T. May, 533 – τινὰ λέγομεν ἀδύνατα φύσει... ἐκ τῶν δυνατῶν γενέσθαι τὸ βέλτιστον αἰρεῖσθαι. On the the Hellenistic view that miracles were not contrary to nature, see also G. Smith, 341-348.

forms of paralysis and the effects of brain injury.⁶⁰⁵ When such cures of the incurable took place, those who witnessed them discerned the divine – they occurred, “so it seemed, by the will of the god” – τὸ παράδοξον ἐκεῖνο θέαμα...ὡς ἐδόκει βουλήσει τοῦ θεοῦ.⁶⁰⁶

In non-medical texts too, impairment was seen as incurable. Oedipus, for instance, refers to his blindness as something that will never be taken from him. Phineus rejects Jason’s attempt to offer hope that his blindness might be cured: “That is past recall, nor is there any remedy hereafter, for blasted are my sightless eyes.” Here too was the theme of impairment, beyond cure, sometimes being healed in the will and power of the gods. For Polymestor his blindness is incurable, unless the divine Orion hears his prayer and helps him. Polyphemus says that his blindness might only be cured by his father Poseidon; although his enemy Odysseus at once denies this. While Philoctetes repeatedly bewails his lameness as incurable, he is persuaded by Heracles that Asclepius will be sent from heaven to Troy in order to heal his impairment if he agrees to rejoin the Greeks there.⁶⁰⁷ Similarly, Serapis, Artemis and Demeter are each

⁶⁰⁵ Galen’s healing of the apparently incurable – Hand and sciatic paralysis: Siegel, *Galen on Psychology*, 241f, 244 (quoting: *De loc affect.*, 1.6, 3.14, 4.7). Brain injury: Galen, *De Usu Partium* 8.10; Helmreich 1:481f; M. T. May, 413.

Galen’s views discussed in Kudlein, 117-130; cf., Edelstein and Edelstein 2:154: “The god’s cures were medical cures...he acted as a physician; his healings were miracles - for his success was beyond all human reach - but they were strictly medical miracles.”

⁶⁰⁶ Galen, *De Usu Partium* 8.10; Helmreich 1:481f; M. T. May, 413.

We can compare the comments of Aristides, one of Asclepius’ devoted followers, who several times describes the proscriptions the god had given were completely unexpected: “We were ordered to do many strange things” -πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ παράδοξα ἐπετάχθημεν - Aristides, *Orationes*, 47.65; Dindorf, 461; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:289; “There is very much of the marvellous in the unambiguous dreams of the god” – τὸ γὰρ παράδοξον πλείστον - Aristides, *Orationes*, 42.7; Dindorf, 67; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:248.

⁶⁰⁷ Oedipus states that his blindness is incurable: Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1271-4; Jebb, 166f; cf., Seneca (the Younger), *Oedipus* 947-951, 971-977; Loeb 8:512f, 514f. Phineus: Apollonius Rhodius, 2.438-447; Loeb, 132f. Polymestor: Euripides, *Hecuba* 1067-9; Loeb 1:330f. Polyphemus: Homer, *Odyssey* 9.519-521, 525; Loeb 1:340f. Philoctetes: Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 259f; Loeb 2:282f; *ibid.*, 299;

recorded as having healed particular people who had been blind from birth and who made supplication at their temples. In his treatise on astrology, Ptolemy states that Jupiter, Mercury and Venus can bring healing influence in the conjunction of the heavenly bodies that would otherwise result in incurable impairments of many kinds: under these conditions, they “yield to treatment, and...may be easily cured” – εὐπαρηγόρητα...εὐαπάλλακτα. Without any such beneficent planets “in the authoritative positions” the impairments will be incurable – ἀνίατα.⁶⁰⁸

The same theme was used of non-bodily impairment. When illustrating the soul’s distortions, Plato describes bodily mutilation as incurable, even persisting after death: “If anyone’s limbs were broken or distorted in life, these same effects are manifest in death...And so it seems to me that the same is the case with the soul too.” When someone with a maimed soul arrives in Hades, the judge Rhadamanthus “sends him away to Tartarus, first setting a mark on him to show whether he deems it a curable or

Loeb 2:284f; *ibid.*, 696f; Loeb 2:322f; *ibid.*, 1329-1334; Loeb 2:392f; *ibid.*, 1424f; Loeb 2:402f; *ibid.*, 1437f; Loeb 2:404f.

⁶⁰⁸ Serapis: Diogenes Laertius, *Demetrius* 5.76; Loeb 1:528f: “He is said to have lost his sight when in Alexandria and to have recovered it by the gift of Serapis.”

Artemis: *Greek Anthology* 9.46; Loeb 3:6f: “A blind and childless woman, who prayed that she might either recover her sight or bear a child, gained both blessings...her prayers were heard by Artemis.”

Demeter: *Greek Anthology* 9.298; Loeb 3:160f: “I went back to Athens without a staff, proclaiming the holiness of the mysteries of Demeter more clearly with my eyes than with my tongue.” Ptolemy: *Tetrabiblos* 3.12.153; Loeb, 330f.

Cf., Isis healed a devotee of their blindness: Kee, “Medicine, Miracle and Magic,” 67; see also, a blind person healed at Miriam’s well: Holden, 352.

The temple of Athena Ophthalmitis mentioned by Pausanias had no link to any healing of blindness by Athena: it was founded by Lycurgus when he was saved by the Lacedaimonians from having his second eye put out by his enemies – Pausanias, 3.18.2; Loeb, 2:108f.

Impairment incurable in early Jewish tradition: Talmud, *Becharoth* 2a, 2b, 37a, *Yevamoth* 113a, *Baba Koma* 67a, 86a, *Sukkah* 30a. Some forms of impairment curable in specific respects: Talmud, *Gittin* 23a, 69a, *Shabbath* 78a, *Sanhedrin* 100a, *Menachoth* 98a, *Chagigah* 2a, 9a, 9b. Philo refers to arthritis as a condition “for which no salutary remedy has ever been discovered...incurable by human means” – Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 25.145; Loeb 8:402, 404; Yonge 678. Impairment’s incurability as proverbial: the wives of Lamech mock Adam – “physician, heal thine own lameness,” *LOTJ* 1:118.

an incurable case.”⁶⁰⁹ Philo, like Plato, used this impairment theme to describe those maimed in soul: their soul impairment is incurable by medicine – though not incurable by God, by Scripture, nor (he hears) by God’s servants the Essenes.⁶¹⁰

On rare occasions, it appears that this theme of the incurability of impairment except in the will and power of the gods was used by ancient writers to demonstrate the divine status of particular people. Both Suetonius and Tacitus describe an incident in which Vespasian heals a blind man and a man with a withered hand. For Suetonius especially, these healings confirm Vespasian in his new status: “Vespasian as yet lacked prestige and a certain divinity, so to speak, since he was an unexpected and still new-made emperor; but these were given to him.” The event occurred just after Vespasian had left the temple of Serapis, a deity associated with occasional impairment healing, where he had been consulting the auguries about his reign. At first Vespasian holds back, out of modesty, but after the healings have taken place soothsayers give further confirmation of Vespasian’s divine support. He is then able to enter Rome confident “under such auspices.”⁶¹¹

We can compare Ecclesiastes 1:15: “What is crooked cannot be made straight.” Perhaps also a similar notion is in the dyanmic of John 11:15 – that preventing fatal sickness is less impossible than opening the eyes fo a blind person.

⁶⁰⁹ Plato, *Gorgias* 524c-d, 525c, 525e; Loeb 3:522-529.

⁶¹⁰ Philo, *Vit.*, *Cont.* 2.13; Loeb 9:120; Yonge, 698 – the Essenes called *Therapeutae* because they heal diseases of the body and soul that are “terrible and almost incurable” – Philo, *Somn.* 1.26.164; Loeb 5:382; Yonge, 379. Figurative blindness healed by the Scriptures: *Spec. Leg.* 1.60.324; Loeb 7:288; Yonge, 565. Cf., Josephus, on Elisha / the prophet from Jerusalem causing and removing blindness / Jeroboam’s hand paralysis: Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 9.4.3.55-59; Loeb 6:30, 32; Whiston, 249; *ibid.*, 8.8.5.233-236; Loeb 5:696, 698; Whiston, 229 - based on 2 Kings 6:15-23 and 1 Kings 13:1-10 in HB. Impairment curable in the will and power of God: Talmud, *Berachoth* 60b, *Yoma* 35b, *Yevamoth* 101a, *Sanhedrin* 91b; *Genesis R.*, 92.1. Cf., Schrage, 273-275, 290f.

⁶¹¹ Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus* 7; Loeb 2:298f – Vespasian as yet lacking authority: “auctoritas et quasi maiestas quaedam.” We can compare Philo’s panegyric of Augustus: “This is Caesar, who calmed the storms which were raging in every direction, who healed the common diseases which were afflicting both Greeks and barbarians” – Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 21.145; Loeb 10:72, 74; Yonge, 770.

In Tacitus, however, Vespasian is sceptical, going ahead with the healing procedure only after making a thorough investigation, and having sought advice from physicians on the likelihood of success. He enters the temple after the healings have occurred, to investigate with the same thoroughness the god Serapis, whose temple it is. In Tacitus, the people with impairments have a more significant role: they state the method Vespasian is to use, their persistence – “illis instantibus” – persuades Vespasian to loosen his scepticism, and the physicians refer to them as the only ones to lose in the event of his inability to heal them.⁶¹²

Another emperor approached by people with impairments for healing was Hadrian. Here, the people with the impairments play the major role. A blind woman is driven by a dream to give Hadrian a message not to kill himself because of his fever which he is destined to survive. She disobeys at first, and this was the cause of her blindness. She was ordered a second time to give Hadrian the message, “assured of the recovery of her sight if she did so” – which duly happens. Shortly after, a blind man approaches Hadrian when ill with fever, and touches him: “whereupon the man received his sight, and the fever left Hadrian.” In these stories, there is not any sense of Hadrian demonstrating any divine nature through the healing of impairment, but it is clear that the divine is seen to be behind what was occurring. It is possible that these cures of incurable impairment in relation to the emperor had become a device: the writer at once

On the rarity of impairment healing: Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*, 75f – Kee emphasises the role in this incident not of Vespasian, but of Serapis.

⁶¹² Tacitus, *Histories* 4.81; Loeb 3:158-161.

records an observer's scepticism: "All these things, however, Marius Maximus declares were done as a hoax."⁶¹³

In a similar way, Apollonius of Tyana was said to have healed people with impairments. A lame person, a blind person, and someone with a paralysed hand were each said to go away healed. The detail of the healings were kept to the minimum: no mention was made of the healer at all, although it is assumed to be Apollonius. The author of the work claims in many places divinity associated with Apollonius – for example through the portents at his birth, "the gods thereby...hinted in advance how he should transcend all things upon earth and approach the gods."⁶¹⁴

In Graeco-Roman tradition, there was a human person whose ability to cure the incurable led him not only to approach the gods, but even to join them as an immortal: Asclepius. However, this was not before Asclepius had been struck down by Zeus for overstepping the limit with his healing abilities, reflecting the theme we saw above of medicine's inevitable limits.⁶¹⁵ Asclepius as a deity was often identified with the healing of incurable conditions, including impairment. The plot of Aristophanes' play

⁶¹³ Hadrian: SHA, Aelius Spartianus, *Hadrian* 25.1-4; Loeb 1:76f.

⁶¹⁴ Healing of a lame man, a blind man, and a man with a paralysed hand :Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 3.39 Loeb 1:316-319. Apollonius and his "approach to the gods": Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.5; Loeb 1:14f. Cf., the brief mention of "healing by music" practised by Pythagoras: Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica* 25.110, 114; Deubner, 63f; G. Clark, *Pythagorean Life*, 49f. Also, Alexander's so-called healings as quackery: Lucian, *Alexander* 6; Loeb 4:182f; *ibid.*, 22; Loeb 4:204f; *ibid.*, 24; Loeb 4:206f; *ibid.*, 53; Loeb 4:242f. Impairment healing – doing the undoable – as an association of someone seen as a "divine man": see, for example: P. Brown, "Rise and Function," 80-101; H. D. Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," 114-133; M. Smith, "Prolegomena," 174-199; O. Betz, 229-240; Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*, 297-299; Blackburn, 185-218; van der Loos, 117-215; B. Ward, 539-542; ABD 1:372f; Koskeniemi, 455-467.

⁶¹⁵ Asclepius the curer of the incurable: "He advanced so far in reputation as to cure many of the sick who had been despaired of, contrary to all expectations" T4; Edelstein and Edelstein, 9f. The deification of Asclepius: T236-T256, T350; Edelstein and Edelstein, 110-117, 182f. Asclepius' struck down: T4, T232-T235; Edelstein and Edelstein, 9f, 108-110.

Plutus turns on the healing of Wealth's blindness at Asclepius' temple using the process of incubation.⁶¹⁶ Aristides, an Asclepius devotee, claims on several occasions that Asclepius healed specifically people with impairments:

Some, I mean both men and women, even attribute to the providence of the god the existence of the limbs of their body, when their natural limbs had been destroyed.⁶¹⁷

At Asclepius' well, "many by bathing in it have recovered their sight...It has cured one man's feet...Once someone drank it and spoke after being mute."⁶¹⁸ In Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, the story is told of a Cilician making a lavish offering to Asclepius "supplicating the god to restore to him one of his eyes that has fallen out." However, the priest is suspicious, and discovers that the suppliant's eye had been put out as punishment for seducing his step-daughter. The healing does not occur, not because replacing a lost eye was seen as impossible for Asclepius, but because the supplicant had lost his eye as punishment for a crime.⁶¹⁹

Inscriptions recording the healing of impairment by Asclepius survive from many areas of the Graeco-Roman world, but the largest source is the several *stelae* of inscriptions that survive from the temple at Epidaurus. Of the 70 healings listed on the surviving *stelae*, 23 (possibly 24) are of various sensory and mobility impairments. This is a significant contrast with the tiny proportion relating to impairment in the magico-

⁶¹⁶ Aristophanes, *Plutus* - especially: 45f; Loeb 3:366f; Rogers, 6f; *ibid.*, 71; Loeb 3:368-371; Rogers, 10f; *ibid.*, 85; Loeb 3:370f; Rogers, 10f; *ibid.*, 114f; Loeb 3:372f; Rogers, 12-15.

⁶¹⁷ Aristides, *Orationes* 42.7; Dindorf, 65f; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:248 - τῶν παρὰ τῆς φύσεως διεφθαρμένων.

⁶¹⁸ Aristides, *Orationes* 39.15; Dindorf, 412f; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:237.

⁶¹⁹ Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.10; Loeb 1:22-27.

In Jewish tradition, the healing of impairment at a temple of Asclepius raises disturbing questions about the reality of the idol; the response given is that the person's affliction leaves them at the appointed time which, in this case, happens to be when the person is at the temple: the affliction does not hold back its leaving because of the "foolishness of the afflicted" – Talmud, *Avodah Zorah* 55a.

medical texts. These inscriptions support the theme of impairment as being incurable by human treatment, though not beyond healing with divine will and power.⁶²⁰ In several individual inscriptions, the ability of the god to heal impairment is doubted, both by the impaired person and by others present. This is a device to demonstrate the unexpected power of Asclepius that surpasses expectation. A one-eyed person is said to have “ridiculed some of the cures as being unlikely and impossible, the lame and the blind becoming well from only seeing a vision” – *διεγέλα ὡς ἀπίθανα καὶ ἀδύνατα ἐόντα*. There is a similar reaction in the case of another blind suppliant:

Some of the people in the sanctuary were laughing at his simple-mindedness [τὰν ἐνηθίαν αὐτοῦ] in thinking that he could be made to see, having absolutely nothing, not even the beginnings of an eye, but only the socket.⁶²¹

⁶²⁰ For the text of the Epidaurus inscriptions: LiDonnici, 84-131; Edelstein and Edelstein 1:221-237. Impairment healings in the inscriptions – (notation used here is that of LiDonnici):

- a) Finger paralysis: *EMI* A3; LiDonnici, 86f.
- b) Single eye blindness: *EMI* A4; LiDonnici, 88f; *EMI* A9; LiDonnici, 92f; *EMI* B20 (40); LiDonnici, 114f.
- c) Double eye blindness: *EMI* A11; LiDonnici, 94f; *EMI* A18; LiDonnici, 98f; *EMI* A20; LiDonnici, 98f; *EMI* B2 (22); LiDonnici, 100f; *EMI* B12 (32); LiDonnici, 108f; *EMI* C22 (65); LiDonnici, 128f.
- d) Eye injury: *EMI* B20 (40); LiDonnici, 114f; *EMI* D3 (69); LiDonnici, 130f.
- e) Inability to speak: *EMI* A5; LiDonnici, 88f; *EMI* C1 (44); LiDonnici, 116f; *EMI* C8 (51); LiDonnici, 122f.
- f) Body paralysis: *EMI* A15; LiDonnici, 96f; *EMI* B17 (37); LiDonnici, 112f; *EMI* C14 (57); LiDonnici, 124f; ? *EMI* D4 (70); LiDonnici, 130f.
- g) Knee paralysis: *EMI* B18 (38); LiDonnici, 112f.
- h) Lameness: *EMI* A16; LiDonnici, 97; *EMI* B15 (35); LiDonnici, 110f.
- i) Impaired foot: *EMI* B16 (36); LiDonnici, 112f.
- j) Epilepsy: *EMI* C19 (62); LiDonnici, 126f.

Records of Asclepius healing people with impairments in other places than Epidaurus: Ruttimann, 56, 58, 215.

The Edelsteins' collection includes a further 15 passages where Asclepius is said to heal the incurable: T141, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:67f; T154, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:74; T163, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:78; T165, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:80f; T199, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:96; T331, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:169-175; T364, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:187f; T399, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:200-202; T404, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:204; T422, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:220f; T428, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:241f; T459, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:263f; T584, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:324f; T848, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:432-434; T850, Edelstein and Edelstein 1:435-441.

The sons of Asclepius heal the disease of Philoctetes, even though “Odysseus and the sons of Atreus had prematurely decided that this disease was incurable” – Aristides, *Orationes*, 38.10; Dindorf, 74; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:231. Aristides' own condition cured by Asclepius, though physicians decided it was incurable: Aristides, *Orationes*, 48.39; Dindorf, 475; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:299.

⁶²¹ Ability of the god to heal impairment doubted: *EMI* A4; LiDonnici, 88f; *EMI* A9; LiDonnici, 92f.

We also see in the Asclepius healing inscriptions that people with impairments had a contributory role – as we saw too with the people who approached Vespasian and Hadrian. In general, people contributed by the very fact of coming to the temple, despite the difficulties of travel, and by participating in the incubation process. In addition, several times the person received healing on performing some activity, usually prompted by the god during the dream that characterises the incubation, or sometimes stimulated by others present at the temple. An example is “the simple-mindedness” of the blind suppliant just mentioned – at least to the doubting onlookers that was how his faith was interpreted. Again, the reaction of onlookers was a means of heightening the effect of the god’s power.

There are many other examples from the Epidaurian inscriptions of the person who seeks healing contributing to the healing event. A person with finger paralysis doubted, but following what had happened in the incubation dream, stretched out his finger and was healed. A mute boy made a promise to sacrifice, and in doing so spoke. A lame man ran off after a boy who had stolen his crutch. Another lame man obeyed the god’s command in the dream to climb a ladder, but gave up finding it too difficult; despite this, “he boldly tried it when the day came” and was healed. Obedience to the god’s command in the dream is frequently followed by healing, both for impairment, and for other conditions.⁶²² Obedience is a quality that Aristides identifies as important for

⁶²²*EMI* A3; LiDonnici, 86f – man with finger paralysis stretched out his finger. *EMI* A5; LiDonnici, 88f – mute boy makes a promise to sacrifice; cf., *EMI* C1; LiDonnici, 116f – mute girl yells in fear at seeing a snake. *EMI* A16; LiDonnici, 96f – lame man ran off after a boy who had stolen his crutch. *EMI* B15; LiDonnici, 110f – after climbing a ladder in a dream, “(although) being lame he boldly tried it when the

suppliants to show, as do medical writers in relation both to Asclepius healings and to medical healings in general: “I decided to submit to the god, truly as to a doctor, and to do in silence whatever he wishes.”⁶²³

In the Asclepius inscriptions we see the main impairment healing theme identified from medical and literary texts: impairment was seen to be incurable, except by divine power and will. In addition, we see in the Asclepius healing testimonies the second theme: the contributory role of the person with the impairment who is healed. Studies have been made of the similarities between the healing cults of Asclepius and of Jesus: the apologists of each reacted to and imitated the other, including the use of these impairment healing themes.⁶²⁴ In the next section we see how these two themes were used by the Early Church.

day came” – ἀγανακτῶν. Cf., *EMI* B2; LiDonnici, 100f – blind man healed didn’t make the offering, and so became blind again; healed after coming back.

Being obedient specifically mentioned – Those with impairments: *EMI* A5; LiDonnici, 88f; *EMI* A15; LiDonnici, 96f; (*EMI* B2 – returns after healing lost; LiDonnici, 100f); *EMI* B15; LiDonnici, 110f; *EMI* C21; LiDonnici, 128f; *EMI* C22; LiDonnici, 128f. Others: *EMI* A6; LiDonnici, 90f; *EMI* A7; LiDonnici, 90f; *EMI* B4; LiDonnici, 102f; *EMI* B13; LiDonnici, 110f; *EMI* B21; LiDonnici, 114f; *EMI* C3; LiDonnici, 118f; (*EMI* C4 – confesses omission to fulfil vow; LiDonnici, 120f); *EMI* C5; LiDonnici, 122f; *EMI* C11; LiDonnici, 124f; *EMI* C15; LiDonnici, 124f; *EMI* C16; LiDonnici, 126f; *EMI* C20; LiDonnici, 126f; ? *EMI* D3; LiDonnici, 130f.

Compare Philoctetes, Stesichorus and the people healed by Artemis and Demeter who have a contributory role in their own healing – see text at pages 176, 318-319 and footnotes 304, 591-592. Similarly, on people with chronic conditions, specifically impairments, Aretaeus writes that they must persevere (τολμέουσι ἐς τέλος), be courageous and co-operate with the physician – ἄλκιμον ἔμμεναι καὶ ξυνίστασθαι τῷ ἰητρῷ - Aretaeus, *On the Causes and Symptoms of Chronic Diseases* 1.1; Adams, 51, 293. Not only in the inscriptions, but also in medical and non-medical texts, a contributory role is identified for the people with impairments.

⁶²³ Aristides’ own obedience: Aristides, *Orationes* 47.4; Dindorf, 446; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:278; Aristides emphasises the obedience of devotees prior to their healing – Aristides, *Orationes* 52.1; Dindorf, 551; Behr, *Aristides: Complete Works* 2:352: “Thus the god directed us in many things, giving signs as to what should be done, and finding us obedient, if ever any other man was obedient to the god.” Cf., emphasis on obedience in the relationship of other Asclepius devotees, including Galen: Kudlein, 124f.

⁶²⁴ Analysis of resemblances in Epidaurian healings: LiDonnici, 20-75. On the similarities in the healings of Asclepius and Jesus, including the ways in which healings were described and used: Ruttimann, 181-205, 212-219; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 97-158. Similarities in components in healing stories, especially the role of devotees – Ruttimann, 112-115. See also Festugiere, “Types Epidauriens,” 70-73.

3.0 *Impairment Healing and the Nature of Jesus*

3.1 **Impairment Healing and the Unique Nature of Jesus**

The first of the two impairment healing theme – that impairment cannot be cured by medicine – is soon apparent in Early Church texts. Peter speaks of impairments such as mutilations and lameness as “utterly incurable, and entirely beyond the range of the medical profession”⁶²⁵ The theme was used also with non-bodily impairment, to emphasise great extent in what is being described. The love of money, for instance, was said to maim the eyes and ears incurably. Grief is a maiming beyond cure, “even beyond the power of all treatment, and craving assistance from above.” Anger is a darkness of the mind that can become incurable.⁶²⁶ In a way similar to the medical writers’ aim of preventing a condition becoming incurable, figurative lameness or paralysis of the soul was used to warn those in the severe danger of falling into sin

Differences in perceptions of miracles in different traditions: Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 27-72; G. Smith, 341-348; Remus, “Does Terminology Distinguish?” 531-551; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 88-94; van der Loos, 233-254..

⁶²⁵ ὁ ὑποστροφὴν πρὸς ἰασιν πάλιν οὐκ ἔχει καὶ παντὸς ἰατρικοῦ ἐπαγγέλματος ἐκτός ἐστιν: *Homilia Clementina* 14.5.4; *GCS* 42:206; *ANF* 8:306; cf., epilepsy is said to be “very difficult to cure, so that those who have the power to cure demoniacs sometimes fail in respect of this, and sometimes with fastings and supplications and more toils, succeed”- Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 13.6; *GCS* 40:193f; *ANF* 10:479.

⁶²⁶ The love of money disables the eyes and ears incurably: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 65.3; *PG* 59:363; *NPNF i* 14:243. Grief is an incurable maiming: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 2.1; *PG* 49.33; *NPNF i* 9:344. Anger as a darkness of the mind that becomes incurable: Hermas, *Pastor* 5.2.4,

beyond repentance, for “one who is fallen will never rise again.” The image was also used to describe refusal, and the consequences that result from refusal. Jesus’ critics put themselves beyond healing and help, just as those with diseases of blindness are beyond the assistance of physicians. Drawing on an image from Isaiah 56:10, false and hypocritical teachers are described as “mute dogs that cannot bark...they labour under an incurable disease.”⁶²⁷

In the New Testament itself, the impairment healings are used to identify who Jesus of Nazareth was: “The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me” [John 10:25]. Similarly, in Early Church writers, the taking away of impairment is a means of “making plainer” the power and authority of Jesus and his equality with the Father: “He effected this by the demonstration of His deeds.” To many of the witnesses, and for Chrysostom’s own use of these impairment encounters, Jesus’

7; Loeb 2:92f; *ANF* 2:23. The emperor Julian mocks the bishop Maris for his incurable blindness: Socrates, *HE* 3.12; *GCS* nf 1:206f; *NPNF* ii 2:85; Sozomen, *HE* 5.4.8-9; *GCS* 50:198; *NPNF* ii 2:329.

⁶²⁷ Incurable lameness or paralysis of the soul: - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 31; *PG* 63:214-215; *NPNF* i 14:507; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:73; *NPNF* i 11:52.

Jesus’ critics putting themselves beyond healing, like those who are blind: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Col.* 7; *PG* 62:347; *NPNF* i 13:290; even so, incurability is in itself no reason to amputate - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 68.3; *PG* 59:337; *NPNF* i 14:253.

Mute dogs as incurable: Ignatius, *Epist. ad Ephesianos* 7; Loeb 1:180f; *ANF* 1:53. Isaiah 56:10 has simply “They are all mute dogs, they cannot bark.” Cf., despite, like deaf adders, heretics closing their ears “to the song called new, though very old,” a chance remains “to persuade and lead to the truth those who are not entirely incurable”: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 7.16.102.6; *GCS* 17:72; *ANF* 2:553. Cf., God’s own people did not believe, being incurably infirm - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 69.1; *PG* 58:649; *NPNF* i 10:422. Cf., the maiming to Cain’s soul could not be healed, “Although God Himself continually charmed the wound” - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.3; *PG* 59:211; *NPNF* i 14:130.

Incurable impairment used of heretics: Theodoret, *Eranistes, Dialogue* 2.113; Ettlenger, 117; *NPNF* ii 3:185; Theodoret, *HE*, 117.13; *GCS* 44:117; *NPNF* ii 3:72; - *ibid.*, 280.6; *GCS* 44:280; *NPNF* ii 3:132. See also: Barrett, *Gospel According to St John*, 366; Haenchen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 2:41f; Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 41; Mackrell, 46-51. Compare Dwyer’s conclusion on Mark’s use of the culturally established theme of wonder: “a divine rule of awe” – Dwyer, 199.

There are occasions when impairment is presented as not incurable. Copres describes the healing of the lame and the blind as acts of “we lesser men...which the physicians also accomplish by their skill” ἡμεῖς οἱ μικροὶ τὰ μικρὰ ταῦτα πράττομεν, χωλοὺς καὶ τυφλοὺς θεραπεύοντες - *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 10.4; Festugiere, *Historia*, 76f; *LDF* 85.

healing of impairment, doing what is impossible – οὐκοῦν τοῦτο ἀδύνατον – is “sufficient proof of His power” and “establishes His assertions.” A particular example is Jesus’ healing of paralysis. It was described as “something beyond nature,” “far more perfect and better than the operations of nature”; for “Nature herself gave way at His command.” As impairment is in the nature of human beings, so Jesus “re-ordered the bodies which He cured,” restoring both body and soul.⁶²⁸ Showing himself in this way as beyond nature, Jesus is clearly one with the Father in both power and authority:

This then He first aimed at [in healing the man with paralysis], to make Himself equal with God, showing that He was not God’s adversary, but that He said the same and taught the same with Him.⁶²⁹

What Jesus does in healing people with impairments was presented explicitly as “beyond the skill of physicians.” Such conditions are “utterly incurable,” having “baffled the art of medicine,” and “which cannot be corrected by human art, but only by divine grace.”⁶³⁰

⁶²⁸ John Chrysostom’s understanding of impairment healings – As making plainer Christ’s authority: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 36.2; *PG* 57:415; *NPNF i* 10:240; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 6; *PG* 51:59; *NPNF i* 9:218; - As doing the impossible: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 2.1; *PG* 60:31; *NPNF i* 9:344; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.12; *PG* 48:804; *FC* 72:290; - As providing “sufficient proof” and establish assertions: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.4; *PG* 57:380; *NPNF i* 10:213; *ibid.*, 67.1; *PG* 58:633; *NPNF i* 10:409; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 55.2; *PG* 59:304; *NPNF i* 14:199; *ibid.*, 56.1; *PG* 59:305-306; *NPNF i* 14:200f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 2; *PG* 60:31; *NPNF i* 11:15f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 7; *PG* 60:445; *NPNF i* 11:378. Cf., Gospel of Mark 2:5-12, especially Mark 2:10f. “‘But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’ – he said to the paralysed man – ‘I say to you, rise, take up your pallet, and go home.’” Cf., Boobyer, 120; Dupont, 940-958; C. C. Grant, 73f.

John Chrysostom’s use of paralysis healing in relation to nature: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 25.1; *PG* 57:328; *NPNF i* 10:172; *ibid.*, 26.6; *PG* 57:339; *NPNF i* 11:180f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 22.3; *PG* 59:136; *NPNF i* 14:78. Christ’s impairment healings were against “what nature grants as possible...[and] must seem utterly incredible in view of what is naturally possible and impossible...[but not to Christians] for we regard not the law of nature, but the powerful operation of God” – Augustine, *C. Faustum* 26.2; *CSEL* 25:720; *NPNF i* 4:321.

Bodies re-ordered: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:83; *NPNF i* 14:42.

⁶²⁹ Christ’s relationship with nature demonstrates that his authority: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 49.2; *PG* 59:276; *NPNF i* 14:178; cf., John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 6-7; *PG* 51:59-61; *NPNF i* 9:218f.

⁶³⁰ The healing of impairment shows that Jesus is unique: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.1; *PG* 59:305-306; *NPNF i* 14:201. By healing incurable impairment, Christ goes beyond the skill of physicians: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 22.3; *PG* 59:138; *NPNF i* 14:78; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in*

Jesus' ability to take away impairment sets him over not only physicians, but also magicians and astrologers. Impairment such as blindness, mutilation and lameness was "a case, indeed, which not even the astrologers profess to cure" - ὄν οὐδὲ ἀστρολόγοι ἰᾶσθαι ἐπαγγέλλονται. Clement of Alexandria makes a rhetorical appeal on such grounds:

Teiresias...casting away divination and Bacchic frenzy, allow thyself to be led to the truth. I give thee the staff [of the cross] on which to lean. Haste, Teiresias; believe and thou wilt see. Christ, by whom the eyes of the blind recover sight, will shed on thee a light brighter than the sun...thou, old man, who saw not Thebes, shalt see the heavens.⁶³¹

Such was the uniqueness of impairment healing, that Messianic pretenders - even the antichrist - were said to perform the removal of impairment in order to deceive people into following them.

And then he will work wonders, cleansing lepers, raising paralytics, expelling demons...helping widows, defending orphans, loving all...All this he will do corruptly and deceitfully, and with the purpose of deluding all to make him king. For when the peoples and tribes see so great virtues and so great powers in him, they will all with one mind meet together to make him king.⁶³²

Acta Apost. 8; *PG* 60:69; *NPNF i* 11:50; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 27.1; *PG* 57:344; *NPNF i* 10:185; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 4; *PG* 51:55; *NPNF i* 9:215.

Jesus is often described as a physician. For example, Jesus demonstrates the "special mark of a physician to associate with the infirm...not to hurry from them," and like a physician he sees as priority to treat the "root and origin of the infirmity" before tackling its symptoms and signs – John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 5; *PG* 51:57; *NPNF i* 9:216f.

Jesus excels physicians in other respects than his ability to cure the incurable: in his loving-kindness, in his self-sufficiency, in the ease and speed with which he brings about the healings, in the lack of discomfort to the people being healed, and in the large numbers of people with impairments that he is able to heal – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 27.1; *PG* 57:344; *NPNF i* 10:185; *ibid.*, 32.2; *PG* 57:378; *NPNF i* 10:211; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 4 ; *PG* 62:523; *NPNF i* 13:421; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 2, 4; *PG* 51:52, 55; *NPNF i* 9:212, 215.

⁶³¹ Astrologers don't even profess to cure impairment: *Homilia Clementina* 14.5.4; *GCS* 42:206; *ANF* 8:306. Teiresias urged to abandon divination: Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 12.119.3; Marcovich, 172; *ANF* 2:205.

⁶³² The antichrist's use of impairment healings: Hippolytus, *De consummatione mundi* 23.11; *GCS* 1.2:298; *ANF* 5:248; cf., Bousset, 175-181; *EJ* 3:60f. Cf., Simon the Messiah pretender: *The Clement Romance* 22.3; *NTA* 2:512.

Impairment healing was seen as beyond the ability of magic: it is misleading for modern commentators to assert that Jesus' impairment healings "are drawn entirely from the magician's repertoire": M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 107; cf., Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 52-72; Mathew, 54-91.

However, in order to counter Celsus' claim that the miracles of Jesus were the works of human sorcery, Origen asserts that "there is no resemblance between what is done by the power of God and what is the effect of sorcery." The means of discrimination that Origen identifies is a test of behaviour – whether

those who profess to perform them by their lives and morals, and the consequences of their miracles, viz., whether they tend to human injury or to the reformation of conduct.⁶³³

Jesus' ability to take away impairment was one way in which comparisons were made between him and Asclepius. As mentioned above, there was great rivalry between the healing cults of Asclepius and Jesus. At times, the comparison with Asclepius suited the Church. The Jewish leaders' claims that Jesus' impairment healings were evil deeds and proof that he was a sorcerer using the power of Beelzebub, are dismissed by Pilate: " 'This is not to cast out demons by an unclean spirit, but by the god Asclepius.' "

However, the need arose for Early Church writers to assert that Jesus' powers were superior, and the impossible impairment healings played a part in their arguments. The Asclepius cult may have been established long before the arrival of Christianity, one line of reasoning went, but Asclepius was merely imitating the impairment healing prophecies relating to Christ. In fact, it was stated, Christ went further than Asclepius: he did not do as Asclepius did, simply apply medical knowledge "by science drawn

⁶³³ Origen, *C. Celsus* 2.49-51; *SC* 132:394-406; *ANF* 4:450f; cf., Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 12.2; *GCS* 40:70-72; *ANF* 10:450f; the NT texts Origen makes reference to: Matthew 24:23-27 (cf., Matthew 7:22f; Luke 13:26f). Origen continues: Just as "the power of the Egyptian magicians was not similar to the divinely-bestowed grace of Moses...so the proceedings of the antichrists...are said to be lying signs and wonders, prevailing with all deceivableness of unrighteousness among them that perish; whereas the works of Christ and His disciples had for their fruit, not deceit, but the salvation of human souls." For a similar interpretation of impairment healing as "false" miracles by the devil: D. Roberts, 105, 148.

from nature.” Rather, as the impairment healings show, “He modified a person’s original nature, and restored the body whole.”⁶³⁴

3.1 Impairment Healing and the Divine Nature of Jesus

Early Church writers used impairment healings to demonstrate that Christ was not only unique, beyond medicine, magic or Asclepius; his ability to take away impairment showed that he was divine. The healing of impairment is presented as “unquestionable evidence” of his divinity. “The divine in Him is manifest, when...He makes one see who was blind from birth” – τὸ δὲ θεϊκὸν αὐτοῦ φανερώς ἐστὶν ἰδεῖν . “He was showing Himself to be God, and made whole the withered hand” – Θεὸν ἑαυτὸν ἐδείκνυε. Ignatius asks simply in the context of Christ’s healing of impairment – πῶς δὲ οὐχ οὗτος θεός; ⁶³⁵

⁶³⁴ For the rivalry of Asclepius and Jesus healing cults, see Ruttimann, 181-205, 212-219; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 97-158.

Pilate denies the role of Beelzebub in favour of Asclepius: *Acts of Pilate* 1; *NTA* 1:506; Pilate identifies the envy of the religious leaders at this ability of Jesus to heal impairment: *Acts of Pilate* (first Latin form of Decensus); *NTA* 1:527.

Asclepius’ healing a devil-inspired imitation of prophecies for Christ: Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 69.5; Archambault, 336; *ANF* 1:233; cf., Justin Martyr, *Apologiae* 1.22; Wartelle, 128; *ANF* 1:170.

Christ modified the original nature and restored the body whole: Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 49.1-2; *SC* 199:444; *NPNF ii* 4:63.

⁶³⁵ Divine nature manifest in the healing of the man born blind - Hippolytus, *Comm. in Psalmos* 18.17; *GCS* 1.2:146; *ANF* 5:170. Cf., “Divinely as Son of God He opened the eyes of the man blind from birth” - θεϊκῶς δὲ ὡς Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ - Athanasius, *Tomus ad Antiochenos* 7; *PG* 26:805; *NPNF ii* 4:485.

Divine nature manifest in the healing of the man with the withered hand: Athanasius, *Apologia de fuga sua* 12; Opitz, 2.1:69; *NPNF ii* 4:259. Cf., the healing of the man with the withered hand as “unquestionable evidence of his divine character”: Socrates, *HE* 3.8.73; *GCS* nf 1:203; *NPNF ii* 2:83.

Ignatius’ question: Ignatius, *Epist. ad Philippianos*, 5.6.1.2; *PG* 5:928; *ANF* 1:117. Cf., “In order that He might be believed that He uttered these things full of the Godhead, He wrought many wonderful miracles and signs by His mere command, as having received power from God” - θειότητος γέμων...ὡς παρὰ θεοῦ εἰληφώς τὴν ἐξουσίαν - *Homilia Clementina* 1.6.4; *GCS* 42:25f; *ANF* 8:224; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:359, 360; *NPNF i* 10:196f.

There were particular ways in which the Early Church writers used this theme. As we saw above, especially in Graeco-Roman texts, impairment healing was linked directly to the gods. Christian writers used this association to show that Christ's healing of impairment made it clear to pagans that he was divine. When reports reach Rome of "a man in Judea" performing impairment healings, people there were said to conclude that he was acting "as it were in the power of God...there is nothing at all that is impossible for him." Eusebius relates the story of Abgarus king of Edessa: "Afflicted with a terrible disease which it was beyond the power of human skill to cure...[Abgarus] sent a message to Jesus...and begged him to heal his disease." At the reports of Jesus' impairment healings Abgarus conveniently draws this conclusion: "One of two things must be true: either thou art God, and having come down from heaven thou doest these things, or else, thou, who doest these things, art the Son of God."⁶³⁶

Christ did not declare himself to be God – no need to, as in his impairment healings he performed "the works of God in power and in actuality" - δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ποιῶν - *Acts of Phileas* Column 6; Musurillo, 335. The impairment healings "that were done could have been done by no other nature than the Divine...God alone has power for this...These works are peculiar to God" - "propria Dei" - Hilary, *De Trinitate* 7.6; *CCL* 62:265f; *NPNF ii* 9:120. Impairment healings make manifest the Saviour's power: δύνάμιν ἐμφαίνεσθαι τοῦ σωτῆρος - Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 13.384; *SC* 222:244f; *FC* 89:150.

Similarly, the healing of the paralysed man shows Christ's divinity: John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.26-29; *PG* 48:807, 809; *FC* 72:296f, 301-303. Gregory of Nyssa calls Christ's impairment healings truthful evidence of his incarnation - μαρτύριον ἀψευδὲς τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως αὐτοῦ - Gregory of Nyssa, *Liber de cognitione Dei*; *PG* 130:268. Cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:69; *NPNF i* 11:50: "A miraculous sign again takes place, which both confirms the converts, and draws over the rest...The disease was in the nature of man, and baffled the art of medicine. He had been forty years lame...and no-one during that time had cured him"; *ibid.*, 21; *PG* 60:165; *NPNF i* 11:136: "the miracle served for exhortation to many". Cf., Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.48.24; *SC* 132:392; *ANF* 4:450.

Impairment healings were also seen as causing the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus: Melito, *On Pascha* 72, 78-79; Hall, 38f, 42f.

⁶³⁶ Reports in Rome of a man in Judea in the power of God: *The Clement Romance* 6.4; *NTA* 2:505. Abgarus' correspondence with Jesus: Eusebius, *HE* 1.13.6-7; Loeb 1:88f; cf., *The Abgar Legends*; *NTA* 1:497.

Cf., The impairment healings are also said to be a means by which the invisible divine nature of Christ was made visible: Theodoret, *Eranistes, Dialogue* 1.48; Ettlinger, 73; *NPNF ii* 3:166. Similarly, the impairment healings are used to assert Christ's self-sufficiency: through his divine nature he is "self-

References to the Hebrew Bible also were used to show how Jesus' divinity is demonstrated by his ability to heal impairment. To begin with, in his impairment healings Jesus exceeds the prophets:

Namaan, a leper, was cleansed, but no deaf person heard nor lame walked. Elias raised a dead man; so did Eliseus; but none blind from birth regained his sight. For in good truth, to raise a dead person is a great thing, but it is not like the wonder wrought by the Saviour... Certainly, had it come to pass that a lame person also had walked and a blind person recovered their sight, the narrative [of Scripture] would not have omitted to mention this also.⁶³⁷

His impairment healings were linked to a variety of specific Hebrew Bible texts that reveal his divine nature. Many times, references were made to Hebrew Bible prophecies that were being fulfilled by Jesus. The prophets were said to

connect the blind recovering their sight, and the lame walking, and the deaf hearing, and the tongue of the stammerers being made plain, with the Divine Coming which is to take place... "When have they taken place, save when the Word of God Himself came in the body? – ἐπὶ τῇ γενομένῃ θεῖα παρουσίᾳ λέγουσι.⁶³⁸

However, it was not only the impairment healing event itself that showed Jesus' divinity: the circumstances of the event were also put to the same use. Referring to 1 Kings 8:39, John Chrysostom states that the impairment healings gave Jesus the chance to "prove to them [his critics] the power of His Godhead" through knowing people's

sufficient, and self-maintained, and free from infirmity" and so "by His fullness are we all healed both body and soul": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim. 4*; PG 62:523; NPNF i 13:421; *Hom. in Matt. 67.4*; PG 58:638; NPNF i 10:413. Cf., Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 22.5; SC 199:346f; NPNF ii 4:48.

⁶³⁷ Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 38.5; SC 199:400f; NPNF ii 4:57. Cf., Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 6.47.242; SC 157:312; FC 80:234f.

⁶³⁸ HB prophecy fulfilled by Jesus' impairment healings: Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 38.4.6; SC 199:400f; NPNF ii 4:56f - Athanasius quotes John 9:32f. Cf., "That He healed the lame and the blind, and that therefore we hold Him to be the Christ and the Son of God, is manifest to us from what is contained in the prophecies" – Origen, *C. Celsus* 2.48; SC 132:390f; ANF 4:449 - Isaiah 35:5f then quoted. Cf., in Justin Martyr – *Apologiae* 1.48; Wartelle, 162; ANF 1:179; - *ibid.*, 1.31; Wartelle, 138; ANF 1:173; Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 69.5; Archambault, 336; ANF 1:233; the gentiles receiving "the holy inheritance of God" as fulfilment of Isaiah 35:1-7 & 42:6-7 – *ibid.*, 26.2.4;

thoughts and the secrets of their heart, “an attribute of God alone.” The Gospels themselves draw on this point when showing Jesus aware of the criticism that his healing of impairment was causing. Chrysostom adds a further dimension: Jesus was also able to see the admirable qualities of the people with impairments that he was about to heal.⁶³⁹

A Hebrew Bible passage frequently used by Early Church interpreters is Isaiah 35:3-6, a text of impairment healing that demonstrates divine restoration and reversal:

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, fear not! Behold your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame leap like a hart, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.’

In his speech to Paulinus the bishop of Tyre, Eusebius uses this passage, amongst others, to describe the restoration of the Church after the period of persecution.

Eusebius’ use of this image works in several ways. There is the sense that the healing of Christ’s Body is impossible by any human agency, but it is possible for God. By referring to Hebrew Bible texts, Eusebius shows that such restoration had been promised in prophecy, and so was bound to happen: “Rejoice with in the signal favour of the all-merciful God.” There is the added dimension that mutilation and impairment

Archambault, 116; *ANF* 1:207; cf., *ibid.*, 65.4.7; Archambault, 310; *ANF* 1:230. Cf., Ps-Justin Martyr, *De resurrectione* 4; *PG* 6:1577; *ANF* 1:295.

⁶³⁹ Knowing the secrets of human hearts a divine attribute made clear at impairment healings - of Jesus’ critics: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 6; *PG* 51:59; *NPNF* i 9:218; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 12.1; *PG* 60:99; *NPNF* i 11:76; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:359; *NPNF* i 10:196; - of people with impairments: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 66.1; *PG* 58:626; *NPNF* i 10:404f; *ibid.*, 32.1; *PG* 57:377-378; *NPNF* i 10:211; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.2; *PG* 59:213; *NPNF* i 14:132 – “Jesus perceived great endurance in his soul”.

The impairment healings are interpreted also as showing Jesus’ attribute of “care and concern”: John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.36-40; *PG* 48:808f; *FC* 72:300f; e.g., ἀπόδειξις δὲ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ κηδεμονίας – *ibid.*, 12.36; *PG* 48:808; *FC* 72:300.

were actual consequences for Christians of the persecutions – the image was appropriate figuratively and physically.⁶⁴⁰

In a similar way, specific Hebrew Bible texts were used to demonstrate that in healing impairment, Jesus was showing divine restorative activity. Firstly, Jesus' ability to heal impairment was presented as the same ability that he used at creation to create all matter. Jesus spits on the ground and uses clay to heal the blind man demonstrating his nature as "Architect of creation," not only opening the man's eyes, but even forming them.⁶⁴¹ Similarly, from the healing of impairment,

He made Himself known to be Son of God...It may be known that He who can do these is not man, but the Power and Word of God...For who that saw Him give back what was deficient to those born lacking, and open the eyes of the man blind from his birth, would have failed to perceive that human nature was subject to Him, and that He was its Artificer and Maker?⁶⁴²

Secondly, the impairment healings of Christ illustrated how Christ has re-ordered the human condition: "At once all the infirmities of their bodies and diseases of their souls

⁶⁴⁰ Other HB passages where the taking away of impairment is used of promised restoration and reversal possible only by God: Jeremiah 31:8, Micah 4:6f, Zephaniah 3:19, Isaiah 29:18f, Isaiah 42:14-16, Isaiah 61:1; Psalm 146:5-8. Use of Isaiah 35:3-6 in the NT: Hebrews 12:12f; cf., Job 4:3f.

Eusebius using HB prophecies of impairment healing as promised restoration of the Church after persecution: Eusebius, *HE* 10.4.32; Loeb 2:416-419. Physical mutilation and impairment the results of persecutions: see above pages 287-291.

Impairment healing a foreshadowing of divine restoration / God's kingdom in early Jewish traditions: *LOTJ* 3:78f, 153; cf., Talmud, *Yevamoth* 101a, *Sanhedrin* 91b; *Genesis R.*, 92.1.

Impairment healing as a motif of reversal or restoration in other ancient texts: Egyptian prophecy, *ANET* 445: "I show thee the land topsy-turvey. The weak of arm is (now) the possessor of an arm"; in the life beyond death, there will be a restoration of physical capabilities – damaged members will be "all there, sound"; in the topsy-turvey world of the Lord's day, "The sun seeing dimly, shines at night... There will be a most swift running for the lame, and the deaf will hear and blind will see, those who cannot speak will speak" – *Sibylline Oracles* 8.202-208; *OTPs* 1:423. Cf., the day of the Lord as a time of "thick darkness with the sun and moon both darkened: Joel 2:1f, 3:15.

⁶⁴¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.2; *PG* 59:307; *NPNF i* 14:201; cf., *ibid.*, 57.1; *PG* 59:311; *NPNF i* 14:204.

⁶⁴² Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 18.3f; *SC* 199:330f; *NPNF ii* 4:46; cf., Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 75; *PG* 26:948; *NPNF ii* 4:216; Athanasius, *Epist.* 60.3; *PG* 26:1076; *NPNF ii* 4:576.

were transformed, and they were fashioned anew to health and exactest virtue.”⁶⁴³

Some use impairment healings to illustrate both the effects of human sin, and also the restorative remedy brought about by Christ:

Because the works [of God] were become imperfect and mutilated from the transgression, He [Christ] is said in respect to the body to be created; that by perfecting them and making them whole, He might present the Church unto the Father, as the Apostle says, ‘not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.’ Humankind then is perfected in Him and restored, as it was made at the beginning, nay, with greater grace.⁶⁴⁴

The image was applied to illustrate Christ’s re-ordering of the Law: “In the same way, He took the Law, which was imperfect, He corrected it, formed and moulded it, and brought it to a more perfect state.”⁶⁴⁵

Cf., the act of divine creation as an opening of eyes and of ears: Egyptian myth – *ANET*, 13; Sumero-Akkadian myth – *ANET*, 389.

⁶⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:83; *NPNF i* 14:42; cf., John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 10.29-42; *PG* 48:789-791; *FC* 72:255-260.

⁶⁴⁴ Athanasius, *Orationes tres contra Arianos* 2.31.67; *PG* 26:289; *NPNF ii* 4:385.

⁶⁴⁵ Impairment healing illustrates Christ’s re-ordering of the Law: John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 10.36f; *PG* 48.790; *FC* 72:258. See also: “In the same way he took the Law, which was imperfect, he corrected it, formed and moulded it, and brought it to a more perfect state” – John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 10.36-37; *PG* 48.790; *FC* 72:258; cf., Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 67.12; *CCL* 39:877; Tweed *et al.*, 3:323.

Again, this is a divine characteristic: God as creator has the ability to re-fashion impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesim* 21.8; *PG* 53:178; *FC* 82:56; *ibid.*, 40.6; *PG* 53:370; *FC* 82:392; *ibid.*, 49.5; *PG* 54:445; *FC* 87:44.

Impairment healing is used as an image of restoration in other respects: “This is the sign [by which we are known as Christians], that we do not seek only what is our own, but we correct and strengthen our members which have become twisted. In this is the greatest proof of our faith” – τὰ μέλη ἡμῶν διεστραμμένα διορθοῦν καὶ καταρτίζειν - John Chrysostom, *Sermones in Genesim* 9; *PG* 54:623; ET in footnote 37 at *ACW* 31:267.

As well as using impairment healing imagery as illustration, Chrysostom also uses images to illustrate impairment healing. The restorative power of God, demonstrated in the healing of impairment, is illustrated by similes of buildings: “For having taken in hand the common nature of men, as some excellent workman might take a house decayed by time, He filled up what was broken off, banded together its crevices and shaken portions, and raised up what was entirely fallen down”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:83; *NPNF i* 14:41. In another example, the building image is used to identify God as the one who restores: “As some excellent architect may build part of a house, and leave the rest unfinished, so that to those who believe not he may prove, by means of that remnant, that he is the author of the whole; so also God joineth together and completeth our body, as it were a house decayed”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.2; *PG* 59:307; *NPNF i* 14:201; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 7; *PG* 62:637; *NPNF i* 13:501.

Thirdly, the Gospel impairment healings were seen as having been done for the purpose of illustrating Christ's restorative power at the general resurrection, "to induce the belief that in the resurrection the flesh shall rise entire. For if on earth He made the body whole, much more will He do this in the resurrection."⁶⁴⁶ This was presented as a reason for encouragement:

Be comforted ye faint in soul: be strong, fear not...for even if anyone be labouring under a defect of body, yet be an observer of the doctrines delivered by Him, He shall raise him up at His second advent perfectly sound, after He has made him immortal, and incorruptible, and free from grief.⁶⁴⁷

In a similar way, the *parousia* of Christ was described as "an age turned upside down": currently impossible things will happen, including the taking away of impairment.

The entire year will be an age turned upside down. The sun, seeing dimly, shines at night...There will be a resurrection of the dead and most swift racing of the lame, and the deaf will hear and blind will see, those who cannot speak will speak.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ Ps-Justin Martyr, *De resurrectione* PG 6:1577, 1580; ANF 1:295.

⁶⁴⁷ The general resurrection an encouragement for those with impairments: Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 69.5; Archambault, 336; ANF 1:233 - κἂν τις ἐν λῶβῃ τινὶ σώματος ὑπάρχων...ὀλόκληρον αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ δευτέρᾳ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ...ποιῆσαι ἀναστήσει. No impairment in the resurrected body: Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 58.18; CCL 2:1006; ANF 3:590f; contrast Augustine on the martyrs' badges of honour that remain in the Kingdom for all to admire: Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.19; CCL 48:838f; NPNF i 2:498.

Differences of opinion about Christ's own body – Christ's body "rose again in perfect soundness, since the body belonged to none other, but to the very Life": Athanasius, *De incarnatione Verbi* 21.7; SC 199:344; NPNF ii 4:48. "The Lord who raises the bodies of all men, unmaimed and unmarred (for lameness of limb and blindness of eye are unknown among them that are risen), left in His own body the prints of the nails, and the wound in his side" - ὁ κύριος ἄπηρα καὶ ἀλώβητα πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐγείρει τὰ σώματα· οὔτε γὰρ χωλότης οὔτε τυφλότης ἐν τοῖς ἀνισταμένοις εὐρίσκεται - Theodoret, *Eranistes, Dialogue* 2.161; Ettlinger, 148; NPNF ii 3:199.

As we see below, particular impairment healings were used to illustrate the general resurrection in specific ways: pages 389-393.

⁶⁴⁸ The age turned upside down: *Sibylline Oracles* 8.202-207; OTPs 1:423. The world be upside down in other respects relating to impairment – impairment will occur where it is not so now: at the loss of the sun and the moon, "Everything will be blackened, there will be darkness throughout the earth, and blind men, evil wild beasts, and woe" - *Sibylline Oracles* 5.350; OTPs 1:401. Cf., "There will be no voices of men, or beasts, or birds. The world, in disorder, will hear no useful sound" – *Sibylline Oracles* 8:344f; OTPs 1:426. Cf., the use of impairment to illustrate the world turned upside down in Egyptian literature: "A man who saw has turned blind, a hearer deaf, a leader now leads astray!" – AEL 1:174.

The removal of impairment, given the perception of impairment as incurable, was an appropriate image to describe the dramatic and radical reversal anticipated at Christ's return and earthly reign.

By way of a recap, we can refer to a recently published collection of Early Christian magical material that shows from a particular perspective several of the points about impairment healing that we have already identified. The collection contains 135 texts, many of which are substantial in length and wide ranging in content. Of these texts, 45 have any reference to healing. Where particular disorders are mentioned, they include most frequently fevers, head pains, skin disease, and conditions relating to childbirth. There is a single reference to "an eye that is darkened." In three places, spirits of impairment are called on to stay away. There is also an obscure reference in the context of childbirth, which might relate to an infant with a congenital impairment: "Whatever is crooked, let it be straight."⁶⁴⁹

Unlike the other collections of magico-medical texts discussed above, there are in this collection several references to impairment healings – Christ's impairment healings. As with the Early Church writers, these impairment healings were used in several ways.

Firstly, the healings assert Christ's divine nature:

The blind and the disabled and the mute, and the hearing impaired...you truly cleanse by the word of your mouth...These deeds reveal you, causing all flesh to know you, for you are the only begotten Son of God.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁹ The collection is *ACM* – according to the editors, "they date from about the 1st to the 11th or 12th centuries C.E., with the majority from late antiquity...virtually all are texts by Coptic Christians from ancient and early medieval Egypt": *ACM*, 1.

Darkened eye: *ACM*, 267. Impairment spirits to stay away: *ACM*, 45, 46, 316. Whatever is crooked, let it be straight: *ACM*, 96; cf., prayer that the child be born alive: *ACM*, 125.

⁶⁵⁰ *ACM*, 320.

Secondly, the fact that Christ can heal impairment was used to call on Christ to heal the person's own illness: "He opened the blind man's eyes. Hence we also...shout and call out...Have mercy on us."⁶⁵¹ This is in the context not of impairment specifically but of general illness: the person making the incantation is stating that Christ who can heal incurable impairment could easily heal their condition. It also supplies evidence of what we see in more detail below, that early Christians readily identified with people with impairments from the Gospels. Both these ways of referring to and using Christ's ability to heal impairment are also found in ancient inscriptions from various parts of the Hellenistic world. Apart from Christ's impairment healings, the one explicit reference in the collection to the removal of impairment is non-bodily. It is said of a child, "Open the organ of perception of his heart, that he may know everything that is (good)."⁶⁵²

The particular Christian context of this collection demonstrates several points already indicated. The power of magic appears not to have been expected to extend to the healing of impairment – Christ's ability to heal impairment is referred to, but not in the context of the supplicant's own impairment. The healing of impairment was understood as demonstrating divinity, specifically Christ's divinity. Finally, as before, impairment healing was used with a non-bodily sense.

⁶⁵¹ Christ the healer of impairment can therefore help me: *ACM*, 32f; cf., *ibid.*, 33, 35, 38, 39, 40, 97, 127f, 336; see also similar use in inscriptions: *MM*, 646. On the use of Christ in magical texts, see M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 61-64, 101-104, 113-137; cf., Mathews, 54-91. Similarly, Christ crucified in pain is called on to help a person in pain: *ACM*, 98; cf., John Chrysostom's use of pain at crucifixion: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 4.28; *FC* 50:197; *ACW* 31:77.

⁶⁵² *ACM*, 127.

4.0 “Yet Greater Works”: Beyond Impairment Healing

A further way that Early Church writers developed impairment healing themes was to link with the words of Jesus that his followers would do “yet greater works” [John 14:12]. These greater works were not understood to be impairment healing happening on a grander scale than Jesus achieved. The interpreters used the impairment healings in a more relevant way. Firstly, by identifying the extraordinary nature of impairment healing, the writers emphasised things that are even greater than impairment healing. Secondly, these yet greater things were shown to be, paradoxically, accessible to all Jesus’ followers. As Jesus promised, everyone has the ability to perform works greater even than the healing of impairment. The point for these interpreters was not whether or not impairment healings did occur or continue to occur. On the contrary, they used impairment healings to show that much more important things than impairment healings are taking place, and that these things are within the ability of every follower of Christ.

4.1 Impairment Healing and the Body / Soul Distinction

A chief way that greater things than bodily impairment healing were shown to be done is in the body / soul distinction. As we saw above, it was a common device to show that impairment of the soul is much more grievous than impairment of the body: “What injury had this man by his blindness?...Sin alone is an evil, but blindness is not an

evil.”⁶⁵³ By the same token, the healing of a soul’s impairment was shown to be far greater than the healing of the body’s impairment. The soul’s impairment was said to be a truer impairment, and one harder to heal. John Chrysostom explained that it was for these reasons that Jesus heals the paralysed man of Matthew 9 after forgiving the man’s sins:

He first loosed the bonds of the real and true palsy - τὴν ὄντως παράλυσιν - and then proceeds to the other...Having wrought the invisible miracle, He confirmed it by the visible, the spiritual by the bodily cure.⁶⁵⁴

Having done this more difficult miracle first, Jesus leaves “no room for gainsaying about the easier one.”⁶⁵⁵

Similarly, with the paralysed man of John 5, the healing powers of the angel and of Jesus were compared in terms of body and soul, and of servant and master:

The servant heals the imperfections and mutilations of the body; the master cures the wickedness of the soul. Do you see how clear in every way it becomes that there is a great and immeasurable difference between the servant and the master?⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.1; *PG* 59:307; *NPNF i* 14:201.

⁶⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 8; *PG* 62:60-61; *NPNF i* 13:88; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2-3; *PG* 57:359-360; *NPNF i* 10:196-198; *ibid.*, 46.3; *PG* 58:479-480; *NPNF i* 10:290; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 40.2; *PG* 61:348; *NPNF i* 12:245; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 4; *PG* 51:54; *NPNF i* 9:215; *ibid.*, 7; *PG* 51:60; *NPNF i* 9:219.

⁶⁵⁵ The soul’s healing is more difficult: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:83-84; *NPNF i* 14:41f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 4; *PG* 62:525-526; *NPNF i* 13:422f.

⁶⁵⁶ Use of the healing of the paralysed man of John 5 to distinguish Jesus as master and the angel as servant: John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.10; *PG* 48.804; *FC* 72:289f. Cf., “Men of Ephesus, ...how many miracles and cures of diseases have you seen through me? And yet you are blinded in your hearts, and cannot recover your sight”: *Acts of John* 39; *NTA* 2:187.

The miraculous impairment healings of Peter, of lesser importance than healing of soul impairment: “They were cured of every bodily disease, such as believed in the name of Jesus Christ, and very many were added every day to the grace of the Lord...And Peter said to them ‘If there is in you the faith which is in Christ, if it is established in you, then see with your mind what you do not see with your eyes; and though your ears be closed, yet let them open in your mind within you...only the inner eyes see Jesus Christ’ ”: *Acts of Peter* 19-31; *NTA* 2:302-312. See also: Lampe, “Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic,” 212, 215; Wiles, 221-225.

Bodily impairment healing fulfilled in soul impairment healing: “He who has opened his eyes, also saves him wholly: he will grant a resurrection at his right hand, who gave enlightenment to his countenance” – Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 44.14; *CCL* 36:387; *NPNF i* 7:248f. Cf., Augustine’s reference to bodily impairment healings confirming the resurrection and ascension of Christ, “That one grand and health-

This distinction of body and soul impairment, with the soul impairment being of more importance, is what John Chrysostom used to explain why miraculous bodily impairment healings no longer occur. Current disciples do not need them, and are better off without them:

This is the great indication of your high birth, and of your love, that you should believe God without pledges. And in fact this, and one other thing, were the reasons why God made miracles to cease. I mean, that if when miracles are not performed, they that plume themselves on other advantages – for instance, either on the word or on wisdom, or on show of piety – grow vainglorious, are puffed up, are separated one from another; did miracles also take place, how could there be but violent rendings?...Do not thou therefore seek signs, but the soul's health...Seek not to see a blind person healed, but behold all now restored unto that better and more profitable sight...If thou wouldest work miracles also, be rid of transgression, and thou hast quite accomplished it.⁶⁵⁷

4.2 Impairment Healing and the Apostles

As well as the body / soul distinction, Early Church interpreters used the apostles' impairment healings in their rhetorical dynamic to show that more important things than bodily impairment healing were taking place and that these greater things could be achieved by all people. The apostles were used both to point beyond themselves and also to display the greater works of key discipleship qualities.

giving miracle” – “illi uni grandi salubrique miraculo” – Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.8; CCL 48:815; NPNF i 2:484. On Augustine's views on miracles, see P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 413-418.

⁶⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; PG 57:387; NPNF i 10:218; cf., *ibid.*, 46.3; PG 58:479-480; NPNF i 10:290.

Firstly, the apostles were said to imitate their master by performing impairment healings, and, like their master, the signs they did emphasised the words they spoke. In contrast to their master, however, the healings pointed not to the healers, but beyond the healers: onlookers are led to “not admiring them, but God that wrought through them.” We saw above, for example, how Peter emphasises that impairments are far beyond the healing ability of physicians and magicians; we see that he does so in order to show that he himself is able to do such impossible things, but only through Christ’s power: “yet I praying to God will cure it.”⁶⁵⁸

The impairment healings performed by Christ’s disciples also point beyond the disciples themselves in another respect: they prove the truth of what the disciples believe. The miraculous healing of impairment was said to occur “to confirm that one grand and health-giving miracle of Christ’s ascension to heaven with the flesh in which He

⁶⁵⁸ In healing impairment, the apostles imitate their master: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:70; *NPNF i* 11:50.

Philip’s healing emphasises his words: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 18; *PG* 60:145; *NPNF i* 11:116.

Deflection away from healers to God: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:70; *NPNF i* 11:50f.

Peter’s ability to heal impairment: *Homilia Clementina* 14.5.4; *GCS* 42:206; *ANF* 8:306. Peter is especially associated with impairment healing: e.g. the public questioning at his daughter’s paralysis, and people he had healed from impairment as witnesses at his trial: *Acts of Peter* 1.128-141, *NTA* 2:285f; cf., Augustine, *C. Adimantum* 17; *CSEL* 25:170.

The ability to cure the incurable is seen in the desert fathers: “All that the Saviour did through the saints, he does in our own times through these monks” – *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 25.2; Festugiere, *Historia*, 135; *LDF* 118; cf., John “endowed with much grace...performs many miracles and cures, and was especially successful at healing people afflicted with paralysis and gout” – *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 26.4; Festugiere, *Historia*, 136; *LDF*, 117. Cf., Macarius is recognised by a hyena as able to heal her cubs’ blindness – *ibid.*, 21.16, Festugiere, *Historia*, 127; *LDF*, 110. Miracles performed by the Apostle John include restoration of sight to the blind – *Acts of John* 23, *NTA* 2:174. Cf., the blind Ahasuerus recovered his sight “as soon as he directed his eyes” towards Esther – *LOTJ* 6:475.

See also: Ward, 539-542; Copeland, *passim*; McEwen, 133-145; Ferngren, “Early Christianity,” 1-15; Lampe, “Miracles in Early Christian Apologetic,” 205-218; Wiles, 221-234; van der Loos, 216-232; Praeder, 107-129.

rose.”⁶⁵⁹ There is no sense here of what we find in modern preoccupation of the particular faith of an individual that either enables or prevents impairment healing taking place. Rather, the faith that impairment healing points to is the corporate faith, the faith of the Church. The healing of impairment was used to prove that the faith of the healer was true, not that the faith of an individual healer or person healed was sufficiently strong.

Secondly, when they heal impairment, the apostles were said to demonstrate these yet greater works not in their ability to perform impairment healings, but in the discipleship qualities they displayed in the course of the healings. An example is the apostles’ modesty in ascribing to God the ability to do these impossible acts: “See how on all occasions they are clean from the lust of glory, not only not coveting, but even repudiating it when offered it.”⁶⁶⁰ Similarly, with Peter’s healing of the lame man:

Why, what made Peter blessed, tell me? Was it indeed to have lifted up the lame man? By no means, but the not having these riches, this procured him Heaven...this was the apostle’s achievement.⁶⁶¹

With Paul too, when the Spirit comes upon him at his baptism, it was pointed out that “the mighty gifts” that he receives are not the ability to work impairment healings, but the ability to speak immediately in the synagogues, and not be “ashamed at the change...[that] the very things in which he was glorious aforesaid, the same he

⁶⁵⁹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 22.8; *CCL* 48:815; *NPNF i* 2:484. Cf., *ibid.*, 22.9; *CCL* 48:827, 828; *NPNF i* 2:491: “To what do these miracles witness, but to this faith which preaches Christ risen in the flesh...these miracles attest this faith which preaches the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life”.

⁶⁶⁰ Chrysostom stresses the apostles’ modesty at ascribing the ability to heal impairment not to themselves, but to God: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 30; *PG* 60:223; *NPNF i* 11:190, cf., *ibid.*, 4; *PG* 60:49; *NPNF i* 11:31; *ibid.*, 20; *PG* 60:160; *NPNF i* 11:131; *ibid.*, 31; *PG* 60:228; *NPNF i* 11:196; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 29; *PG* 60:656; *NPNF i* 11:544; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 35.8; *PG* 61:301; *NPNF i* 12:212; cf., *ibid.*, 35.11; *PG* 61:303; *NPNF i* 12:213; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 4; *PG* 62:416; *NPNF i* 13:339; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 10; *PG* 62:658-659; *NPNF i* 13:515. Cf., John Cassian, *De institutis* 4.41; *CSEL* 17:76; *NPNF ii* 11:232.

destroyed.” That this spiritual gift is greater than the ability to work wonders was shown by the hostility his action provoked, “For this was more intolerable to them than the miracles that had taken place”, and by his deliverance from their plot to seize him, “that thou mayest learn the energetic character of the man, how he shines even without miracles.” In several other ways, the apostles’ impairment healings were said to demonstrate miraculous gifts “more wonderful than raising the dead or giving eyes to the blind” – including confidence towards God, faith, obedience, a pure life, and the rejection of vainglory and covetousness. In describing these qualities as greater than impairment healing, John Chrysostom drew on 1 Corinthians 13: such qualities are, as Paul himself points out, “the more excellent way.”⁶⁶²

It is also, paradoxically, in their own inabilities that the apostles were said to perform yet greater works than their ability to heal impairment. John Chrysostom makes the point graphically: “Not so worthy were Paul’s hands when they lifted up and raised the

⁶⁶¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 90.4; *PG* 58:792; *NPNF i* 10:533f.

⁶⁶² Paul’s greater gift from the Spirit: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:160-161; *NPNF i* 11:131f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 29; *PG* 60:656; *NPNF i* 11:544; cf., in the ranking of the Spirit’s gifts, prophecy is prior to miracles, the classification that includes impairment healings – “the gifts of healing are justly inferior to prophecy”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 32.3; *PG* 61:265; *NPNF i* 12:187.

Apostles demonstrate the “yet more wonderful gifts” in their discipleship qualities than in their ability to heal impairment: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.6; *PG* 57:381-382; *NPNF i* 10:214 – “See how He provides for their conduct... implying that the miracles without this are nothing”; *ibid.*, 32.11; *PG* 57:386-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f; *ibid.*, 46.3; *PG* 58:479-480; *NPNF i* 10:290; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 30; *PG* 60:225; *NPNF i* 11:192; *ibid.*, 31; *PG* 60:228; *NPNF i* 11:196; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 8; *PG* 60:464; *NPNF i* 11:393; *ibid.*, 18; *PG* 60:574; *NPNF i* 11:479: “They were telling what they learnt from God. And this is a higher thing than miracles”; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 3.10; *PG* 63:35-36; *NPNF i* 14:380f; *ibid.*, 18.6; *PG* 63:128; *NPNF i* 14:454: “For although they do not raise up the dead nor the lame, yet, what is greater than all; they have confidence towards God.”

Greater than impairment healings, these qualities are “the more excellent way”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:387; *NPNF i* 10:218; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 3.10; *PG* 63:35-36; *NPNF i* 14:380f. Cf., Christ’s disciples are known not by their ability to perform signs and wonders (including impairment healings), but by their love – John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 1.5; *SC* 28:96, 98; *FC* 72:54.

lame man at Lystra, as when they were bound around with chains.” Chrysostom states that he would prefer to have himself Paul’s imprisonment than his ability to heal impairment: “I deem it more desirable to suffer evil for Christ’s sake...this is transcendent honour, this is glory that surpasses all things.” Elsewhere he states that God deliberately permitted the apostles to be “both wonderful and weak” –

θαυμαστοὶ καὶ ἀσθενεῖς – in order for them to instruct unbelievers: “the one to proclaim His power; the other to prevent the error of humankind [of worshipping them as gods].”⁶⁶³ There was also instruction for the apostles themselves:

that they may learn from the very outset...that they themselves must suffer such things, that they may stand nobly, not idly gaping for the miracles, but much more ready for trials.⁶⁶⁴

However, the obvious inabilities of the apostles were seen as important not only as a way of preventing the self-aggrandisement and false worship that might arise from their ability to do the undoable. The inabilities themselves were said to bring glory to God. The apostles were uneducated, “without experience, without skill” and yet, as Peter showed, in contact with the philosophers, “the man whose occupation had been about lakes, so mastered them, as if it cost him not so much ado as even a contest with mute fishes.” The very inabilities of the apostles showed that the power working through

The occasional ability to heal impairment was portrayed as something to give no heed to, and certainly not be led astray by: “God is testing you, He permitetd you to have this power” – John Chrysostom, *Adv. Judaeos* 8.5.8; *PG* 48:935; *FC* 68:223; cf., *ibid.*, 1.7.28; *PG* 48:854; *FC* 68:29f.

⁶⁶³ Paul’s greater reward from his hands chained, and what Chrysostom would prefer: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 8; *PG* 62:57; *NPNF i* 13:86f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 32.14; *PG* 61:275; *NPNF i* 12:193; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 16.9; *PG* 49:167; *NPNF i* 9:449; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 21.3-4; *PG* 61:545; *NPNF i* 12:377f; *ibid.*, 27.1; *PG* 61:584; *NPNF i* 12:404. See also Copeland, 98-123.

God permits the apostles to be both wonderful and weak: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 26.2; *PG* 61:577; *NPNF i* 12:399; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:387-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f; *ibid.*, 33.2; *PG* 57:389; *NPNF i* 10:220; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 4; *PG* 62:416; *NPNF i* 13:339.

them was clearly God's power. For this reason, it is said of their obvious inabilities that glorify God: "Greater this than the raising up of the lame man!"⁶⁶⁵ In a similar way, the instrument of Paul's healing, Ananias, was shown to be a weak and insignificant person, in order to emphasise how the quality of obedience that he demonstrated exceeds the fact that he took away Paul's blindness: "It is a most mighty proof of the power of God. Both the fear is shown, and the obedience greater than the fear." With parallels being drawn to Paul's own paradoxical words at 2 Corinthians 12:8f, when impairment healings are performed by the apostles, what brings greater glory to God is not the apostles' miraculous ability to cure the incurable, but their own human inability. This is why, it was said, God deliberately does not take away their inabilities.⁶⁶⁶

In all these uses of the apostles' own impairment healings, the purpose for the Early Church interpreters was the same. It was emphasised time and again that the qualities

⁶⁶⁴ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 31; *PG* 60:229; *NPNF i* 11:196.

⁶⁶⁵ Apostles' inabilities bring glory to God – Peter and the philosophers: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 4; *PG* 60:47; *NPNF i* 11:29; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 15.13-14; *PG* 61:128; *NPNF i* 12:88. "Greater this than the raising up of the lame man!": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 31; *PG* 60:228; *NPNF i* 11:196; cf., *ibid.*, 30; *PG* 60:225; *NPNF i* 11:192; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:387-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f; cf., *ibid.*, 46.3; *PG* 58:479-480; *NPNF i* 10:290.

⁶⁶⁶ Ananias shows God's power by his fear, and by his obedience despite his fear: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:159-160; *NPNF i* 11:131. Comparisons made with the martyrs: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 4.7; *PG* 61:35; *NPNF i* 12:19f; *ibid.*, 18.6; *PG* 61:150; *NPNF i* 12:104. On Moses' speech impairment (re Exodus 4:10f): "For many things were permitted by God, that the weakness of human nature might be manifested. . . If our bodies were not subject to infirmity, all would be ascribed to them": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Tim.* 10; *PG* 62:658-659; *NPNF i* 13:515. Christ's suffering compared to his impairment healing as a source of wonder: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.3; *PG* 59:84; *NPNF i* 14:42; similarly to his humility: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 70.2; *PG* 59:383; *NPNF i* 14:58. Cf., the cross itself, though it was deemed "a conviction of weakness": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 4.6; *PG* 61:34-35; *NPNF i* 12:19; – cf., Paul at 1 Corinthians 1:25. Cf., it is not the miraculous works of the apostles that distinguishes them from false prophets, but their inabilities and weaknesses: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 26.3; *PG* 61:578-579; *NPNF i* 12:400f. Cf., the apostles show that there is no exemption from fear, inabilities and suffering – even for miracle workers: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.6; *PG* 57:381-382; *NPNF i* 10:214; *ibid.*, 33.2; *PG* 57:389; *NPNF i* 10:220; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 4.7; *PG* 61:35; *NPNF i* 12:19f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 26.3; *PG* 61:578-579; *NPNF i* 12:400f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 4; *PG* 62:416; *NPNF i* 13:339.

that the apostles demonstrate in the context of their impairment healings are miraculous abilities accessible to all people.

There is another gift far greater than this [to give eyes to the blind or to raise the dead]... And this gift not one or two, but all may have. I know that ye open wide your mouths and are amazed, to hear that it is in your power to have a greater gift than raising the dead, and giving eyes to the blind, doing the same things which were done in the time of the Apostles. And it seems to you past belief. What then is this gift? Charity.⁶⁶⁷

Such qualities are “the greatest miracles” because they are more effective than impairment healings:

These are the greatest miracles, these the wonderful signs. If we go on working these signs, we shall both ourselves be a great and admirable sort of person through these, and shall win over all the wicked unto virtue, and shall enjoy the life to come.⁶⁶⁸

They are also, in contrast to impairment healings, what God requires and rewards: “And what commends our own life? Is it indeed a display of miracles, or the perfection of an excellent conversation? Very evidently it is the second.”⁶⁶⁹ The apostles’ own example makes this clear:

Let us also then emulate this man [Peter]... For Christ will be with us, like as He was with them [the apostles], if we are willing to follow them, and to be imitators of their life... For in consequence of these things God crowns and commends men, not requiring of thee to cure the lame.⁶⁷⁰

Even the inabilities of the apostles were applied to the current followers: “Since Paul also himself said, that a great reward was laid up for him, not because he worked

⁶⁶⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 3.10; *PG* 63:35; *NPNF i* 14:380.

⁶⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:388; *NPNF i* 10:218f.

⁶⁶⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 46.3; *PG* 58:480; *NPNF i* 10:290.

⁶⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 90.4; *PG* 58:792-793; *NPNF i* 10:533; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 30; *PG* 60:224; *NPNF i* 11:192; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:387-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f; *ibid.*, 46.3; *PG* 58:479-480; *NPNF i* 10:290; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 35.8; *PG* 61:301; *NPNF i* 12:212; *ibid.*, 35.11; *PG* 61:303; *NPNF i* 10:213; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 2 Cor.* 27.1; *PG* 61:584; *NPNF i* 12:404; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 8; *PG* 60:464; *NPNF i* 11:393: “that we may show forth what is a greater miracle than all these – charity”; “For although they do not raise up the dead nor the lame, yet, what is greater than all; they have confidence towards God”- John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 18.6; *PG* 63:138; *NPNF i* 14:454.

miracles, but because ‘to the weak he became as weak’.”⁶⁷¹ Paradoxically then, the endurance of inabilities and sufferings was said to bring God more glory, and even bring for the persons themselves more benefit, than any ability to perform miraculous healings of impairment.

In this section we have seen how the modern preoccupation with whether or not impairment healings did occur or continue to occur was not an issue of relevance to the Early Church. Even when the question of the current decline and ceasing of impairment healings was raised, it was understood not as a lamentable evidence of a lack of faith in contemporary times, but as “the great indication” that in contemporary times God can be loved “without pledges” and that “the better and more profitable” healing, the taking away of the soul’s impairment, was open to all people.

5.0 Identification with People with Impairments

We have already seen in several respects that for the Early Church, the significance of the impairment healing stories of the New Testament did not lie in whether or not impairment healing actually occurred either in biblical times or in contemporary times. In this section, we see that what was significant to these early interpreters was how

⁶⁷¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 32.14; *PG* 61:275; *NPNF i* 12:193; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 30; *PG* 60:225; *NPNF i* 11:192.

The same is said even of God. Despite the wonders that God performs, He is to be regarded with more admiration “when He showeth love towards man, when He is longsuffering.” It is of God’s patient love,

these impairment healing stories could be used to articulate, to interpret, and to promote the discipleship of the people they were addressing. This extensive use of the stories by ancient interpreters demonstrates that the people they were addressing found no difficulty in identifying with the characters with impairments. The Early Church certainly used impairment as their focus in interpretation – not the taking away of impairment in biblical times or in their own day, but the experience of impairment that was familiar both then and in their own day.

5.1 Modelling Discipleship Qualities

In the pagan impairment healing texts, we saw that at times the person being healed played a significant contributory role. In the case of the Epidaurian inscriptions, this might simply be coming to the temple as a suppliant and undergoing the incubation process. At other times, a more specific act resulted in the person being healed of their impairment. Often, this was an action performed in obedience to some unexpected command from the god. In Early Church impairment healing texts also, the person with an impairment was often identified as performing an act that contributed significantly in the process of their healing. The act was sometimes mundane. Even so, to the Early Church interpreters of the Gospel impairment healings, these simple acts were crucial to the story and were used as a rich resource for illustration. As John Chrysostom several

in contrast to His wonders, that Chrysostom says: “This then let us zealously seek after.” - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 3.11; *PG* 63:36; *NPNF i* 14:381.

times states in the context of the impairment healings, no detail in scripture is ever without significance or usefulness.⁶⁷²

Particular Gospel characters with impairments provided a very fertile opportunity to develop this contributory role, to the extent that in the way their characters and behaviour were developed by the interpreters, they were presented as teachers to all people. As we saw above with the qualities displayed by the apostles at their impairment healings, the impairment healing itself played a minor role compared to the aspects of discipleship being modelled, in this case by the people with impairments. It is the encounter with Jesus that was the focus of the story, and it was in this encounter that the people with impairments were shown to contribute significantly. The Gospels often record these encounters with many details, and these details were developed by Early Church interpreters in order to show how the people with impairments who encounter Christ in Scripture illuminate and instruct the interpreters' current listeners in their own encounters with Christ. The fact that so much material from these encounters between Jesus and people with impairments in the Gospels was also used in Early Church art and liturgy suggests that this encouragement of congregations to identify with the people with impairments was a widespread and frequent way of using the Gospel impairment stories.

⁶⁷² In the context of biblical impairment texts, no detail in narrative of scripture is without significance: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 40.1; *PG* 59:227; *NPNF i* 14:143; cf., *ibid.*, 36.1; *PG* 59:203; *NPNF i* 14:125; *ibid.*, 57.1; *PG* 59:311; *NPNF i* 14:204; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 19; *PG* 60:156; *NPNF i* 11:127f. Augustine writes of the story of the blind man in John 9: "Were we to attempt handling the whole of it, and considering, according to our ability, each passage in a way proportionate to its worth, the day would be insufficient" – Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 44.1; *CCL* 36:381; *NPNF i* 7:245.

Often in Early Church descriptions of impairment healings, a minor but significant contributory role was identified in the person being healed. This was a theme also in non-Christian traditions. We can compare a story from the Epidaurian inscriptions with an impairment healing performed by a desert father:

There was a lame man who wanted to visit the father, seeking a cure. He mounted the ass, and as soon as his feet touched the strap which had been made by the holy man, he was instantly cured.⁶⁷³

A blind man. This man lost the oil bottle in the bathing room. When he was sleeping here, it seemed to him the god said he should search for the bottle in the big inn, by entering on the right. When day came the servant led him there to search. As soon as he was led into the inn, he immediately saw the bottle and from this became well.⁶⁷⁴

The source of the impairment healing is divine – this is the clear point of both stories.

Also in both, the contributory role played by the person with an impairment is significant, albeit straightforward.⁶⁷⁵

We can compare from the New Testament the man with a withered hand, who is healed simply when he stretches out his hand: “Then Jesus said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, whole like the other” [Matthew 12:13]. The act is small, but performed as an act of obedience and trust, with a significant element of risk.⁶⁷⁶ Elsewhere in the New Testament, this minor

⁶⁷³ The lame man who was healed by the desert father’s strap: *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 13.9; Festugiere, *Historia*, 100; *LDF* 94.

⁶⁷⁴ The Epidaurian inscription: *EMI* C22; LiDonnici, 128f.

⁶⁷⁵ We can compare the small contributory role of blind Darius: after God heard Daniel’s prayer, “The king had but to wash his eyes, and vision would return to them” – *LOTJ* 4:347. By the same token, a minor action can prevent healing from taking place: Moses was not healed of his speech impairment for saying to God, “Thou hast been speaking to me now these many days, nevertheless I am still slow of speech and of a slow tongue” – *LOTJ* 2:236. Namaan the Syrian despised such a minor contributory role – by not performing it, he was not healed: 2 Kings 5:11f.

⁶⁷⁶ When the man with a withered hand stretches out his hand, it is interpreted as a significant act of trust and courage: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 40.1; *PG* 57:439; *NPNF i* 10:260; *ibid.*, 39.1; *PG* 57:434; *NPNF i* 10:255; cf., in NT: Matthew 12:13 - ἔκτεινόν σου τὴν χεῖρα.

contributory role is regularly played, if not by those with impairments themselves, then by the other people with them: “They brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought him to lay his hands upon him” [Mark 7:32]. A variation of this is seen with the woman healed of spinal curvature. She is passive prior to the healing, but importantly active after the healing: “And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God” [Luke 13:13]. As we shall see, these simple contributory acts were developed in considerable depth by Early Church interpreters.⁶⁷⁷

The importance of this simple contributory act is seen in ways that John Chrysostom uses the image elsewhere, making specific allusion to this impairment healing. Giving alms is described in terms of stretching out the hand: “Stretch out thy hand, let it not be closed up!” - ἔκτεινον τὴν χεῖρά σου - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 11.9; *PG* 63:95; *NPNF i* 14:422; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 13; *PG* 60:112; *NPNF i* 11:86; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 16.17; *PG* 49:166; *NPNF i* 9:451. Not giving alms as described by having a withered hand: “Let us not keep our hands to ourselves, but stretch them out honourably, not for grasping, but for alms-giving. Let us not have our hand unfruitful nor withered; for the hand which doeth not alms is withered; and that which is also grasping, is polluted and unclean”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 25.7; *PG* 63:176; *NPNF i* 14:480; cf., John Chrysostom, *De diabolo tentatore* 2.3; *PG* 49:261; *NPNF i* 9:188. Giving alms is described as the healing of a withered hand: “If thou change from inhumanity to almsgiving, thou hast stretched forth the hand that was withered” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:388; *NPNF i* 10:218f. The same image is used of those with impairments who stretch out their hands asking for alms: τὰς χεῖρας ἐκτείνοντες - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:465; *NPNF i* 13:373. In these ways the image is used to show the mutuality of those who ask for alms and those who give alms. This paradox of Christian discipleship Chrysostom describes elsewhere, again using impairment, (to illustrate the proper use of wealth): see text above at page 258 and footnote 478.

⁶⁷⁷ In the NT, similar minor contributory role played if not by the people with impairments themselves, then by those with them: e.g., Mark 8:22, Matthew 4:24, Matthew 9:32, Matthew 14:35f. We can compare Philo on raising the eyes of the soul, dimmed by worldly affairs, and with effort looking around “in my desire to inhale a breath of life pure and unmixed with evil” – Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.1.4; Loeb 7:476; Yonge, 594.

For a survey of similarities in the healing stories of pagan and Christian healing cults, see Ruttimann, 151-220; Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict*, 97-158. Ruttimann does not compare impairment healings specifically, but we can identify other people with impairments from the Epidaurian inscriptions who contribute - the lame man who put his foot on a ladder and was made well: *EMI* B15; LiDonnici, 110f; the man with finger paralysis who stretched out his fingers and was healed: *EMI* A3; LiDonnici, 86f. For faith, compare the man with no eye, who was laughed at for his “simple-mindedness” at thinking he could be healed - he went through the incubation process and was healed: *EMI* A9; LiDonnici, 93; also the mute boy who made a promise to sacrifice and his speech returned: *EMI* A5; LiDonnici, 89. For other pagan texts with contributory role played by people with impairment who are healed, see see text at pages 318-319 and footnotes 591-592.

Some other Early Church examples of this minor contributory role: At repentance and prayer with parents, Hermippus is healed of the blindness he receives when attacking Paul: “the Lord himself healed him, in the form of Paul” - *Acts of Paul* 28-34; *NTA* 2:222f, 247-9. Antony heals “a maiden from Busiris Tripolitana who had a terrible and very hideous disorder...She was paralysed also and squinted.”

For some Early Church writers, there were people with impairments in the Gospel healings who provided an opportunity for a much broader development of this contributory role theme. These were characters who play in the Gospel stories a major part in their encounter with Jesus. The significance of these characters was not confined to how they are in their post-healing state, and they were not important for having become able-bodied. John Chrysostom says of the paralysed man of John 5, “For not only his soundness but also his infirmity has become a cause of the greatest benefit to us.” Chrysostom identifies three ways in which this particular person’s impairment is of such great general benefit:

For his cure has stimulated the souls of the hearers to speak the praise of the Lord, and his sickness and infirmity has encouraged you to patience, and urged you to match his zeal; and it has exhibited to you the loving kindness of God.⁶⁷⁸

The first and third of these reasons we have identified and discussed already. With the first, that his cure has stimulated onlookers to speak the praise of the Lord, Chrysostom refers to the theme of impairment healing being evidence of Christ’s ability to do the undoable, given that impairment healing that was widely understood in the ancient world as impossible except in the will and power of the gods. The third, that his impairment exhibits the loving kindness of God, has been discussed in the chapter considering the causes of impairment, specifically the section on impairment caused or

Elements in the story emphasised are: her parents’ faith, Antony as instrument of Christ’s power, the contribution of the woman herself as one who prays - Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 58; *PG* 26:925; *NPNF ii* 4:211f. “Then indeed he will cure the sick and all who are blemished, as many as put faith in him. The blind will see, and the lame will walk. The deaf will hear; those who cannot speak will speak”: *Sibylline Oracles* 1.351-4, *OTPs* 1:343; cf., John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei* 88.47.4; *PTS* 12:204; *NPNF ii* 9:87.

permitted by God. It is a reference to the encouragement, as Chrysostom regularly describes it, that anyone “beset with infirmity and countless sufferings” would receive on reading the biblical impairment encounters, or on entering a church and hearing these stories being read. It is from these Gospel encounters that the understanding comes that impairment is neither incompatible with the loving kindness of God nor any hindrance to virtue. Also, the experience of Gospel characters with impairments demonstrates God’s presence with all who are “in the midst of trials”:

God was present with him...and afforded him great encouragement. He it was who strengthened him, and upheld him, and stretched forth a hand to him, and suffered him not to fall.⁶⁷⁹

The second reason Chrysostom gives for the infirmity of the paralysed man being of such great benefit is the one we discuss in detail in this section. Chrysostom states that “his sickness and infirmity has encouraged you to patience, and urged you to match his zeal.” Elsewhere he says of the same person:

We discovered a rich and large treasure, not by delving in the ground, but by diving into his heart: we found a treasure not containing silver and gold and precious stones, but endurance, and philosophy and patience and much hope towards God, which is more valuable than any kind of jewel or source of wealth.⁶⁸⁰

This is a theme used by Chrysostom on many occasions: in their encounters with Jesus, people with impairments demonstrate key discipleship qualities for all people to emulate. Chrysostom explains that this was regularly the motive for Jesus’ interaction

⁶⁷⁸ John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 1; *PG* 51:50; *NPNF i* 9:212. Cf., the paralysed man also: “So much profit to us” - τῶσαῦτα ἐκαρπώσαμεθα: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 3; *PG* 51:53; *NPNF i* 9:214.

⁶⁷⁹ Impairment incurable except in divine will and power, and how this theme is used to illustrate Christ’s nature: see text above at pages 326-339. Impairment caused or permitted by God: see text above at pages 157-171. The encouragement resulting from the impairment healing stories: see above text at page 252 and footnote 481. The experience of Gospel characters with impairments demonstrates God’s presence to those “in the midst of trails”: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 2; *PG* 51:51; *NPNF i* 9:212.

with the particular people with impairments who are mentioned in the Gospel encounters. Their personal qualities were the very reason for Jesus making contact with them:

It is usual for Him on every occasion, first to make manifest and discover to all the virtue of those He is healing, and then to apply the cure, for one reason, that He might lead on the others likewise to emulation; and for another, that He might show that they were enjoying the gift worthily.⁶⁸¹

Chrysostom interprets the details in the narrative relating to people with impairments as being included deliberately by the Gospel writers: they are “recorded that we too may imitate them.”⁶⁸² It is the Gospel writers’ intended purpose, Chrysostom states, that those who hear or read the stories be led to identify with the characters with impairments.

A pattern that emerges from John Chrysostom’s use of the Gospel impairment healings is that the encounters between Jesus and the people with impairments fall into three stages. At the first stage of the encounter, Jesus was said to engage with particular people with impairments because he is able to look into their hearts and see their prior disposition. His ability to do this illustrates his divine nature, as we saw above, but what he sees reflects on the people with impairments.

⁶⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 1; *PG* 51:47; *NPNF i* 9:211.

⁶⁸¹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404. Cf., Chrysostom refers to people with impairments in general as his listeners’ teachers - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:465, 466; *NPNF i* 13:373f – see text above at pages 255-257 and footnotes 488-494.

⁶⁸² John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 58.4; *PG* 59:319-320; *NPNF i* 14:210. See also: Augustine refers to the blind person of John 9 as the servant who leads to the Lord, and as a teacher whom those he teaches cast out ungratefully: Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 44.12; *CCL* 36:386f; *NPNF i* 7:248; *ibid.*, 44.14; *CCL* 36:387; *NPNF i* 7:249. See above on theme of people with impairments as teachers: text at pages 255-257 and footnotes 488-494.

We can compare Paul’s use of Abraham’s faith prior to circumcision – it was not only the ‘perfected’ state which was used as exemplary: Romans 4:11.

He knew indeed, even before their cry, the secrets of their mind; but that He might lead on others also to the same earnestness, He makes them known to the rest as well, by the result of their cure proclaiming their hidden faith.⁶⁸³

In addition to a variety of qualities, often explained as resulting from their experience of impairment,⁶⁸⁴ Jesus was said to see in advance that the people with impairments that he encounters are capable of responding to his words. In the case of the paralysed man of John 5, this capability included being able to receive the warning that he should sin no more:

Jesus perceived great endurance in his soul, and addressed the exhortation to him as to one who was able to receive His command, keeping him to health both by the benefit, and by the fear of future ills.⁶⁸⁵

In the second stage, in the direct encounter with Jesus, the emphasis in the interpretation was placed on qualities such as zeal, persistence and hope.⁶⁸⁶ These qualities were often revealed because of the atmosphere surrounding the encounter of resistance and criticism:

⁶⁸³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.1; *PG* 57:377-378; *NPNF i* 10:211; cf., John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 1; *PG* 51:49-50; *NPNF i* 9:211. Cf., the lame man healed at Acts 3: ἦδη ὠκέλωτο τὴν προαίρεσιν - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 30; *PG* 60:223; *NPNF i* 11:190.

⁶⁸⁴ The qualities they demonstrate include persistence, endurance, fortitude, patience, gentleness and wisdom, and an ability to trust and obey; they also show a willingness not to blaspheme God in their afflictions, but rather to give thanks to God: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.1; *PG* 57:377-378; *NPNF i* 10:210f; *ibid.*, 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404; *ibid.*, 29.1; *PG* 57:358; *NPNF i* 10:195f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:203; *NPNF i* 14:126; *ibid.*, 37.1; *PG* 59:213; *NPNF i* 14:128f; *ibid.*, 57.1; *PG* 59:311-313; *NPNF i* 14:204f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 30; *PG* 60:223; *NPNF i* 11:190; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 1; *PG* 51:49, 50; *NPNF i* 9:211f; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.12-16, 35; *PG* 48:804f, 808; *FC* 72:290f, 299f.

⁶⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 38.2; *PG* 59:213; *NPNF i* 14:132. Cf., their worthiness to receive his healing: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.1; *PG* 57:377-378; *NPNF i* 10:210f; *ibid.*, 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 56.2; *PG* 59:308-309; *NPNF i* 14:202; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.12-23; *PG* 48:804-806; *FC* 72:290-294.

⁶⁸⁶ Qualities demonstrated at the second stage, including zeal, persistence, hope, no shame in their infirmity, seeking to be led: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 52.4; *PG* 58:522; *NPNF i* 10:323; *ibid.*, 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:204; *NPNF i* 14:126; *ibid.*, 56.2; *PG* 59:308-309; *NPNF i* 14:202; *ibid.*, 57.1; *PG* 59:311; *NPNF i* 14:204f; *ibid.*, 58.1-3; *PG* 59:315-319; *NPNF i* 14:207-210; John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 5; *PG* 51:57; *NPNF i* 9:216f; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.17-24; *PG* 48.805f; *FC* 72:292-295.

Let us listen to these blind men, who were better than many that see. For neither having a guide, nor being able to see Him when come near to them, nevertheless they strove to come unto Him, and began to cry with a loud voice, and when rebuked for speaking, they cried the more. For such is the nature of an enduring soul, by the very things that hinder it is borne up.⁶⁸⁷

Even the small contributory acts of stretching out a hand, or taking up the pallet, are interpreted as showing the qualities of trust and obedience. When trusting and obeying Jesus' words, especially in these hostile circumstances, the characters with impairments were said to be acting with great courage.⁶⁸⁸ Even their asking was said to be significant to the way Jesus was using the encounter:

In many cases He made a point of healing on entreaty, lest any should suppose Him to be rushing upon these miracles through vainglory: and not on this account alone, but to indicate also that they deserve healing, and that no one should say, 'It was out of mere mercy that He saved, all ought to be saved'.⁶⁸⁹

Repeatedly, the qualities that the people with impairments demonstrate in these encounters were presented as ones for all people to follow; and they carry a similar promise of fulfilment:

These then let us also emulate. Though God defer the gift, though there be many withdrawing us, let us not desist from asking. For in this way most of all shall we win God to us.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404.

They were healed because of their cry – "Have mercy on us!": Origen, *C. Celsus* 6.67; *SC* 147:346, 348; *ANF* 4:604; Jerome, *Epist.* 147.9; *CSEL* 56:325; *NPNF ii* 6:293.

Identification with the two blind men through the linking of their cry to the *kyrie eleison* in liturgy: Ambrose, *De fide* 1.6.45; *CSEL* 78:19; *NPNF ii* 10:297.

On their calling him simply 'Son of David': "Not only did He not take it ill, but even praised their faith": Theodoret, *Eranistes, Dialogue* 2.161; Ettliger, 130f; *NPNF ii* 3:191.

Similarly, the muteness of the Israelites is healed when the people call out to God – Preuss, 302f.

⁶⁸⁸ Obedience as great courage: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.2; *PG* 59:209; *NPNF i* 14:129; *ibid.*, 57.1; *PG* 59:312-313; *NPNF i* 14:204. Small acts showing great obedience: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.2; *PG* 59:209; *NPNF i* 14:129; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 40.1; *PG* 57:439; *NPNF i* 10:260; *ibid.*, 39.1; *PG* 57:434; *NPNF i* 10:255.

⁶⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.1; *PG* 57:377-378; *NPNF i* 10:211.

⁶⁹⁰ Their persistence to be emulated: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404; Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 4; *CSEL* 47:545-547, 552; *ANF* 3:411, 414; ; cf., the persistence of the Canaanite woman: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 38.8; *PG* 53:354; *FC* 82:361.

The two blind men demonstrate how God gives opportunities for salvation for us to respond to by showing similar qualities: John Cassian, *Collationes* 3.19; *CSEL* 13:92; *NPNF ii* 11:329.

At the third stage of the encounter, after the healing has taken place, the characters with impairments again show that “they were enjoying the gift worthily”, especially in the qualities they demonstrate of commitment, and endurance in the face of criticism. They become evangelists, proclaiming and witnessing to Christ. The encounter characters also defend Christ against criticism, even suffering and being rejected for his sake. For these sufferings in particular, they were said to be “enrolled into the company of His own disciples” by Jesus himself, and “like some judge at the games, He receives the champion who had toiled much and gained the crown.”⁶⁹¹ Again, the qualities they display are ones for all people to follow:

They were seen as “types of the two peoples who should believe upon Him” [Jews and Gentiles], and the spot where they had sat at the wayside became significant enough to be pointed out to pilgrims – Jerome, *Epist.* 108.12; *CSEL* 55:320; *NPNF ii* 6:201. Cf., Jerome’s interpretation of the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida to illustrate the relation between Christians and Jews: Jerome, *Tractatus in Marci evangelium* Hom. 78(5); *CCL* 78:474-477; *FC* 57:154-158.

The qualities demonstrated in this second stage of the encounter were used to show that the characters with impairments were worthy of Christ’s response to them and that current disciples who follow their example deserve similar healing of their impairment (of soul):

a) The man born blind: Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 44.13; *CCL* 36:387; *NPNF i* 7:248.

b) The two blind men: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 109.5; *CCL* 40:1604f; Tweed *et al.*, 5:233f; *ibid.*, 77.43; *CCL* 39:1095; Tweed *et al.*, 4:79; Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 11.17; *GCS* 40:62; *ANF* 10:445.

c) Those with paralysis – John Cassian, *Collationes* 13.16; *CSEL* 13:391f; *NPNF ii* 11:433; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.14; *PG* 48:805; *FC* 72:291; *ibid.*, 10.35-36; *PG* 48:790; *FC* 72:257f.

d) Bartimaeus: Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 4.36; *CSEL* 47:545-547; *ANF* 3:411.

In his persistence, Bartimaeus demonstrates a nice irony: “qui ab apostolis prohibetur clamore sed per inprudenciam recipit sanitatem” – Jerome, *Comm. in Matt.* 1.1425; *CCL* 77:60. Similarly, Bartimaeus was used to show how Christians, like the disciples at Jericho, can hinder those who call to Christ for mercy: Augustine, *De natura et gratia* 55.65; *CSEL* 60:282; *NPNF i* 5:144. With Bartimaeus, the contrast is drawn between the ability of the person with an impairment and the inability of the able-bodied people: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 59.1; *PG* 59:323; *NPNF i* 14:212; cf., Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 4.36; *CSEL* 47:545-547; *ANF* 3:411.

In contrast to these full use of the encounters between Jesus and people with impairments in the Gospels by Early Church writers, we can compare a recent modern commentator on the Jesus’ encounter with the blind man at Bethsaida: “Luz calls this pericope ‘very short and colourless’ and we can agree with him” – Vledder, 218.

⁶⁹¹ Qualities shown at the third stage including thankfulness and praise to God, proclaiming Christ and declaring themselves his disciples, defending him and suffering for his sake: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.1; *PG* 57:377-378; *NPNF i* 10:211; *ibid.*, 66.1; *PG* 58:625-626; *NPNF i* 10:404f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.2; *PG* 59:209; *NPNF i* 14:129f; *ibid.*, 38.2; *PG* 59:213; *NPNF i* 14:132;

Now these things are recorded that we too may imitate them. For if the blind man...straightway showed such boldness even before he was encouraged by Christ, standing opposed to a whole people...how much more ought we...who have recovered the sight of the eyes within...exhibit all boldness of speech towards those who attempt to accuse.⁶⁹²

It is in these representative terms that Chrysostom interprets Jesus' parable of himself as shepherd calling his sheep [John 10:1-18]. From the fact that Jesus gives the parable immediately after the conversion and healing of the blind man, Chrysostom understands Jesus to be alluding to the blind man when referring in the parable to 'calling', 'leading out', and the shepherd's voice being 'heard' and 'known'.⁶⁹³

John Chrysostom does not automatically apply to all people with impairments the discipleship qualities embodied by the particular people with impairments in the Gospels who encounter Jesus. Sometimes Chrysostom states that the characters in these encounters differ from people with impairments in general so that he could emphasise their qualities as all the more remarkable. The paralysed man of John 5, for instance, is not "intractable, most intolerable" as other "people with infirmities...after a long lapse of time." On the contrary, he demonstrates "much forbearance" obviously having borne "the difficulties with much thankfulness." Chrysostom's familiar purpose for making

ibid., 57.2; *PG* 59:312-313; *NPNF i* 14:205; ibid., 58.1-3; *PG* 59:315-319; *NPNF i* 14:207-209; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.32-41; *PG* 48:807-809; *FC* 72:298-302; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:71; *NPNF i* 11:51f. Jesus enrolls them himself as disciples: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 59.1; *PG* 59:322-323; *NPNF i* 14:212f.

⁶⁹² John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 58.4; *PG* 59:319-320; *NPNF i* 14:210.

With the blind person of John 9, Augustine makes identification explicit, calling the blind man a Christian – "Christianus factus est"; a herald of grace and preacher of the gospel – "anuntiator...gratiae...evangelizat, confitetur"; a steadfast confessor despite persecution – "constanter...expressit"; and several times making explicit links between the the pool of Siloam ("Sent"), the obedience of the blind man who was sent and catechumens who similarly are sent and wash in the pool of baptism: Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 44.2-15; *CCL* 36:382-387; *NPNF i* 7:245-249.

For the use of NT blindness healing in the context of baptism, see text below at pages 379-385, 392-395. On Siloam and "Sent" compare: "On the Blind Man – The name of the pool is 'Sent', but dost thou understand who is sent by whom, so that thou mayest have a perfect view?" – *Greek Anthology* 1.74; Loeb 1:34f.

this comparison soon becomes clear: “Let us imitate the patience of our fellow-servant.”⁶⁹⁴

There was a similar presentation of the paralysed man of Matthew 9. He is said to contrast strongly with people with chronic conditions in general who are “so faint-hearted and difficult to please as often to decline the treatment offered to them...and to die rather than to disclose their personal calamities.” In allowing himself to be lowered through the roof by his friends, the paralysed man shows his fortitude and courageous faith, proving to Chrysostom that the phrase in Matthew 9:2 – “When he saw their faith” – includes the faith of the paralysed man himself. Again, Chrysostom’s purpose for the contrast is clear. Jesus was said deliberately to wait for the man to be brought to him, “that He might exhibit the man’s zeal and fervent faith to all.” Chrysostom again applies what is seen in the example of this particular person to all believers: “Let us then carefully hold fast all these things...that they may abide immovably in our heart, and let us contribute zeal on our side.”⁶⁹⁵

At other times, Chrysostom reinforces the qualities of the Gospel characters by stating that similar qualities can be seen in people with impairments generally. An example is persistence. Whatever attitudes Chrysostom’s congregation may have had towards those who were begging, he presents them as models for the discipleship quality of

⁶⁹³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 59.3; *PG* 59:325; *NPNF i* 14:214.

⁶⁹⁴ The qualities of the paralysed man of John 5 as unusual: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 1; *PG* 51:49-50; *NPNF i* 9:212; *ibid.*, 5; *PG* 51:56f; *NPNF i* 9:216f.

⁶⁹⁵ The similarly unusual qualities of the paralysed man of Matthew 9: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 5; *PG* 51:56f; *NPNF i* 9:216; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:71; *NPNF i* 11:51. Chrysostom’s use of these paralysed men as models for all to emulate occurs elsewhere: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 8; *PG* 51:61; *NPNF i* 9:219; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 66.1; *PG* 58:626;

persistence, so clearly illustrated by Bartimaeus and the two blind men of Matthew 9. There may well have been considerable irony in Chrysostom's approach: the very persistence that people found irritating and hard to resist in a person begging was linked to Gospel characters and held up as a quality to be emulated by all disciples of Christ. Persistence was several times the subject of Jesus' parables as a required discipleship quality, again with irony, as we see in the stories of the widow and the unjust judge and of the friend in the night [Luke 18:1-8; Luke 11:5-13].⁶⁹⁶

In other ways, people with impairments in general, specifically those who beg, were said to show similar qualities to the Gospel characters:

Spending their whole life in begging, [they] do not blaspheme, are not angry, nor impatient, but make the whole narrative of their beggary in thanksgiving, magnifying God and calling Him merciful.⁶⁹⁷

Similarly, "an impaired, lame or maimed" person from the market-place, was said to outdo someone comely, full of vigour and possessing nobility in receiving the beatitude sayings of Jesus. The difficulties of their experience make them more readily disposed:

NPNF i 10:404; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:72; *NPNF i* 11:50; *ibid.*, 27; *PG* 60:208-209; *NPNF i* 11:177f.

⁶⁹⁶ Persistence a characteristic of people with impairments in general: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:70; *NPNF i* 11:50; cf., the irony of beggars with impairments said to demonstrate the patience that the speaker claims to lack: Tertullian, *De patientia* 1.18; *CCL* 1:299; *ANF* 3:707..

Bartimaeus' persistence: Mark 10:48-51. The two blind men: Matthew 9:27-31.

Compare discussions of qualities modelled by Gospel characters with impairments in a recent modern commentary: J. F. Williams, 98-101, 101-104, 121-127, 127-143, 151-171; "These individuals exemplify for the reader the positive qualities of faith and understanding," *ibid.*, 127. Cf., passing mentions in: Robbins, 233; van der Loos, 268f, 443. For a deliberately positive interpretation of biblical impairment texts: C. C. Grant, 74, 79-86; Black, *passim*.

What does interest modern commentators are questions of historicity and editorship: e.g., E. S. Johnson, "Blind Bartimaeus," 191-204; E. S. Johnson, "The Blind Man from Bethsaida," 370-382; Robbins, 224-243; Achtemeier, 115-145; Dodd, 174-195; Dunn, 395-415; Kolenkow, 623-638; Mead, 348-354; Dewey, 394-401; L. S. hay, 69-75; Boobyer, 115-120; Haenchen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 1:256-260; Hendrickx, 104-148, 149-167; McGinley, *passim*.

On such terms, the positive qualities demonstrated by Gospel characters with impairments are seen as "a problem" and as evidence that the texts is not original to the Gospel writer!: Achtemeier, 115, 120-125.

“Their very adversity is a benefit”: it humbles their minds, and so “they meekly attend unto thy words.” Whatever the accuracy of Chrysostom’s representation of people with impairments in general, the significant point is that he was using people with impairments to reinforce the qualities embodied in scripture by particular characters with impairments. He did this in order to emphasise to his listeners the deficiencies and dangers of a lifestyle of plenty and worldly success, generally seen as fortunate and desirable. In a way that we have seen done before, Chrysostom was using people with impairments to illustrate the paradoxes of Christian discipleship and faith, sometimes making allusion in these contexts to Paul’s own use of inability to express these paradoxes.⁶⁹⁸

John Chrysostom states that even the smallest details of scripture are recorded with purpose and usefulness, so that others may emulate and be encouraged by what they hear and read. He urges his congregation to become familiar with the verses of scripture, to read them through regularly, and to “hear them not carelessly” so that they can become emboldened and strengthened in their own discipleship.⁶⁹⁹ He states this having interpreted a biblical impairment healing in just such a way. People with

Some commentators take an approach that emphasises social-scientific analysis: Pilch, 142-150; Malina and Rohrbaugh, 70-72, 185-188, 315f. Others emphasise the motifs being used: Theissen, 43-173.

⁶⁹⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Thess.* 11; *PG* 62:465-466; *NPNF i* 13:373.

⁶⁹⁸ People with impairments from the marketplace excel in receiving the beatitude sayings: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 13; *PG* 60:111; *NPNF i* 11:86; *ibid.*, 42; *PG* 60:302; *NPNF i* 11:262; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Col.* 1; *PG* 62:304-305; *NPNF i* 13:260f; John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 1.28; *PG* 49:28-30; *NPNF i* 9:341f.

Adversity humbles: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 60.6; *PG* 59:336; *NPNF i* 14:221f.

The prior disposition of people with impairments in general: ἐπιτηδείους πρὸς ἀρετὴν - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 13; *PG* 60:111; *NPNF i* 11:86. Cf., people with impairments illustrate the contrast of wealth and poverty: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.*, 35.12; *PG* 61:303; *NPNF i* 12:213.

Chrysostom alludes to Paul’s use of inability to express similar paradoxes: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 8; *PG* 51:61; *NPNF i* 9:219f; *ibid.*, 6; *PG* 51:58; *NPNF i* 9:217.

⁶⁹⁹ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 58.4; *PG* 59:319-320; *NPNF i* 14:210.

impairments were used by Chrysostom to embody in an immediate way specific discipleship qualities. Even the smallest contribution made by biblical characters with impairments was shown to have significance and as contributing to the benefit and profit for all that these encounters provide. These qualities were not ones that are stimulated by the presence of Jesus, nor do they emerge once people have their impairment taken away. The characters with impairments show these qualities before encountering Jesus, in the encounter itself, and in the way they respond after the healing has taken place. As with the apostles' impairment healings, the principle focus in the interpretation of the impairment healing texts was the qualities demonstrated; these eclipse the event of impairment healing itself.

5.2 Modelling Discipleship Processes

We have seen how, in the rhetorical dynamic of implied author and reader, Early Church writers led their listeners to identify with the characters with impairments from the New Testament impairment encounters. This identification occurred not only in relation to specific discipleship qualities, but also, by extension, in relation to key discipleship processes: coming to faith, changing entrenched habits, being released from overwhelming burdens, being led to truth, commitment and baptism, and even the general resurrection. As before, the importance of impairment in these applications of the stories did not relate to the event of impairment healing in the current time, but to the experience of impairment in the current time. Familiarity with this experience of

impairment was being used as an access to the texts of Scripture and as the means of conveying relevance to current discipleship.

We saw above how the healing of the soul's impairment was presented as more important and more difficult than the healing of bodily impairment. The soul's healing was said to be more difficult because of the additional component of a person's choice:

The health of our bodies is a great thing, but that of our souls is as much greater as the soul is better than the body...because our bodily nature follows withersoever the Creator will lead it, and there is nothing to resist, but the soul being its own mistress, and possessing power over its acts, does not in all things obey God, unless it will to do so...God must persuade it to become [beautiful and excellent] of its own will and choice.⁷⁰⁰

The role of choice was seen as crucial. It is the means by which the greater impairment healing is indeed accessible to anyone, and is exercised, amongst other things, in the process of coming to faith:

Agreeably to the promise of Jesus, His disciples performed even greater works than these miracles of Jesus, which were perceptible only to the senses. For the eyes of those who are blind in soul are ever opened; and the ears of those who were deaf to virtuous words, listen readily to the doctrine of God, and of the blessed life with Him; and many, too, who were lame in the feet of the 'inner person,' as Scripture calls it, having now been healed by the word, do not simply leap, but leap as the hart...and these lame who have been healed, receive from Jesus power to trample, with those feet in which they were formerly lame, upon the serpents and scorpions of wickedness.⁷⁰¹

⁷⁰⁰ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:84; *NPNF i* 14:42; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 4; *PG* 62:525-526; *NPNF i* 13:422f. Elsewhere, John Chrysostom uses the incurability of impairment to state the opposite – that healing impairment of soul is, by comparison, “Easy and very simple...With the soul, it is entirely a matter of free choice rather than of a nature subject to necessity” – John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1.9-10; *SC* 50:113-114; *ACW* 31:26; cf., *ibid.*, 5.25; *SC* 50:212-213; *ACW* 31:91.

⁷⁰¹ The followers of Jesus perform yet greater works, i.e. impairment of soul being healed: Origen, *C. Celsum* 2.48.24; *SC* 134:390f; *ANF* 4:449. Cf., Origen's interpretation of Luke 14:12-14: “Invite ‘the crippled,’ those whose minds are injured, so that you can heal them. Invite ‘the lame,’ those who limp in their reason, so that they can make ‘straight paths.’ Invite the blind, who do not have the faculty of

The theme of the impossibility of healing impairment was used to emphasise the power of God who alone is able to bring about the profound change of coming to faith.

Heretics and those without faith were said to be incurable, without hope of change, beyond healing – “the gratuitous waste of many prepared drugs on the incurably-diseased produces no results worth caring about” – and yet, the Divine Physician can heal them.⁷⁰² Only God has the ability to make the impossible happen: the healing of the soul’s impairment “cannot be corrected by human art, but only by divine grace.”

We see this theme in an adaptation of John 9:2f, where it is said of the man born blind: “Neither did he sin at all, nor his parents, but that the power of God might be manifest through him in healing the sins of ignorance.”⁷⁰³

It was a common device for Early Church interpreters of the biblical impairment stories to associate coming to faith with the healing of impairment. The process in such a context was described as a double impairment healing, of both body and soul.⁷⁰⁴ A

contemplation, so that they can see the true light” – Origen, *Hom. in Lucam* Fr. 209; *GCS* 49:317; *FC* 94:211f; cf., *ibid.*, Fr. 214; *GCS* 49:320; *FC* 94:213f.

⁷⁰² Those without faith and heretics as incurably and hopelessly diseased, and medicine wasted on them: Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eunomium* 1.1.1-1.1.7; Jaeger 1:22-24; *NPNF ii* 5:35f. Cf., Theophilus - invisible God perceived through His Providence and His works: “His breath you breathe, yet you know Him not. And this is your condition, because of the blindness of your soul, and the hardness of your heart. But if you will, you may be healed. Entrust yourself to the Physician” - διὰ τὴν τύφλωσιν τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ πῆρωσιν τῆς καρδίας σου. ἀλλὰ εἰ βούλει δύνασαι θεραπευθῆναι - Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.7.2; *PTS* 43-44:24; *ANF* 2:91. Cf., Ignatius, *Epist. ad Ephesianos* 7; Loeb 1:180f; *ANF* 1:53. We can compare the use of impairment healing imagery for coming to faith in Philo, *Virt.* 33.179; Loeb 8:272; Yonge, 658.

⁷⁰³ Blind man of John 9 – healed sins of ignorance: *Homilia Clementina* 19.22.6; *GCS* 42:265; *ANF* 8:337; cf., John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 4.14; *SC* 50:190; *ACW* 31:72. Cf., the impious, unholy and atheists as mutilated and crushed – “incurably sunk into vice” – Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.60.324-327; Loeb 7:288, 290; Yonge, 565; only God can provide “the healing treatment of their spiritual conditions which no human power is competent to cure” – *ibid.*, 2.4.16f; Loeb 7:314, 316; Yonge, 569.

⁷⁰⁴ Chrysostom highlights this double healing of body and soul to bring out particular contrasts he is making, such as with the paralysed man of Matthew 8: “Not only did He quite heal the servant’s body, but the soul also of the centurion”: *Hom. in Matt.* 26.6; *PG* 57:339; *NPNF i* 10:180f; *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:72-73; *NPNF i* 11:50-52. Cf., the paralysis of body and soul of the paralysed man of John 5: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.*, 38.2; *PG* 59:306-307; *NPNF i* 14:132. Paul’s “double blindness removed”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:160; *NPNF i* 11:131; cf., John Chrysostom,

non-biblical example of coming to faith described in terms of impairment healing is

Ptolomaeus who was said to have become blind through weeping at what had happened

when he attempted to rape Peter's daughter. Prevented from killing himself,

Ptolomaeus is sent by a vision to Peter:

And coming to me he told (me) all that had happened to him in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he did see with the eyes of his flesh and with the eyes of his soul, and many people set their hopes on Christ.⁷⁰⁵

Hom. in Matt. 29.2; PG 57:360; NPNF i 10:196f; cf., ibid., 67.1; PG 58:633; NPNF i 10:409; John Chrysostom, Hom. in Jo. 59.1; PG 59:323; NPNF i 14:213. The power of God manifested through the healing of blindness / ignorance: Homilia Clementina 19.22.6; GCS 42:265; ANF 8:337. Soul's impairment – only curable by God: John Chrysostom, Hom. in Acta Apost. 2; PG 60:31; NPNF i 11:15f; John Chrysostom, In paralyt. 4; PG 51:55; NPNF i 9:215.

We can compare Paul describing Christ as speaking light to those in darkness: Acts 26:23; cf., Luke 4:18, Psalm 19:8.

Similarly, Matthew 5:16 – “Let your light so shine...” – was interpreted in terms of current disciples behaving in such a way that they illuminate / heal the blindness of those who witness their behaviour – “that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven”: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 4.19-20; SC 50:192-193; ACW 31:73f.

Cf., healings, or not, of the bodily and spiritual blindnesses of the religious leaders and blind man in John 9 compared: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo. 56.1-2; PG 59:306-307; NPNF i 14:200-202; ibid., 58.3-4; PG 59:318-320; NPNF i 14:209f. Cf., also the use impairment healing imagery to emphasise a dramatic change that takes place, such as Paul's making blind of the sorcerer Simon: “the sign by which he himself was converted...[and] meant for his conversion...a sign of the blindness of his soul”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost. 28; PG 60:210; NPNF i 11:179. With Paul's own physical and spiritual healing, the taking away of blindness is particularly associated with baptism: for example, John Chrysostom, Hom. in 1 Cor. 29.2; PG 61:241-242; NPNF i 12:169f; cf., John Chrysostom, Hom. in Acta Apost. 9; PG 60:79; NPNF i 11:57f; John Chrysostom, Hom. in Acta Apost. 20; PG 60:159; NPNF i 11:130; John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 1.1; PG 49:223; ACW 31:131; ibid., 2.1; PG 49:231; ACW 31:173. This use of the impairment healing theme is discussed below pages 379-385, 392-395.**

Use of impairment healings in general for coming to faith: Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 41.1.2; Archambault, 182, 184; ANF 1:215; Origen, *Comm. in Matt. 11.18; GCS 40:65-67; ANF 10:447f; ibid., 13.3-13.5; GCS 40:185-192; ANF 10:477f. Cf., similar use of the healing of leprosy: Origen, C. Celsum 6.11.30; SC 147:204f; ANF 4:578; Origen, Comm. in Jo. 6.9.55; SC 157:168; FC 80:183; Ps-Justin Martyr, *De resurrectione* Fr. 10; PG 6:1589, 1592; ANF 1:301 – “that leprosy might be understood to be an emblem of sin”. Cf., Christ as healer of both body and soul: ὁ ἰώμενος ἡμῶν καὶ σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν τὸν ὅλον ἄνθρωπον Ἰησοῦς - Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 3.12.98.2; SC 156:184; ANF 2:295. Various HB passages of impairment being removed are also interpreted as coming to understanding, becoming able to speak God's words or to discern them: e.g., Origen, *Hom. in Exodum* 3.1-2; GCS 29:161-165; FC 71:248-252 (developing the theme of Moses' speech impairment). We can compare Kee's analysis of miracle as universal symbol in the Graeco-Roman world in terms of “symbolic transformation of experiences”: Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*, 221-251.*

On the use of impairment and its healing by Jesus for the blindness of the disciples: E. S. Johnson, “The Blind Man from Bethsaida,” 370-382; E. S. Johnson, “Blind Bartimaeus,” 198-204; Tyson, 35-43; van der Loos, 425, 461f; Robbins, 224-243; Achtemeier, 115-145; Barrett, *Gospel According to St John*, 366; Theissen, 231-302. The emphasis in this modern interpretation of blindness in relation to the disciples is consistently negative. We can contrast the Early Church's more varied use of blindness, that includes the modelling of positive discipleship qualities to be identified with and emulated.

⁷⁰⁵ *The Acts of Peter* 132-139; NTA 2:285f.

We see the theme being used also in the frequent linking of catechumens or the newly baptised to groups of people with impairments who appear in the Gospels:

Let us then cause to go up along with ourselves to the mountain where Jesus sits – His church – those who wish to go up to it along with us, the deaf, the blind, the lame, the maimed and many others, and let us cast them at the feet of Jesus that He may heal them, so that the multitudes are astonished at their healing.⁷⁰⁶

The impairment healing image was a useful one in this context: coming to faith was presented as such a profound change that only God could bring it about, and the effect on onlookers was as dramatic as witnessing the impossible happening.

The exercise of choice as an impairment healing was used also of dramatic changes in behaviour, especially the breaking of entrenched habits. In a similar way to the use of the image for the possibility of coming to faith, the apparent incurability of impairment was used to show that despite all appearances, behaviour change is possible. To show the continuing possibility of change, John Chrysostom holds back from saying that his listeners were in fact incurable in their soul impairment.⁷⁰⁷ Making a similar point, Ireneus refers to the blinding of Stesichorus for cursing Helen, and the restoration of his

⁷⁰⁶ Catechumens' description: Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 11.18; *GCS* 40:65-67; *ANF* 10:447f. Cf., people with impairments at the pool of Bethesda awaiting healing as pattern and type for Baptism - ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι καὶ τύπῳ - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:203; *NPNF i* 14:126. Cf., "Let those who perceive that they are blinded by following multitudes who are in error...draw near to the Word, who can bestow the gift of sight, in order that, like those poor and blind who had thrown themselves down by the wayside, and who were healed by Jesus because they said to Him, 'Son of David, have mercy upon me,' they too may receive mercy and recover their eyesight, fresh and beautiful, as the Word of God can create it": Origen, *C. Celsus* 6.67; *SC* 147:346, 348; *ANF* 4:604. Cf., similar association in *ACM*, 32f: "He opened the blind man's eyes...Have mercy upon us!". Cf., "The Word of God promises to take away wickedness, which it calls a stony heart, from those who come to it, not if they are unwilling, but only if they submit themselves to the Physician of the sick, as in the Gospels the sick are found coming to the Saviour, and asking to obtain healing, and so are cured. The recovery of the sight by the blind is, so far as their request goes, the act of those who believe that they are capable of being healed; but as respects the restoration of sight, it is the work of the Saviour": Origen, *De principiis* 3.1.15.32; Gorgemanns and Karpp, 516, 518; *ANF* 4:317.

sight after he repented. Often the particular impairment image used was one appropriate to the particular behaviour. No longer making oaths for instance, was described in terms of being healed of lameness of tongue – *χωλεύουσαν αὐτοῖς τὴν γλῶσσαν*. Giving up sins associated with sight, such as looking on others in adultery and on oneself with vanity, was said to be a restoration of sight from blindness.⁷⁰⁸ In an attempt to rouse his listeners to change their behaviour, John Chrysostom clusters several impairments together:

If thou change from inhumanity to almsgiving, thou hast stretched forth the hand that was withered. If thou withdraw from theatres and go to the church, thou hast cured the lame foot. If thou draw back thine eyes from an harlot, and from beauty not thine own, thou hast opened them when they were blind. If instead of satanical songs, thou hast learnt spiritual psalms, being mute, thou hast spoken.⁷⁰⁹

Just as for the disciples, being sent to heal infirmities of the body was a training ground for “the cure of the soul, which is the principal thing”, so for Christians generally a prior aim is the restored sight of the soul over restored bodily sight:

⁷⁰⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 33.11; *PG* 57:388; *NPNF i* 10:219; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 19; *PG* 60:591; *NPNF i* 11:493; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 31.3; *PG* 63:214-215; *NPNF i* 14:507.

⁷⁰⁸ Irenaeus use of Stesichorus and the restoration of his sight after he repented – Irenaeus, *Adv. haereses* 1.16.2; Rousseau and Doutreleau, 316; *ANF* 1:348. Breaking the habit of making oaths: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 17.6; *PG* 57:263; *NPNF i* 10:122. Looking on others in adultery and looking on oneself with vanity as a restoring of sight from blindness: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:386-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f.

⁷⁰⁹ Multiple impairment healings for many changes in behaviour: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:386-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.*, 20; *PG* 60:596-597; *NPNF i* 11:497; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Philipp.* 11; *PG* 62:270; *NPNF i* 13:237f. Cf., the adoption of frugality from a life of gluttony and luxury is said to “make the soul herself more clear-sighted”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 27; *PG* 60:209; *NPNF i* 11:177f; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 17.9; *PG* 63:134; *NPNF i* 14:450. Cf., taking up the image of Job 29:15, participating in alms-giving is a way of being “eyes to the blind and feet to the lame”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Cor.* 34.10; *PG* 61:295; *NPNF i* 12:207f.

We can compare similar use in Philo: the proper use of wealth as turning blindness into sight – Philo, *Sobr.* 9.40; Loeb 3:464; Yonge, 230: “The temperate person will make riches which are usually blind and accustomed to excite and tempt people to luxury, farsighted for the future”; scripture properly used “cause even those who were blind in their understanding to grow keen-sighted, receiving from the most sacred oracles the gift of eyesight, enabling them to judge the real nature of things” – Philo, *Somn.* 1.26.164; Loeb 5:382; Yonge, 379f; cf., Philo, *Vit. Cont.* 10.75; Loeb 9:158; Yonge, 705; “The smallest

Seek not to see a blind man healed, but behold all now restored unto that better and more profitable sight; and do thou too learn to look chastely, and amend thy eye – τὴν βελτίω καὶ χρησιμωτέραν ἀνάβλεψιν.⁷¹⁰

5.3 Impairment Healing Themes in Particular Biblical Encounters

We now look at several particular impairment images from the biblical impairment healings in order to see how the themes we have identified were used in an extended way by Early Church interpreters. From an analysis of the images within other ancient texts, we see that the Early Church writers used in a variety of ways established

spark of virtue...being wakened into life by good hopes, gives light to what has been previously been dim-sighted and blind” – Philo, *Migr. Abr.* 21.123; Loeb 4:202; Yonge, 265.

⁷¹⁰ Healing bodily infirmities a training ground for “the cure of the soul, which is the principal thing,” so the restored sight of the soul is prior over restored bodily sight: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.11; *PG* 57:387-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:360; *NPNF i* 10:197; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:72-73; *NPNF i* 11:52; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 8; *PG* 62:60-61; *NPNF i* 13:88. Cf., “For the present He makes them [the disciples] physicians of bodies, dispensing to them afterwards the cure of the soul, which is the principal thing”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.4; *PG* 57:379; *NPNF i* 10:212.

To Christ the healing of an impaired person’s soul is more important than the healing of their body, and an unblemished soul is to be preferred to an unblemished body - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.4; *PG* 57:379; *NPNF i* 10:212; *ibid.*, 32.11; *PG* 57:387-388; *NPNF i* 10:218f; *ibid.*, 40.1; *PG* 57:434; *NPNF i* 10:260; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 20; *PG* 62:137-140; *NPNF i* 13:144-146; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 43.2; *PG* 59:247; *NPNF i* 14:156.

In Christ’s own words, greater emphasis is put on the non-mutilation of a soul over wholeness in body, as Chrysostom highlights - Matthew 5:27-30, 18:8-9; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 59.4; *PG* 58:578; *NPNF i* 10:367; cf., Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 13.24-13.25; *GCS* 40:245-249; *ANF* 10:489f.

For the crowds of people with impairments in John 5, an angel may have brought healing for the body, but it is the Lord of angels who brings healing for the soul - and this greater healing was evidence for the Jews of Christ’s divinity: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:204; *NPNF i* 14:126. Cf., while Jewish priests had authority over bodily leprosy, Christian priests have authority over uncleanness of the soul, just as the Mosaic law relating to bodily leprosy “in its principal meaning” relates to leprosy of the soul. God initially gave commandments relating to things bodily and easier to understand: “for they being of a duller sort, He was discoursing with them from these topics, advancing them by little and little”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 21.5; *PG* 61:174; *NPNF i* 12:121; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:360; *NPNF i* 10:197; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 20; *PG* 60:596-597; *NPNF i* 11:496f.

There may be an association with these John 5 traditions in the reference to waters given healing properties by the Spirit of the Lord brooding over it: “And if the Spirit of the Lord did not descend and brood upon the waters and upon the fountains, human beings would be injured, and everyone the demons saw, they would injure” – *Testament of Adam* 2.10; *OTPs* 1:993.

associations with the images, and applied them to common discipleship processes. The New Testament encounters between people with impairments and Christ were used to illustrate, describe and interpret universal Christian experience. As before, Christians were led to identify with the people with impairments. The fact that close similarities occur in the use of biblical impairment encounters between exegesis, art and liturgy shows that this representative use of the biblical impairment characters was a widespread practice in the Early Church. For the interpreters of the Early Church, the relevance of the biblical impairment healings lay not in the event of impairment healing, but in the opportunities that impairment healing encounters provided for understanding and explaining universal discipleship processes.

5.3.1 *The Stooping Woman Set Free – Luke 13:11-16*

The woman of Luke 13:11 is often referred to in modern Bible translations as “bent double.” This can be misleading. Although modern commentary understands this as a recognised medical condition, συγκύπτουσα is not a medical term: the word does not occur at all in the corpus of Greek ancient medical texts. The verb regularly used for severe spinal curvature or for limbs that are distorted is συγκάμπτω – a word that appears in the Septuagint, but is not used by Luke, despite his known familiarity with the Septuagint (and his supposed medical background!). Luke chose for this woman deliberately not a medical term, but the far more unusual word – συγκύπτουσα. It appears that he made this choice because of associations with the image at play in the

rhetorical dynamic of author and reader. These associations we now investigate starting from how other ancient writers used the word.⁷¹¹

We see from ancient texts that συγκύπτουσα had two broad meanings: weighed down by a heavy burden, and stooping or curving. The word was used to emphasise the effect on a body of a great weight. It described a statue of Atlas with the world on his shoulders: “Atlas was bowed over and crushed by the weight...and barely had the strength left to stand.” The word was used also of the curved shape made by the bowing of the body in making an appeal “as to a god.” It described the effect made by the corners of a military square as the soldiers at the edge come together to pass through a confined space, such as a bridge. The shape described by συγκύπτουσα is not a twist or distortion as a medical term might suggest, but a curve or a bow. With associated words, it was not uncommon for both meanings to be used together: older people were described as weighed down by a lifetime of troubles, or as “bowed with age and wisdom untold.” Similarly, the weight of ripe fruit causes a tree’s branches to bow. In early Jewish texts too, heavy burdens were said to make a person bow forward. Potiphar’s wife, Zuleika says to Joseph, “I will put heavy labour upon thee that will bend thee over” and Joseph replies by quoting from Psalm 146:8, “The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down.”⁷¹²

⁷¹¹ συγκάμπτω as the regular medical term for severe spinal curvature: *LSJ*, 1662; this word appears in LXX, e.g. Psalm 68:24, 4 Kings 4:35. At LXX Job 9:27, we have συγκύψας. συγκύπτουσα understood as a medical term by modern commentators: e.g. Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 131-141.

⁷¹² συγκεκυφῶτα used of Atlas: Philostratus, *Imagines* 2.20.372K.25; Loeb, 218-221. The curving of military squares: Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.4.19, 21; Loeb 3:472f - συγκύπτει...συγκύπτου; cf., the shape of mares moving close together: Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 6.18, 572a23; Loeb 10:298f – with both soldiers and horses, the effect from the συν- prefix of ‘coming together’ is brought out. Body bowed in appeal: Aristophanes, *Vespae* 570f; Loeb 1:462f. Older people bowed by troubles: Aristophanes, *Achamenses* 703; Loeb 1:68f; *Greek Anthology* 16.265; Loeb 5:316f; cf., “This beech-branch which old age had bent as it bends us” - κεκυφῶτα - *Greek Anthology* 6:37; Loeb 1:316f. Older people bowed by

Early Church writers used this image from Luke 13 in several ways. Chrysostom uses it to describe the people of Antioch weighed down by anguish - συγκεκυφότας, Jacob burdened by grief - συγκεκυφώς, and the gesture of a person who begs - συγκεκυφώς καὶ χεῖρας προτείνων. It was used of the Jews' rejection of Jesus: "What wonder if those do not look up at heavenly things whose back is always bowed down that they may lie among earthly things?" It was used also with a positive sense. Distinguished from the bending over in idol-worship (usually προσκυνέω), συγκύπτω was used to demonstrate the action of a penitent asking for "mercy and crumbs, the food of a dog that is very hungry."⁷¹³ It was even used of Jesus himself, to demonstrate his humility, both generally in his stooping to take on human form, and specifically as he bends over to wash the feet of the disciples:

wisdom: Aegyptius in Homer, *Odyssey* 2.16; Loeb 1:36f. Cf., the shape when laughing uncontrollably: Phrynicius Comicus, 3.6 – quoted in LSJ, 1668; when bowed in fury – μανίη δὲ κεκυφότα νῶτα - *Greek Anthology* 2.6; Loeb 1:58f. Ripe fruit bows branches: Theophrastus, *De causis plantarum* 3.22.1; Loeb 2:164f: τὸ ἐπικύπτειν; cf., *ibid.*, 4.14.1; Loeb 2:344f. Zuleika word's to Joseph: *LOTJ* 2:48. Cf., the Qumranic text: "And he bent [his shoulder to the burden and was reduced to (the) tribute] of a slave" – 4QGenesis Peshser^c (4Q254), 5; Martinez, 216.

⁷¹³ The people of Antioch: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 2.6; *PG* 49:36; *NPNF* i 9:345. Cf., a similar image is used to illustrate the support God gives to those whose souls are overburdened - "It was not possible, for a soul bowed down by disease to endure it, did not He Himself give us the strength": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Philipp.* 11; *PG* 62:270; *NPNF* i 13:238.

Jacob weighed down by sorrow – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesin* 65.3; *PG* 54:559; *FC* 87:244 - "This old greybeard, all stooped and bent" – ὁ γέρων ὁ πρεσβύτης ὁ συγκεκυφώς.

A person who begs: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 11.10; *PG* 61:94; *NPNF* i 12:63. Cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 88; *PG* 58:778; *NPNF* i 10:522. Cf., "Remember the sons of your covenant, the desolate, ... the wanderers, for whom there is no return, the sorely wounded for whom there is no cure, [those bent double, with no strai]ghtening up" – 4Qapocryphal Lamentations B (4Q501) 2-4; Martinez, 403. Also: Issachar's words to his children: "Have pity upon the poor and the feeble, bow your backs to till the ground" – *LOTJ* 2:203.

The Jews' rejection of Jesus: Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 17.19; *CCL* 48:586; *NPNF* i 2:356.

Stooping penitent: Gregory of Nazianzen, *In sancta lumina* 16; *PG* 36:356; *NPNF* ii 7:358. Cf., the curved back in worship of the hesychasts in Greek Orthodox tradition: Ware, 106f – following the position of Elijah at 1 Kings 18:42, who "put his face between his knees." Cf., a similar association of stooping and penitence in an early Jewish text: the footnote to *LOTJ* 5:114 draws attention to a word play *gahon* – "he bent down" as "he repented" in name of river Gihon. Contrast, however, Luther's use of the person "curvatus in se" as ignoring God: Tripp, 134.

Wilt thou deem Him little on this account, that He humbled Himself for thee? ... Because for the soul that was bent to the ground He humbles Himself, that He may raise up with Himself the soul that was tottering to a fall under a weight of sin? ... If so, we must blame the physician for stooping over sufferings, and enduring evil odours that he might heal the sick – δια τὴν συγκύπτουσαν χαμαὶ ψυχὴν ταπεινοῦνται... τὸν ἰατρὸν... ὅτι συγκύπτει ἐπὶ τὰ πάθη.⁷¹⁴

When drawing explicitly on the Luke story, Early Church writers applied the image in a broadly similar way. They used it to describe the effects of the burden that a person carries, especially the burden of sin, which forces the person to look only at the ground, that is, at worldly matters. This way of living is brought about through the activity of Satan. However, when the person encounters Jesus, their burden is lifted and they are set free. This lifting by Jesus was understood to be the forgiving of the person's sins.

They are now able to raise their head and to look up towards the things of God:

How many others are still bowed down and bound by Satan, who hinders them from looking up at all, and who would have us look down also! And no-one can raise them up, except the Word, that came by Jesus Christ... Jesus came to release those who were under the dominion of the devil.⁷¹⁵

This impairment healing in Luke was used to describe the discipleship process of the change in a person's outlook that results from their encounter with Jesus. As we have

⁷¹⁴ Stooping Christ: Gregory of Nazianzen, *In theophania* 14; *PG* 36:328; *NPNF ii* 7:349f; cf., Gregory of Nazianzen, *In sancta Pascha* 2.26; *PG* 36:660; *NPNF ii* 7:432f; Basil of Caesarea, *Epist.* 8.5; Courtonne, 1:29; *NPNF ii* 8:118; Jerome, *Tractatus lix in psalmos* Hom. 41 / Psalm 119.130-133; *CCL* 78:250; *FC* 48:304f.

Cf., a similar image from Ephrem used of the divine Being who "in his love bent down from on high and acquired from us our own habits" in Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 147.

⁷¹⁵ Origen, *C. Celsus* 8.54; *SC* 150:294f; *ANF* 4:660.

Some examples of the use of this image for the encounter with Jesus: Ambrose, *Exameron* 3.12.50; *CSEL* 32.1:93; *FC* 42:105f; Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 68.2.8; *CCL* 39:923; Tweed *et al.*, 3:383f; Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 13.42.277; *SC* 222:179; *FC* 89:125f; Jerome, *Tractatus lix in Psalmos* Hom. 36 / Psalm 109.241-251; *CCL* 78:230; *FC* 48:279; *ibid.*, Hom. 55 / Psalm 145:121-152; *CCL* 78:326f; *FC* 48:396; John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, 28.2.14; *PTS* 12:81; *NPNF ii* 9:33; Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 13.7; *GCS* 40:194; *ANF* 10:479; Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis* 1.1; *SC* 381:132; *NPNF ii* 12:2.

seen with other impairment healings, the details of the Luke 13 story were associated with those beginning their discipleship. When addressing Christians recently baptised, Gregory of Nazianzen applied the image directly to their experience:

Yesterday you were a...soul bowed over by sin; today you have been made straight by the Word. Do not be bent again, and condemned to the earth, as if weighed down by the Devil with a wooden collar, nor get an incurable curvature” – δια τῆς ἀμαρτίας συγκύπτουσα...Μὴ συγκύψῃς πάλιν.⁷¹⁶

It was not, however, an image useful only for new Christians. Augustine associated the looking up of the woman after Jesus had touched her to the *sursum corda* of the Eucharist: hearing those words, Christians can recall the woman of Luke 13 and look up to their own hope “laid up in heaven.”⁷¹⁷

Each of these points in their interpretation draws explicitly from a detail found in Luke: burdened and stooping [Luke 13:11], unable to look up [Luke 13:11], this way of living caused by Satan [Luke 13:16], the person set free by Christ [Luke 13:12], now seeing the things of God [Luke 13:13]. With some of these interpreters, the word for looking up – ἀναβλέπω – was directly linked to another impairment, blindness: it was the word regularly used for regaining sight.⁷¹⁸ This figurative and ambiguous use of ἀναβλέπω as

Cf., Eusebius, *Comm. in Psalmos*; PG 23:85; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1.15; SC 50:116; ACW 31:28; *ibid.*, 4.11-12; SC 50:188-189; ACW 31:70f; *ibid.*, 6.22; SC 50:226; ACW 31:101.

⁷¹⁶ Gregory of Nazianzen, *In sanctum baptismum* 33-4; PG 36:405, 408; NPNF ii 7:372f.

⁷¹⁷ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 68.2.8; CCL 39:923; NPNF i 3:383f; cf., *ibid.*, 73.23; CCL 39:1020; NPNF i 3:512f.

⁷¹⁸ Use made in of the ambiguity of ἀναβλέπω: Clement of Alexandria attacks idol-worshippers: “seeing these things do you still continue blind, and will you not look up to the Ruler of all, the Lord of the universe?” - καὶ ταῦτα ὁρῶντες ἔτι τυφλώττετε καὶ οὐχὶ...ἀναβλέψετε; - Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 10.91.2; Marcovich, 135; ANF 2:197. The use of the ambiguity of ἀναβλέπω in the context of Luke 13:11-17 – see text at pages 156-157 and footnote 269. Origen links Luke 13:11 with a phrase from John 4:35, “Lift up your eyes and see”: Origen, *Comm. in Jo.* 2.47; SC 120:236; FC 80:106; *ibid.*, 13.42.277; SC 222:179; FC 89:125f. Jerome links the Luke image to Psalm 110(109):7 – *Tractatus lix in Psalmos* Hom. 36 / Psalm 109.241-251; CCL 78:230; FC 48:279; cf., *ibid.*, 145:121-152; CCL 78:326f; FC 48:396. Gregory the Great links the Luke image to Psalm 68(69):23f – *Regula Pastoralis* 1.1; SC 381:132; NPNF ii 12:2.

both ‘looking up’ and ‘regaining sight’ occurred in other ancient texts. An example is Plato’s cave image – πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἀναβλέπειν.⁷¹⁹ Figurative use of the details that we find in Luke’s image was not unheard of by non-Christian writers, as we see in these lines from Philo:

Look up then, so as to convict the blind human race, which, though it appears to see, is blind. For how can it be otherwise than blind, when it sees evil instead of good... Even if they ever do open their eyes, [they] still bend them down towards the earth, pursuing only earthly things” – ἀνάβλεψον δὲ... πρὸς γῆν ἀπονεύκασι τὰ γήινα μετιόντες.⁷²⁰

With these associations present in the rhetorical dynamic between implied author and reader, those who anciently read or heard the Luke 13 story would readily understand the story in terms of the human experience of being weighed down by the burdens and pressures of human living – even bowed over so that no other way can be seen. Luke applies this impairment image to describe the effects on general human experience that occur in the encounter with Jesus. The woman’s situation was not a specific medical condition that Jesus was able miraculously to cure, but a universal human experience from which Jesus was able to set free. On these Early Church readings, Luke’s purpose was to show that her experience is universal: both her experience of burden, and her experience of liberation.

Contrast, however, this ambiguity in ἀναβλέπω denied: E. S. Johnson, “The Blind Man from Bethsaida,” 376f.

ἀναβλέπω is used in the NT Gospels similarly both for the regaining of sight by blind people (e.g. Matthew 11:5, Luke 7:22) and also for looking up (e.g. Mark 16:4, Luke 19:5).

⁷¹⁹ Plato, *Republica* 7.1, 515c; Loeb 6:122f. Cf., of Jacob: “His eyes grew dim and his lifetime was so nearly finished that he could not see a single person because of his long life and senility. Then he lifted his eyes toward the light of Isaac” – *Testament of Jacob* 2.2-4; *OTPs* 1:914; cf., *Life of Adam and Eve* [Apocalypse], 34.2, 35.2; *OTPs* 2:289.

⁷²⁰ Similar imagery to Luke’s in Philo: Philo, *Rer. Div. Her.* 15.76-78; Loeb 4:318, 320; Yonge, 282. Similar literal and figurative uses for ἀπονεύω, ‘bend forward’, as for συγκύπτω: *LSJ*, 210.

5.3.2 *Paul Led to the Truth – Acts of the Apostles 9:8-20*

In this section, we see a particular association with blindness that was drawn from the impairment encounter between Jesus and Paul. This impairment encounter differs from the others in that Paul becomes impaired as a result of the encounter. It is however similar to the others in the way that bodily and non-bodily associations with impairment were used representatively for common aspects to discipleship. The impairment encounter between Paul and Jesus was used to illustrate the universal Christian process of coming to the commitment of baptism. The focus for the interpreters was that Paul was taken by the hand and “led to the truth” through his experience of blindness for three days. The details of what occurred to Paul during this period were explicitly linked by the interpreters to baptism; in early Christian baptismal liturgy the same details consistently occur.

Being led was a familiar association with physical blindness. Homer wrote of the blind singer Demodocus: “Then the herald drew near, leading the good minstrel...and took Demodocus by the hand, and led him forth from the hall.” In Aristophanes’ play, *Plutus*, the slave Cario complains of his master: “Now he’s following a poor blind old man, just the reverse of what he ought to do. For we who see should go before the blind, but he goes after.” The task of leading a blind person often fell to the person’s children, or to their slaves. Oedipus calls out to Creon who has abducted his daughter Antigone, “You villain, who have snatched from me by violence the beloved eye I had,

gone like the eyes I had already lost!”⁷²¹ The association is clear too from dream interpretation:

To dream that one is blind in both eyes signifies the death of the children... of the dreamer... For eyes are like children in that they are missed when absent and they guide and lead the body, just as children guide and lead their parents when they grow old... Someone dreamt that his slave, whom he valued beyond all the others, turned into a torch. The man went blind. This slave guided him by the hand and, in his way, he saw the light through him.⁷²²

Being led was also familiar in non-bodily uses of blindness, illustrating dependence.

With a negative connotation, the image illustrated being led astray, especially by passions. The spirit of procreation and intercourse was “the last in the creation and the first in youth, because it is filled with ignorance; it leads the young person like a blind man into a ditch and like an animal over the cliff.” In this sense of mis-leading, demons were said to cause blindness: “And the sons of Noah came to Noah, their father, and they told him about the demons who were leading astray and blinding and killing his grandchildren.”⁷²³ In penal blindness, the senses of being led through both bodily and non-bodily blindness coincided:

⁷²¹ Demodocus: Homer, *Odyssey* 8.62, 106; Loeb 1:262f, 264f. The theme reversed: Aristophanes, *Plutus* 13-16; Loeb 3:364f; Rogers, 4f. Oedipus’ words when Antigone is abducted: Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 866-870; Loeb 2:512f; cf., *ibid.*, 173, 183; Loeb 2:430f; *ibid.*, 179; Loeb 2:430f; *ibid.*, 501f; Loeb 2:468f; cf., Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1292; Jebb, 168f; *ibid.*, 1521; Jebb, 196f; cf., Sophocles, *Antigone* 988-990; Loeb 2:92f.

⁷²² Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 5.20; Pack, 306; White, 232. Cf., Children and slaves associated with leading a blind person: “Not only was Plutus blind, but his guide, Fortune, as well”: Diogenes Laertius, *Demetrius* 5.82; Loeb 1:534f; “Lay hold on helping hand” - Euripides, *Hercules furens* 124; Loeb 3:138f. “Then Tobit got up and came stumbling out through the courtyard door... When the people of Nineveh saw him coming [Tobit healed], walking along in full vigour and with no one leading him, they were amazed” – Tobit, 11:10, 17; cf., references in Moore, 189.

Blind led by the hand in Jewish tradition: Preuss, 273f (including Samson – Judges 16:26).

⁷²³ Loss of control: “A man when he has become drunk is led by a mere stripling, stumbling, not knowing where he walks”: Heraclitus, *On the Universe* 73; Loeb 4:492f. The spirit of procreation and intercourse: *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Reuben* 2.9; *OTPs* 1:782; cf., *ibid.*, *Judah* 11.1-2; *OTPs* 1:798; cf., Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.14.79; Loeb 7:522, 524; Yonge, 602. Demons leading astray as causing blindness: *Jubilees* 10.2; *OTPs* 2:75; cf., “Balak was even a greater magician and soothsayer than Balaam, who allowed himself like a blind man to be led by him” – *LOTJ* 3:370.

God said, ‘Behold now Samson has been led astray through his eyes, and he has not remembered the mighty works that I did with him... And I will hand him over to his enemies, and they will blind him’.⁷²⁴

However, being led as an association with blindness was also seen positively: “Thou dost hold my right hand. Thou dost guide me” [Psalm 73:23f; cf., Isaiah, 42:6f, Psalm 105:37]. The dependence associated with the image is used of being guided by God or by God’s prophet. The sun and the moon, for instance,

coming from the presence of God, they are blinded by the radiance in the heavens, and they cannot find their way. God, therefore, shoots off arrows, by the glittering of which they are guided.⁷²⁵

Similarly, the Samaritans who were affected by Elisha’s prayer that they be made blind “were so darkened in their sight and in their mind, that they followed him very diligently.”⁷²⁶ Both negative and positive connotations with a blind person being led were used by Early Church writers. When luxury or ambition overtook people, they

render them blind indeed, and dark, so much so that they have even to seek for someone to lead them by the hand! Would that they did do this, would that they did seek anyone to lead them by the hand!⁷²⁷

For those who are blind in this way, Christ and the Spirit were said to take by the hand and lead to the light.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁴ Pseudo-Philo, 43.5-7; *OTPs* 2:357; cf., *LOTJ* 4:48.

⁷²⁵ *LOTJ* 1:25.

⁷²⁶ Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 9.4.3.57; Loeb 6:30, 32; Whiston, 249. Cf., leading a blind person was an act of righteousness, as we see in Asmodeus’ kindness: “A blind man going astray he set in the right path” – *LOTJ* 4:167.

⁷²⁷ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 28; *PG* 60:212; *NPNF i* 11:180; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in I Cor.* 39.16; *PG* 61:345; *NPNF i* 12:242; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 3.5; *PG* 59:43; *NPNF i* 14:14.

⁷²⁸ The Saviour leads to the light those who are blind: Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 1.9.83.2; *SC* 70:258; *ANF* 2:230. The Spirit leads the blind to what is profitable: Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 19.50.6; F. H. Johnson, 101; *NPNF ii* 8:31. Like those unable to see the sun, those who cannot see the Son must be led away from darkness: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.*, 12.3; *PG* 59:86; *NPNF i* 14:43. Cf., Origen, *C. Celsus* 7.51; *SC* 150:134f; *ANF* 4:632. Those who are blind with ignorance led to virtue: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 8:8; *SC* 50:252; *ACW* 31:122.

Augustine interprets the blind person of John 9 as standing for all humankind: he shows how all people are born blind and in need of a guide, specifically in relation to unbelief and faith – Augustine, *Tractatus*

This theme of the blind person's dependence, focussed in the image of being led by the hand, was central to Early Church uses of the story of Paul's impairment encounter with Jesus. The paradox of Paul's blindness was brought out many times. "From a persecutor Paul becomes a preacher. His bodily eyes are blinded in order to clear the eyes of his soul." This happened not only for his own benefit: his blindness resulted in the sight of others: "so that through him the Lord Jesus might be seen by many": the blind Paul is told that he will be sent to open the eyes of the Gentiles [Acts 26:17f].⁷²⁹ After hearing Jesus' voice, Paul "arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight" [Acts 9:8f]. This detail of the blind Paul being led by the hand was used to show the process of change, of reversal even, that he underwent. The image illustrated how Paul was led to understanding, and to the commitment point of baptism: "He put aside the darkness in which he had

in Jo. 44.1; *CCL* 36:381; *NPNF i* 7:245. As Augustine points out in this story, it is "a weighty subject of inquiry" that the blind person guides those who are sighted: *ibid.*, 44.12, 16, 17; *CCL* 36:386f, 387f; *NPNF i* 7:248, 249. Cf., the emphasis on Christ leading the blind man of Bethsaida: Jerome, *Tractatus in Marci evangelium* Hom. 79(5); *CCL* 78:474-478; *FC* 57:154-158.

An historical character being led by the hand – Maris the blind bishop led into the presence of the emperor: Socrates, *HE* 3.12; *GCS* nf 1:206f; *NPNF ii* 2:85; Sozomen, *HE* 5.4.8-9; *GCS* 50:198; *NPNF ii* 2:329.

The Law as the light for those who are blind and in need of being led is a phrase explained as an abusive one used by Jewish religious leaders of proselytes: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 6; *PG* 60:433; *NPNF i* 11:369.

⁷²⁹ Paul's blindness brought him light: Ambrose, *De Joseph* 8.45; *CSEL* 32.2:103; *FC* 65:218; *ibid.*, 10.52; *CSEL* 32.2:108; *FC* 65:223. Cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 19; *PG* 60:152-154; *NPNF i* 11:123-125.

Paul made to be blind so that he would have sight: Jerome, *Epist.* 16.1; *CSEL* 54:68; *NPNF ii* 6:20 – "oculis carnalibus excaecatur ut mente plus videat". Cf., John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 16.7; *PG* 49:16; *NPNF i* 9:448; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:158; *NPNF i* 11:129; John Chrysostom, *De laudibus Pauli* 4.1; *SC*, 182-188; Augustine, *Epist.* 173.3; *CSEL* 44:641; *NPNF i* 1:544; Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 75.14; *CCL* 39:1046; Tweed *et al.*, 4:16 – "et circumfulsus lumine, facta sibi caecitate in oculis, ut intus videret, emisit primam cogitationem oboedientiae". Paul made blind so that all people can see: Ambrose, *De Joseph* 10.59; *CSEL* 32.2:111; *FC* 65:226. Cf., Augustine, *De Trinitate* 13.15; *CCL* 50A:407f; *NPNF i* 3:177f; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 5.21; *SC* 50:211; *ACW* 31: 91; John Chrysostom, *De laudibus Pauli* 4.1; *SC* 182.

wandered and was led to the truth. He did not delay the event, but straightway he was baptised.”⁷³⁰

Paul’s dependence as a blind person was used to show different aspects to the process that was happening to him during the three days of his blindness. Being led was used to demonstrate his initial reluctance: “Paul even against his will and resisting Christ drew to Him.” Paul was said to have described this as being brought as “a captive into Damascus, bound without chains.”⁷³¹ If this image of his dependence shows his initial reluctance, then, as those three days pass, the image becomes one of trust and obedience. It was used to show Paul as a blind seer: “Although he saw nothing when his eyes were opened, still he saw Christ.” Seeing Christ, his trust in Christ begins: he was said during this time to learn that Christ’s words are more sure than his own sight. With the growing trust came obedience: “Although Paul was struck and taken up and was terrified because blindness had befallen him, still he began to come near when he said, ‘Lord, what will You have me do?’ ” “And being shined upon round about with the light, blindness having smitten his eyes, that he might inwardly see, he put forth the first thought of obedience.”⁷³² The process of being led through the reversal is

⁷³⁰ John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 4.7-9, *SC* 50:186-187; *ACW* 31:68f.

⁷³¹ Initial reluctance: John Cassian, *Collationes* 13.15; *CSEL* 13:389; *NPNF* ii 11:433; cf., *ibid.*, 3.5; *CSEL* 13:72; *NPNF* ii 11:321. Led as a captive: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 16.7; *PG* 49.166; *NPNF* i 9:448.

⁷³² Blind Paul sees Christ: Ambrose, *De patriarchis* 12.57f; *CSEL* 32.2:159f; *FC* 65:274f. Paul learns to trust Christ’s words more than his own sight: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 88; *PG* 58:778; *NPNF* i 10:523. “What will You have me do?”: Ambrose, *De Joseph* 10.58; *CSEL* 32.2:110; *FC* 65:225. Elsewhere, Paul is said to ask the same question: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 19; *PG* 60:153; *NPNF* i 11:124. The obedience of Paul: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 75.14; *CCL* 39:1046; Tweed *et al.*, 4:16. Cf., John Chrysostom, *De laudibus Pauli* 4.2, 4; *SC* 184, 188-190. The obedience of Ananias is also emphasised: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:159-160; *NPNF* i 11:130f. “It is a most mighty proof of the power of God. Both the fear is shown, and the obedience greater than the fear.” Cf., Jerome interprets Ananias’ name as meaning ‘obedient’: Jerome, *Comm. in Ezechielem* 8.27.18; *CCL* 75:373.

completed as Paul with humility stoops for baptism: “Paul the persecutor of the Church, that ravening wolf of Benjamin, bows his head before Ananias one of Christ’s sheep.” It is at this point of Paul’s commitment in baptism that his “double blindness” is taken away. Paul is not passive in this: he is participating, for it was said that he “only recovers his sight when he applies the remedy of baptism.” Having been baptised, he is then equipped in his task: “As soon as baptised, he was to draw upon himself the grace of the Spirit, by his zeal and exceeding earnestness.”⁷³³

Central to the story of Paul’s impairment experience was the reversal that took place: “You saw how complete was the change in him. Did you see how the grace of the Spirit reformed his soul and changed his purpose?”⁷³⁴ But this change took place over a period of time. The turnabout was not the instant reversal that the modern phrase ‘a Damascus road experience’ might imply:

Grace did not come to him immediately, but three days intervened, during which he was blind; purified the while and prepared by fear... God first takes order that the soul shall be thoroughly in earnest, and then pours forth His grace.⁷³⁵

The process of being led to the truth and to the point of commitment focussed in baptism was occurring during the period when Paul was blind, when he was being led physically. His experience of this may be the source for his comment to the Corinthians: “For we walk by faith not by sight” [2 Corinthians 5:7]. The blindness image does not

⁷³³ Paul stoops with humility: Jerome, *Epist.* 69.6; *CSEL* 54:191; *NPNF ii* 6:146. Paul’s “double blindness removed”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:160; *NPNF i* 11:131; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:360; *NPNF i* 10:196f; cf., *ibid.*, 67.1; *PG* 58:633; *NPNF i* 10:409; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 59.1; *PG* 59:323; *NPNF i* 14:213. Paul applies the remedy: Jerome, *Epist.* 69.6; *CSEL* 54:691; *NPNF ii* 6:146. When baptised, Paul is equipped for the task: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:157-159, 160-161; *NPNF i* 11:129.

⁷³⁴ John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 5.19-21; *SC* 50:209-211; *ACW* 31:88; cf., *ibid.*, 5.21; *SC* 50:211; *ACW* 31:88f.

⁷³⁵ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 1; *PG* 60:22; *NPNF i* 11:7.

suggest passivity. Certainly Paul was participating: as with the two blind men and Bartimaeus, what became his earnest desire was said to be fulfilled. The blindness image, focussed in the detail that Paul was being led by the hand, was used to show how, during his three days of blindness, Paul was being led from enmity, through reluctance, to trust and obedience, and finally to full discipleship.

This association with baptism was not an unusual application of the New Testament impairment healings. John Chrysostom calls the picture in John 5 of people with impairments gathered at the pool of Siloam waiting to be dipped and healed a pattern and type for baptism in Christ – ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι καὶ τύπῳ . The healing that took place at baptism was understood to be the figurative healing of forgiveness: “Happy is our sacrament of water, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life.” In Christian magical texts, as we saw above, the healing of illness was associated with baptism, and when making incantations, reference was made to Jesus’ impairment healings. The process of coming to faith and to discipleship described in the story of the blind man of John 9 was used in several ways by the Early Church to illustrate baptism. Even the name given to the baptizands alludes to the Scriptural impairment encounters: they were known as “illuminandi” or φωτιζόμενοι, and the procedure itself was called ‘Enlightenment’.⁷³⁶

⁷³⁶ People with impairments at John 5 as the type for baptizands: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:203-204; *NPNF i* 14:126. Cf., “Sin no more” spoken by Jesus to the paralysed man at John 5:14 applied to those recently baptised: Cyprian, *De opere et eleemosynis* 1; *CCL* 3A:55; *ANF* 5:476. Gregory of Nazianzen describes baptism in terms of various NT impairments and their healings applied to the soul of those being baptised – spinal curvature, paralysis, withered hand, deafness and muteness, blindness: *In sanctum baptismum* 33-4; *PG* 36:405, 408; *NPNF ii* 7:372; cf., *ibid.*, 6; *PG* 36:365; *NPNF ii* 7:361; *ibid.*, 11; *PG* 36:373; *NPNF ii* 7:363. These soul impairment healings take place through the action of God, and with an emphasis on the contributory role of those healed – see above footnotes 622, 675 and 677.

Paul's own process of blindness and enlightenment was several times applied directly to the circumstances of others being brought to baptism. The conversion and baptism of the king of the Iberians is told with explicit parallels to the conversion of Paul: "He went out hunting, and the loving Lord made a prey of him as He did of Paul." Also, key details of Paul's experience as described in Acts 9 were used liturgically. Being led by the hand, going without food, the laying on of hands, being filled with the Spirit, coming to sight / insight, rising up, taking food (the Eucharist) and being strengthened for the tasks of discipleship, are all elements of early baptismal liturgy. In addition to the types for baptism relating to Jesus (his own baptism, his burial and resurrection, his

Tertullian uses the John 5 healing in the context of baptism to state that the angel that heals impairment of the body is a forerunner of the Holy Spirit that heals impairment of soul at baptism, "According to the rule by which things bodily are always antecedent as figurative of things spiritual" – Tertullian, *De baptismo* 5; *CCL* 1:280-292; *ANF* 3:671f.

Baptism's healing as forgiveness: Tertullian, *De baptismo* 1.2; *CCL* 1:277; *ANF* 3:669. Baptism as blindness (of understanding) healed – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 23; *PG* 60:183; *NPNF i* 11:154.

Healing of illness was associated with baptism: *ACM*, 41, 118f, 328, 333, 335. Cf., John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 2.24; *SC* 50:147; *ACW* 31:52.

The healings of the paralysed man of John 5 and of Bartimaeus are the focus for the incantation of *ACM*, 32f.

There are also references to healing, both physical and figurative, in the early baptismal texts collected by Whitaker, 7, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 52f; cf., limbs made firm by the baptismal oil: 54. Impairment itself, however, is said to be healed not at baptism, but at the resurrection: Augustine, *Sermones* 131.6-8; *PL* 38:732-733; *NPNF i* 6:502f. Cf., impairment not taken away at coming to belief, but at the *parousia*:

"Even if anyone is labouring under a defect of body... He shall raise him up at His second advent perfectly sound": Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 69.5-6; Archambault, 336, 338; *ANF* 1:233.

The baptism of Christ was also associated with impairment healing – it was from that moment that those with impairments started to be healed: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 101(102).1; *CCL* 40:1426; Tweed *et al.*, 5:1-3. Early Church use of the process of coming to faith and to discipleship described in the story of the blind man of John 9: Hoskyns, 351, 355; F. M. Braun, 153-155; R. E. Brown, 380-382; C. C. Grant, 86; Horne, "Those Who Are Blind See," 92, 100; van der Loos, 430f.

Baptism as Enlightenment: John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 1.12; *PG* 49:225; *ACW* 31:135 – καλείται καὶ φῶτισμα. Cf., John Chrysostom, *Ad illuminandos catecheses* 1.1; *PG* 49:223; *ACW* 31:131; *ibid.*, 2.1; *PG* 49:231; *ACW* 31:165; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 20; *PG* 60:159; *NPNF i* 11:129. Baptism as the soul's enlightenment, and a life change: τὸ φῶτισμα λαμπρότης ἐστὶ ψυχῶν βίου μετάθεσις – Gregory of Nazianzen, *De baptisma* 40.4; *PG* 36:361; *NPNF ii* 7:360. Cf., the restoration of speech is also applied to the change that occurs at baptism: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.1-2; *PG* 61:239-242; *NPNF i* 11:168-170. Cf., with baptizands, as for people with impairments who encounter Jesus, the sins of their lives are known by Jesus but not disclosed: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 3; *PG* 51:52; *NPNF i* 11:213. Baptism was also presented as a blinding – for

nakedness on the cross), the impairment encounters of the New Testament were used to illustrate and interpret the experience of people brought to baptism. Paul's experience was one of these. Like the process described in the encounter between Jesus and the woman weighed down, the experience that Paul underwent during his impairment encounter with Jesus was a resource that the Early Church found valuable in interpreting and articulating a universal Christian process and experience.⁷³⁷

5.3.3 *The Paralyse Man Raised Up – Matthew 9:1-8 & John 5:2-18*

The image behind παράλυσις is the breaking or releasing of the tensions that hold a condition in place. This had a positive aspect. High praise is given to Augustus,

who calmed the storms which were raging in every direction, who healed the common diseases which were afflicting both Greeks and barbarians... This is

Satan, dazzled by the brilliant divine light shining from the heads of the newly baptised: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1.27; *SC* 50:122; *ACW* 31:33f.

⁷³⁷ The conversion and baptism of the king of the Iberians told as a parallel to Paul's conversion: Theodoret, *HE* 1.24; *GCS* 44:75f; *NPNF* ii 3:59. Other examples of Paul's experience applied to the experience of others being brought to baptism: John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 5.19-21; *SC* 50:209-211; *ACW* 31:88f. Cf., Gregory of Nyssa, *In sanctum baptismo* 6; *PG* 36:365; *NPNF* ii 5:361. Cf., Cyprian, *De zelo et livore* 10; *CCL* 3A:80; *ANF* 5:494. Cf., Augustine, *C. litteras Petiliani* 2.21.47-48; *CSEL* 52:47f; *NPNF* i 4:541. Cf., Ambrose, *De Joseph* 10.59; *CSEL* 32.2:111; *FC* 65:226. The light which "blazed out upon Paul and by wounding his eyes healed the darkness of his soul... in a special sense is the illumination of baptism" – Gregory of Nazianzen, *De baptisma* 40.6; *PG* 36:365; *NPNF* ii 7:361.

We can compare Paul's blinding of Elymas at Acts 13, said to have been done by Paul for Elymas to have the same chance that he had had: "It was the sign by which he was himself converted... that he might give him opportunity for repentance": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 28; *PG* 60:210; *NPNF* i 11:179. Details of Paul's experience that also occur in early baptismal liturgy, from the collection of Whitaker, 1-59:

a) Being led by the hand: Whitaker, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, 20, 37, 39, 40, 42, 44, 56, 58.

b) Going without food: Whitaker, 1, 2, 4, 9, 32.

c) The laying on of hands: Whitaker, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 22, 30, 32, 36, 38, 41, 49, 57.

d) Being filled with the Spirit: Whitaker, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 23, 30, 32, 35, 40, 49.

e) Coming to sight / insight: Whitaker, 2, 15, 24, 25-27, 35f, 52.

f) Rising up: Whitaker, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16, 19, 29, 30, 31, 34f, 41, 49.

g) Taking food after baptism (the Eucharist): Whitaker, 7, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 41, 50, 56, 58, 59. See also for baptism followed by Eucharist: *Homilia Clementina* 14.1; *GCS* 42:204; *ANF* 8:305; John Chrysostom, *Catecheses ad illuminandos* 2.27; *SC* 50:149; *ACW* 31:53.

h) Onlookers hearing a voice only: Whitaker, 14, 16, 18.

i) Divine light dazzles vision: Whitaker, 14, 17.

Cf., the detail in later versions of Paul's experience of bowing before the baptiser: Whitaker, 4, 9, 37, 45, 51.

We can compare the use of Paul's impairment encounter in modern baptismal liturgy: Kerridge, 76-81.

he who did not only loosen but utterly abolish the bonds in which the whole of the habitable world was previously bound and weighed down –
 παρελύσας τὰ δεσμά οἷς κατέζευκτο καὶ ἐπιπίεστο ἡ οἰκουμένη.⁷³⁸

On the negative side, παραλύω was used for violating customs and breaking peace treaties. The image also described the effect of dissolving the structure of a community when a city is occupied by the enemy. The word was used too for utter exhaustion.⁷³⁹

In medical use of paralysis, the same core image was present. The tensions holding the body in balance are released: “all the veins are relaxed and dissolved; this state is followed by a complete prostration of the harmony and due arrangement of the limbs.” This way of understanding paralysis signified also how the condition was to be treated: “paralysis is a slackening and looseness of the nerves, and it is necessary to tighten them.” Although paralysis was understood as a slackening, its effects were felt as the opposite: in a Babylonian text, paralysis is described as “shackles and fetters on my flesh.” Similarly, Hippocrates was said to use λύω for the treatment of a mild case of apoplexy, “because he knew that in cases of apoplexy the cause is like a fetter that impedes the brain; so he used the opposite term to describe recovery.” Non-medical

⁷³⁸ Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 21.145-146; Loeb 10:72, 74; Yonge, 770. Cf., in Plato’s cave image: λύσις a term for release from bonds and folly (according to footnote ^c – with references – a technical term in Neoplatonism) – Plato, *Respublica* 7.1, 515c; Loeb 6:122; cf., Plutarch, *Mor.*, *De defectu oraculorum* 432c; Loeb 5:468f.

⁷³⁹ Violating customs and laws: Philo, *Leg. Gai.* 30.200; Loeb 10:104; Yonge, 775; *ibid.*, 36.293; Loeb 10:146; Yonge, 783; *ibid.*, 37.298; Loeb 10:150; Yonge, 784. Breaking peace: Philo, *Abr.* 39.226; Loeb 6:110; Yonge, 430. City occupied by the enemy: ἡ δύναμις ἅπασα τῆς πόλεως παρελύθη – Lysias, *Against Agoratus* 46-47; Loeb, 304f. Sodomites: “were wearied with their exertions to find the door” – παρελύθησαν ζητοῦντες τὴν θύραν – Philo, *Fug.* 26.144; Loeb 5:86; Yonge, 334; (the Sodomites’ blindness discussed by John Chrysostom: *Hom. in Genesin* 43.23; *PG* 54:402; *FC* 82:448). Cf., Relaxed in sleep: σώμασιν παρειμέναι – Euripides, *Bacchae* 683; Loeb 3:58f; cf., “The hand is relaxed...as is usual at the beginning of slumber” – λύεται – Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.2.297K.13; Loeb, 10f.

ancient writers drew on this core image: “The daughter of limb-relaxing Bacchus and limb-relaxing Aphrodite is limb-relaxing Gout” – λυσιμελοῦς.⁷⁴⁰

Early Church writers also made explicit use of this core image. With paralysis being a releasing of the body’s energies, Jesus’ healing of paralysis was a tightening, a ‘bracing’ – σφίγγω – of the body. The bracing of a paralysed body was the image used for a paralysed soul being encouraged and strengthened in difficult circumstances or when temptations threaten: “Let us entreat Him, that He would brace our paralysed soul.” The same image was used with a sense of paradox: it emphasised the impact of the statement that the paralysed man of John 5 is one who encourages and models for all people: “his paralysis is sufficient to brace up our souls.”⁷⁴¹ In the context of the paralysed man of Matthew 9, however, the image was drawn on in a different way. Jesus was said to have ‘fastened’ the man’s bodily paralysis, but ‘released’ his paralysis of soul, that is, forgiven the man’s sins. The contrast was put epigrammatically:

⁷⁴⁰ Paralysis as a relaxing of the due arrangements of limbs: Philo, *Praem. Poen.* 25.145; Loeb 8:402, 404; Yonge, 678; cf., Philo, *Det. Pot. Ins.* 46.167; Loeb 2:312, 314; Yonge, 130. Cf., Celsus, *De medicina* 2.1.12; Loeb 1:92f – “resolution nervorum (paralytim Graeci nominant)”; cf., *ibid.*, 3.27.1a; Loeb 1:344f. Paralysis to be tightened: *Book of Medicine*, Wallis Budge 2:144; cf., *ibid.*, 2:124. Paralysis as shackles and fetters: *BWL*, 45. Cf., Paralysis as bound / limp in early Jewish texts: Preuss, 230.

Hippocrates’ use of λύω for treating apoplexy: Hippocrates, *Aph.* 2.42; Loeb 4:118f. The analysis of why he used λύω in Stephanus, *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* 2.41; Westerink, 230f - ὡς περ ὑπὸ τινῶν δεσμῶν. We can compare the use of λύω as a term of release in magical texts: Moore, 158; see also, Faraone, 165-220.

Limb-relaxing Bacchus, Aphrodite and Gout” – *Greek Anthology* 11.414; Loeb 4:270f. Cf., Play on bound / released: cf., “To be unable to speak or to be tongue-tied signifies unemployment as well as poverty. For poverty destroys a person’s freedom of speech. One might also quote here the saying of Theognis: ‘For everyone who is bound by poverty is unable to speak or to achieve anything. And their tongue is bound.’” – Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 1.32; Pack 41; White, 33.

⁷⁴¹ Jesus’ healing is explained as “giving tone to the body of the paralysed” – John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:360; *NPNF i* 10:197; *ibid.*, 26.6; *PG* 57:339; *NPNF i* 10:180. Encouragement and strengthening of a paralysed soul as a bracing: ἵνα σφίγγῃ τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν παραλελυμένην - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 14.5; *PG* 59:221; *NPNF i* 10:89; Cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.1; *PG* 59:208; *NPNF i* 14:129. The paralysis of the impaired person braces the soul of all people: John Chrysostom, *In paralyt.* 1; *PG* 51:50; *NPNF i* 9:212 – τὰς ἡμετέρας ἐπισφίγγαι ψυχὰς. Cf., a similar

amongst Christ's works witnessed by the disciples were “a paralytic new-strung, and sins remitted” – παραλυτικὸν σφιγέντα καὶ ἁμαρτήματα λυθέντα.⁷⁴² Jesus' words were interpreted in order to bring out the contrast:

Now what He said is like this, ‘Which seems to you easier, to bind up a disorganized body, or to undo the sins of a soul?’ – σῶμα σφίγξει διωκισμένον, ἢ ψυχῆς ἁμαρτήματα λῦσαι;⁷⁴³

A similar use of this image at the core of ‘paralysis’ occurs in the New Testament itself, as we see at Romans 3:25. However, from the fact that the Early Church writers made only limited use of the image themselves in their interpretation of the paralysis texts, it appears that this association with the image was not widely used in the New Testament in this way. Even so, in both the New Testament and Early Church texts, λύω was regularly used for the release of impairment healing. Sometimes the verb may carry the sense identified above in medical use of the word for impairment recovery, and at other times, there was allusion to the use of the word in the magical context of release from demon activity.⁷⁴⁴

image use with Peter – “Ananias he bound with the bond of death, and the weak in his feet he absolved from his defect of health”: Tertullian, *De pudicitia* 21.12; *CCL* 2:1327; *ANF* 4:99.

⁷⁴² Jesus ‘fastened’ the bodily paralysis, but ‘released’ the paralysis of soul: ἔλυσα τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ παραλυτικοῦ, τὸ σῶμα ἔσφιγξα - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 30.3; *PG* 57:365; *NPNF i* 10:200; Cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.1; *PG* 59:208; *NPNF i* 14:129. “A paralytic new-strung, and sins remitted”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 32.4; *PG* 57:380; *NPNF i* 10:213. Cf., “For a certain token of forgiveness of his sins, He provides the giving tone to his body” τῆς μὲν τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ἀφέσεως τεκμήριον, τὴν τοῦ σωμάτος σφίγξιν ποιεῖται - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:360; *NPNF i* 10:197.

⁷⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 29.2; *PG* 57:360; *NPNF i* 10:197. Cf., a similar use of the image in Latin authors: Christ “made the inner man whole of his palsy, by loosing his sins, by binding fast his faith”: Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 37.1-3; *CCL* 38:382-384; Tweed *et al.*, 2:48-51 – “sic enim fecit interiorem hominem salvum a paralyti, remittendo peccata et constringendo fidem”.

More generally in the context of disease, to free was to heal: “liberare curatio est” – Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* 4.8; *CSEL* 47:438; *ANF* 3:354.

⁷⁴⁴ At Romans 3:25, Paul uses a word that has the clear double meaning of paralysis and forgiveness - τὴν πάρεσιν. John Chrysostom especially develops the double meaning here: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Rom.* 7; *PG* 60:444-445; *NPNF i* 11:378. In a similar way, Chrysostom explains the bodily paralysis image of Hebrews 12:12f - τὰς παρειμένας χεῖρας καὶ τὰ παραλελυμένα γόνατα ἀνορθώσατε - as referring to a soul ‘relaxed’ and ‘paralyzed’ - παραλυθέντας...παρειμένους - and collapsing into sin: John

Early Church writers also made use of paralysis imagery in the visual aspect to the healing of a person with paralysis: moving from a horizontal position to a vertical one. Several times in the Gospels, Jesus says to the person with paralysis whom he heals, “Arise!” – ἔγειρε; ⁷⁴⁵ This command of Jesus was used by the Early Church writers in their use of paralysis as an image for the soul, both in urging oneself to rise up from a bed of wrongdoing, and also in stirring oneself not to fall back to one’s former ways.

Wherefore even though you stand, yet take heed lest you fall...All of us, so to speak, having fallen, and lying prostrate on the ground...Our exhortation is concerning the ability of them that are fallen to arise. Let us rise again then, and let us stand nobly. How long do we lie prostrate?...Let us stretch out a hand to each other and thoroughly raise ourselves up – τοῦ τοὺς κειμένους δυνηθῆναι ἀναστῆναι...Ἀναστῶμεν, καὶ στῶμεν γενναίως...χείρα ἀλλήλοις ὀρέξωμεν καὶ διαναστῶμεν.⁷⁴⁶

Chrysostom, *Hom. in Heb.* 31.3; *PG* 63:214-215; *NPNF i* 14:507. See also, in the context of Luke 4:18f: Sloan, 36-38.

Use of λύω in NT for release from impairment: Speech impairment: Mark 7:35; The woman weighed down: Luke 13:16. Cf., Lazarus: John 11:44. Use of λύω for breaking the Law: John 5:18, 7:23, 10:35. Use of λύω for forgiveness: Matthew 16:19, 18:18. Examples of λύω in Early Church texts for release from impairment - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Eph.* 8; *PG* 62:60; *NPNF i* 13:88. Cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 38; *PG* 60:274; *NPNF i* 11:238. Cf., the healing of various infirmities as a ‘loosing’: ἐλύετο - John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 12.2; *PG* 59:83; *NPNF i* 14:41. Cf., The soul – “set free from ills...returns to Him who made it”: Ps-Justin Martyr, *Orationes ad Graecos* 5; Marcovich, 119; *ANF* 1:272 - ἡ ψυχὴ...παρὰλυθεῖσα.

On binding and loosing in magic in relation to impairment: Moore, 158; see also, Faraone, 165-220; *MM*, 384.

⁷⁴⁵ Jesus’ command to those with paralysis - ἔγειρε; : Matthew 9:6, Mark 3:3; cf., ἀνάστηθι, Mark 9:27, Luke 5:25. Cf., the apostles’ command: Acts of the Apostles 9:18, 9:34, 14:10. The same word used in Early Church interpretations of these texts: e.g. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 26.1; *PG* 57:333; *NPNF i* 10:176.

⁷⁴⁶ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 23.6; *PG* 61:194; *NPNF i* 12:135. Cf., “For as the infirm...unable to arise or work, or do anything...thus too it is with us. And we lay not upon a bed, but upon wickedness itself”: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Phil.* 11; *PG* 62:268; *NPNF i* 13:237. Cf., “Arise! The way itself has come to thee, and roused thee from thy sleep; if, however, it has roused thee, up and walk...the word of God has healed even the lame”: Augustine, *Tractatus in Jo.* 34.9; *CCL* 36:316; *NPNF i* 7:203; cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 35; *PG* 60:256; *NPNF i* 11:222; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:72-73; *NPNF i* 11:52. See also John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 26.10; *PG* 57:344; *NPNF i* 10:184: to encourage those who ‘fall back’ after their baptismal enthusiasm. We can compare James 5:15 on the sick person: “The Lord will raise them up” - ἔγειρεῖ αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος

The paralysed man of John 5 is frequently used to illustrate this rousing and not falling back: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 67.4; *PG* 58:638; *NPNF i* 10:413; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 37.1; *PG* 59:207; *NPNF i* 14:128. Compare also Psalm 20:8 – “They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright.” Philo puts the image to similar use: “There is no small number of things in human life which are confessed to be very difficult to endure...by which weak spirited men are broken down, not

The use of the image in this way is made clear from its context of the interpretation of paralysis healings. Certainly in these images, there is no sense that people with impairments were being referred to as having a passive role – the comparisons work because of the active, even strenuous, contribution being made.

This visual aspect was also drawn on in the use of those with paralysis in the Gospels to illustrate baptism and the resurrection. The focus of this use of these characters with impairments is again Jesus' command, "Arise!" As we saw in the discussion of the use of Paul's impairment encounter with Jesus in relation to baptismal liturgy, 'rising up' as a detail in the Acts account was a detail paralleled in early rites of baptism. The rising up of the paralysed man of John 5 was one way in which this impairment encounter was identified as a figure of baptism.⁷⁴⁷ The same image was used to make links to the resurrection: "He had given no trifling proof of the Resurrection by bracing the paralytic ...[which] fell little short of resurrection."⁷⁴⁸ The rising up of the paralysed man was even said to be "an image of the Resurrection." The rising of the characters healed of impairment, the rising of the dead, the rising of those who have just been baptised, were linked together through a weaving of allusion, in order to illustrate the new life, the healing, that comes from Christ.⁷⁴⁹

being able to raise themselves at all through their want of courage; but those men who are full of high thoughts and noble spirits, rise up to struggle against these things, and contend against them with fortitude and exceeding vigour": Philo, *Virt.* 2.5; Loeb 8:164, 166; Yonge, 640.

⁷⁴⁷ The paralysis healing of John 5 as a type of baptism: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 36.1; *PG* 59:203-204; *NPNF i* 14:126; John Chrysostom, *De incomprehensibili Dei natura* 12.8f; *PG* 48:803f; *FC* 72:288f.

⁷⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Jo.* 39.3; *PG* 59:224; *NPNF i* 14:140 – καίτοι οὐ μικρὰν τέως ἀναστάσεως ἦν δεδωκώς ἀπόδειξιν.

⁷⁴⁹ "This act made manifest the Resurrection, for it was an image of the Resurrection": John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Acta Apost.* 8; *PG* 60:70; *NPNF i* 11:50; cf., *ibid.*, 9; *PG* 60:79; *NPNF i* 11:58. Cf., John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 23.6; *PG* 61:194; *NPNF i* 12:135. Cf., in the NT, Romans 6:3-11: Paul's

The impairment encounters between Jesus and the woman weighed down and between Jesus and Paul were used by Early Church writers to illustrate and interpret what those they were addressing were themselves experiencing, whether they were fresh or established Christians. The impairment encounters between Jesus and the people with paralysis were used in similar ways. Through associations at play in the rhetorical dynamic of communication, the Gospel stories were interpreted by Early Church writers in such a way that readers were led to identify with the characters with impairments. Central Christian processes were being articulated in this way: the liberation that comes from the lifting of overwhelming burdens; being brought to faith and to the commitment of discipleship; the releasing effect of knowing forgiveness; the bracing of encouragement that comes from the shared experience of others; the life-bringing changes that result when Jesus is encountered; links being made between current liturgical practice and Scriptural events.

It is because the Scriptural impairment encounters were used so extensively by the Early Church that not only early Christian liturgy made so many references to these encounters, but also early Christian art. Several studies have shown that impairment was not a common subject for artistic representation in the ancient world: examples are few, especially in Graeco-Roman traditions. In early Christian art, by contrast,

linking of baptism to death and resurrection through the image of rising up. Compare also the words of Christ to the son of the widow at Nain and to the daughter of Jairus: Luke 7:14, Luke 8:54. Rising of those healed of impairment (body and soul), of the dead, of those baptised - linked together: John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Cor.* 40.2; *PG* 61:348-349; *NPNF i* 12:245; Gregory of Nazianzen, *De baptisma* 40.9; *PG* 36:369; *NPNF ii* 7:362; cf., Tertullian, *De baptisma* 2; *CCL* 1:277f; *ANF* 3:669. The same association made in the context of Paul's impairment encounter: John Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum* 16.7; *PG* 49:166; *NPNF i* 9:448; cf., Tertullian, *De baptisma* 13; *CCL* 1:288f; *ANF* 3:676.

impairment had a very high profile: impairment encounters, especially the healings of the blind men and the paralysed man, are said to be “ubiquitous... the core, the mainstay of Early Christian imagery.”⁷⁵⁰ Art commentators suggest that this prominence results from associations with Christ’s power (especially in the light of the rivalry with other healing cults and with magic), and because the healings are symbols of deliverance, of forgiveness of sins, of trust and hope.

Our analysis here of impairment healing texts leads us to a further reason for this unique prominence of impairment in early Christian art. The characters with impairments themselves held significance for the communities who were using these representations. In several of the representations of the paralysed man, for instance, there is no other figure present: people were clearly led to identify with him. Similarly, the Christ figure in other representations is looking directly at the characters with impairments;

We can compare a similar use of the image of the returning from death to life for the return of the lost son: Luke 15:24, 32.

⁷⁵⁰ Little interest in artistic representation of people with impairments, especially in Graeco-Roman traditions: Garland: *Eye of the Beholder*, 105-107, 111-114, 121f; Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 164-175, 247; Dasen, “Dwarfism in Egypt and Classical Antiquity,” 268f. Other references can be added: Statue of Homer: “to look at he was not like a blind man; for grace dwelt in his empty eyes [χάρις]. And I think, the artist made him so, that it might be evident to all that he bore the inextinguishable light of wisdom in his heart” – *Greek Anthology* 2.335-338; Loeb 1:84f; cf., statue of Thamyris “when already blind” – Pausanias, 9.30.2; Loeb 4:298f; cf., the constellation, The Kneeler, identified as “Thamyris, blinded by the Muses, kneeling as a suppliant” – Hyginus, *Poetica Astronomica* 2.6; Vire, 31; M. Grant, 190f. People of restricted growth, however, were popular subjects of artistic representation: Dasen, “Dwarfism in Egypt and Classical Antiquity,” 267, 273.

By contrast, very high profile of representation of people with impairments in Early Church art: *EEC* 2:650; *EEC* 1:108f; Mathews, 59-65; M. Simon, 206f, 212f; *DACL* 1.2:3230-3234, 13.2:1616-1626; Kraeling, 208f; du Bourget, 16, 31; Lowrie, 58; Gough, 41; Milburn, 12; Volbach, 12f. See also, F. M. Braun, 149-160; Beckwith, 1-12.

Particular link with baptism: *EEC* 2:650; *EEC* 1:108f; Lowrie, 58; Milburn, 12, 203; *DACL* 13.2:1617; Kraeling, 208f; E. B. Smith, 102-108; Beckwith, 38, 101.

Images of the paralysed man associated with death: *EEC* 2:650; *ACL* 13.2:1622f; Mathews, 59, 61f; Kraeling, 208f.

On the extent of Early Church use of NT healings in art, especially impairment healings: “Ubiquitous... the core, the mainstay of Early Christian imagery”: Mathews, 59f.

On Early Church use of artistic and narrative exemplars as models for discipleship, compare Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 258f.

sometimes he is even touching them: the people with impairments were the focus of the representations. Given that these representations occur so often in the context of baptism or death, with the associations we have identified from written sources that were being made between characters with impairments and coming to faith, the commitment of baptism, rising up at the general resurrection, it appears that these representations in Early Christian art were being used in very similar ways to the interpretations of the scriptural impairment texts. In art, as in exegesis and liturgy, interpreters were leading those they were engaging with to identify with the people with impairments in the biblical impairment encounters: people with impairments from the Bible were being used to describe and explain common discipleship processes, and to provide encouragement for current disciples.

From their basis of familiarity and experience, the Early Church had an imaginative and relevant understanding of impairment. In exegesis, liturgy and art together, impairment was not simply something to be taken away (or not): impairment was a tool to engage the past with the present – the time past when God in human form encountered people face to face, with the time present when God encountered people in their current discipleship.

6.0 *Conclusion*

The analysis of this chapter shows that the modern preoccupation with the historicity of the impairment healings has resulted in a failure to grasp the breadth of impairment healing themes in ancient texts, including the Bible. To the ancients, the focus in interpretation of impairment healing texts was not whether or not impairment healing could or did occur in biblical times or in current times. There was no discarding of a biblical text as suspect, no urgency to have impairment taken away, no accusation of deficient faith if impairment was not removed. Such emphasis in modern interpretation results in an impoverishment of the impairment texts and damage to people currently living impairment. And the basis of such emphasis is not critical analysis, but culturally-shaped and uncritical presupposition.

The ancients were far more imaginative in their use of impairment healing themes. It was well understood that impairment was beyond the limits of medicine, except in the will and power of the gods. The Early Church combined this largely Hellenistic theme with themes from the Hebrew Bible of the restoration promised with the Messiah to state and illustrate the nature of Jesus through his healing of impairment. These impossible healings showed that he was beyond physicians, magicians, prophets, even Asclepius: they were used to show his divinity. In addition, when the Apostles performed similar healings, they were shown to be fulfilling Jesus' own promise that his followers would do yet greater works – not in the healing of impairment, but in the qualities they demonstrated in the course of these healings. These yet greater works were presented as accessible to all and to be emulated by all.

Also to be emulated by all of Jesus' followers were the discipleship qualities modelled by people with impairments who encountered Jesus in the Gospels. Here too we find an ancient impairment healing theme: people with impairments participate in the process of healing, with even apparently minor acts being contributory. In the Early Church development of this theme, these qualities were modelled specifically by people with impairments. Similarly, people with impairments who encountered Jesus in the Gospels also modelled key discipleship processes, such as coming to faith, changing entrenched behaviour, being set free from the burdens of a person's life, being led to truth and commitment, even baptism and resurrection. This representative use of people with impairments for all people was not confined to written material – there appears to have been a similar rhetorical dynamic between artist and viewer. This wealth of resources in the biblical impairment healing texts that was mined so productively by ancient commentators has lain largely untouched by modern commentary, preoccupied with an agenda that people currently living impairment find irrelevant and hostile.

In addition to stimulating broader readings of the biblical impairment healing texts, ancient perspectives on the healing of impairment also raise questions in relation to people currently living impairment. If people with impairments in the Gospels were being used so extensively in the Early Church to model these key discipleship qualities and processes, in what ways can identification with these characters with impairments be appropriated in the modern Church, at least in cultures where the experience of impairment is generally still unfamiliar?

CONCLUSION

This thesis has had two objectives. The first has been to identify and to question inadequacies in modern interpretation of biblical impairment texts – to critique what has become the Church’s disabling legacy. The second has been to stimulate and to equip new readings of these texts that reclaim their proper focus and appropriate them afresh – to encourage means by which the biblical burden can be reassessed as an accompanying resource.

The starting point for the project has been the alienation and damage experienced by many people living impairment resulting from ‘what the Bible says’, and their consequent rejection of the Bible as irrelevant and hostile. On the basis of my own confessional standpoint, I do not reject the Bible in these terms. Rather, I have sought an appropriate methodology for interpreting the biblical impairment texts that takes full account of this experience: the experience of impairment itself, and of alienation by modern commentary. The methodology proposed is a socio-critical liberatory hermeneutic within a communication model of understanding ancient texts. It is a methodology in which both reader response and historical-critical analyses are combined.

The rhetorical dynamic in ancient texts between implied author and implied reader concerning impairment, partially identified by the analysis of this thesis, provides a

challenge to current readings of biblical impairment texts in two respects. The first aspect to this challenge relates to those who are embedded in the Bible, especially the Church. On the one hand, the experience of those who live impairment in the modern era shows that there are dire inadequacies in the way that the Church uses its biblical resources. This has been identified here as the modern preoccupations with sin as the cause of impairment, with the negative effects of impairment, with the incompatibility of impairment and holiness, and with the historicity of impairment healing. On the other hand, the experience of impairment interpreted by the ancients shows the extent of this inadequacy. Modern commentary overlooks the many perceived causes of impairment, even of divinely caused impairment, the established themes of impairment's abilities and usefulness, and the uses of impairment in the Gospel encounters to illuminate the nature of Christ and the exercise of discipleship.

We have seen that the alienation and damage being done to people living impairment is due not to biblical 'texts of terror', but to modern interpretation of these texts that is uncritical of its own presuppositions relating to impairment. These presuppositions we have traced to culturally-shaped influences that are far from impartial, especially the modern peculiarity of segregating and medicalizing people with impairments. In contrast to the narrowly negative emphasis in modern interpretation, the biblical impairment texts made rich use of the wide variety of impairment themes in ancient cultures to describe, amongst other things, the activity and nature of God, and the qualities and processes of discipleship. Writings of the Early Church especially have been used here both to identify ancient perspectives on impairment, including those in

the Bible, and also to demonstrate how these ancient perspectives have informed the early reading of the Bible.

The second aspect to the challenge from the ancient rhetorical dynamic concerning impairment also challenges presuppositions, the presuppositions regarding the biblical impairment texts of those who currently live impairment. There is no basis for those currently living impairment to reject the ancients as originating irrelevant, alienating and damaging scriptural texts relating to impairment and interpretation of those impairment texts. The ancients did not routinely or widely believe that impairment was caused by sin; they did not emphasise only the negative sides to impairment, whether in characterisation or imagery; the removal of impairment was not what they required or expected to happen. For the ancients, including the writers of the Bible and their earliest interpreters, impairment was mainstream – they speak of impairment with an authenticity, an authority of experience. In this respect, what they say of impairment challenges a response, if not a responsible appropriation, from those who currently live impairment. Indeed, it is people who currently live impairment who hold the vital key to the biblical impairment texts: only when the experience of impairment is reclaimed and reinstated as the proper focus in interpretation can new readings be made that are liberatory and transforming for all people, whether they have impairments or not.

Impairment as both injury and blessing has been a theme running through the analysis here. The ancients understood the causes of impairment in terms of accident or natural occurrence, and also as divinely purposed. When using the themes of impairment's effects, they drew on the negative sides to impairment, its difficulties and inabilities;

they also drew on the positive, its abilities and usefulness. In the impairment healing encounters, the qualities and processes of discipleship modelled and to be emulated were as much those of the person with an impairment as those of the person healed of their impairment. Both injury and blessing is even a theme for those with the courage themselves to engage with the biblical impairment texts. The ancient rhetorical dynamic concerning impairment challenges us, whether we live impairment or not: it identifies inadequacies in our uncritical interpretation and it questions our presuppositions; but it also stimulates and equips us to make fresh readings and to appropriate the texts in liberatory ways. To engage one's experience with the biblical impairment texts informed by a critical investigation of ancient perspectives on impairment, like Jacob's wrestling with the divine figure, results in injury – and blessing.

APPENDIX**IMPAIRMENT, EXPOSURE AND INFANTICIDE**

The destruction of weak or deformed infants was not merely accepted, but required by custom, and possibly even by law.⁷⁵¹

There was little room for people with any form of flaw or imperfection. The Greek obsession with bodily perfection...found expression in prescribed infanticide...Exposure was widespread and in some states mandatory.⁷⁵²

This appendix has been included with the thesis because it is widely asserted by modern commentators that the exposure of infants with impairments was commonplace in the ancient world. This belief about ancient practice is used by modern commentators to support the assertion that impairment was viewed simply in negative terms.⁷⁵³ The topic is included in the thesis because this influential assertion about ancient attitudes towards impairment has no critical basis. The topic is considered here in an appendix because the exposure of infants with impairments is not a biblical theme. The general point about modern assertions focussing uncritically on negative perceptions of impairment is nonetheless relevant to the overall thesis.

⁷⁵¹ Tooley, 316.

⁷⁵² Barnes, "Legacy of Oppression," 13f. See also, Barnes, *Disabled People in Britain*, 12.

⁷⁵³ The perception that the exposure of infants with impairments was widespread is influential in current Christian studies: e.g. Webb-Mitchell, 50, 52f; A. Davies, vii; Potter, 77. The perception is also current in disability studies: Barnes, "Legacy of Oppression," 13-16; Selway and Ashman, 431.

There has been much debate amongst modern commentators about how common the exposure of infants in general was in the ancient world. The orthodox view held by scholars such as Brunt, states that in many different parts of the Roman Empire and other Hellenised regions, “abortion and infanticide must have been much practised.”⁷⁵⁴ The evidence for this conclusion is drawn largely from the interpretation of demography, and from particular literary texts. The assertions are strongly made: “It was almost universally practiced.”⁷⁵⁵ Other interpreters take a quite different view: “We have no evidence that birth-control by exposure was a widespread practice.”⁷⁵⁶ “There is no proof that it was commonly resorted to.”⁷⁵⁷ Others again take a less decisive view: “The rate of infanticide certainly varied from place to place and changed over time.”⁷⁵⁸ “We have no adequate statistics for the ancient world, and it is difficult to tell from the evidence just how common it was for babies to be abandoned.”⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁴ Brunt, 117.

⁷⁵⁵ Ferngren, “The *Imago Dei*,” 37. Cf., Brunt, 110, 117, 148-154. “We have extremely strong reasons for supposing that the exposure of infants, very often resulting in death, was common in many different parts of the Roman Empire, and that it had considerable demographic, economic and psychological effects”: W. V. Harris, “Theoretical Possibility of Infanticide,” 114. “Exposure of unwanted infants was a common practice throughout Greece”: MacDowell, 53. “It was not punished and it was almost universally practiced and viewed with general indifference”: Ferngren, “The *Imago Dei*,” 37.

⁷⁵⁶ Rankin, 47.

⁷⁵⁷ Jones, 288. Exposure and infanticide not widely practised: A summary of modern views about the practice of infanticide in the ancient world, with paleopathological evidence, and the conclusion that infanticide did occur, but was not widespread in the ancient world: Riddle, 10-15. Not common, despite frequent and widespread arguments to the contrary (with summaries of ancient and modern evidence and discussion) – Bolkestein, 222-239; Van Hook, 134-145. Even in the context of impairment: “There is no archaeological or literary evidence for the practice of exposure [in Egypt]”: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 99f, however, in some circumstances individuals may have made the decision: a Greek soldier’s letter to his wife quoted, instructing her to expose their child if she was a girl: *ibid.*, 100. Little evidence of exposure in Egyptian records or evidence: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 99f, cf., Pomeroy, 160-162; Eyben, 25f. “While all this shows that neither Greek public opinion nor Greek law frowned on the practice, there is no proof that it was commonly resorted to”: J. W. Jones, 288.

⁷⁵⁸ Pomeroy, 160. Cf., A. Cameron, 107; Eyben, 13f, 74f; Amundsen, “Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children,” 3.

⁷⁵⁹ G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 49.

There is more agreement amongst scholars when it comes to the reasons for exposure, whether such exposure was frequent or not. In societies without both effective means of preventing pregnancy and also welfare provision, exposure is understood to have been “the main factor limiting family size.” Those on the lowest incomes could not afford to raise all the children born to their families, or limited their families in order that family property would not be divided.⁷⁶⁰ However, the evidence for the practice of exposure, whether or not it was frequent, is not limited to the lowest social strata. Exposure was used as a means for parents to determine the gender of their children: boys were preferred. A letter from a Greek soldier to his wife is often quoted, saying that she should expose their child if a girl.⁷⁶¹ In both historical and mythical texts, children were exposed on the grounds of illegitimacy, especially in cases of adultery or if the mother had been raped. Some scholars point out that as such exposure by its nature often occurs in a climate of secrecy, the lack of statistics or records does not demonstrate that such occurrences were rare. In myth too, dire prophecies relating to the child’s future are causes for the child to be exposed.⁷⁶² In ancient drama, both tragedy and comedy,

⁷⁶⁰ Infanticide as “the main factor limiting family size in both Greek and Roman societies”: Smith and Kahila, 674; see also: Scarborough, *Roman Medicine*, 101, 209; Tooley, 315; Eyben, 75-81. “Exposure was a widespread social problem in a society which lacked effective birth control and welfare provision. We have no adequate statistics for the ancient world, and it is difficult to tell from the evidence just how common it was for babies to be abandoned”: G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 49.

Economic reasons: Hands, 69-71, 73, 114; the poor could not afford to raise their children, or limited their families in order that family property would not be divided - Brunt, 76f, 117, 151-154; Mays, 887; B. Rawson, 175; Dixon, 23, 34, 86f, 93f.

⁷⁶¹ Parental choice in the gender of their children – girls exposed, as boys preferred: Hands, 69-71, 73, 114; Brunt, 138, 151f; Mays, 887; W. V. Harris, “Theoretical Possibility,” 115f; Pomeroy, 160-162; Eyben, 27, 77.

⁷⁶² Illegitimate births: Brunt, 150f; Eyben, 76f; Dixon, 62, 95; Noonan, 4. For example, Claudius exposed the child of his first wife five months after he had divorced her for adultery (as Augustus did similarly): Dixon, 238f. Cf., infanticide in later periods – the stigma of illegitimacy identified as the chief reason (no mention of impairment) – Medieval England: Damme, 1-24; Mays, 887; 19th Century Britain: Sauer, 81-93; 20th Century Greece: Evans Grubb, *Law and Family*, 322f.

Exposure in Myths of Hyginus:

a) Women raped and expose the offspring; shepherds / animals find and rear – Antiopa and her sons Zetos and Amphion: Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 7, 8; H. I. Rose, 9f; M. Grant, 30; Auge and Atalanta and their sons

the foundling trope was not uncommon, providing as it did so readily an opportunity for the recommended dramatic technique of discovery.⁷⁶³

Among the several reasons identified for an infant to be exposed is an impairment.

Many modern assertions are strident: “It was always the Roman custom not to permit deformed children to live”⁷⁶⁴; “With malformed babies the practice was routine.”⁷⁶⁵ In philosophical texts, famously particular passages in Plato and Aristotle, infanticide was recommended in terms that relate to infants with impairments. Plato recommended infanticide on the grounds of optimum population size:

Taking into account wars and diseases and all such considerations, and that, so far as possible, our city may not grow too great or too small... The offspring of the inferior, and any of those of the other sort who are born defective [ἀνάπηρον γίγνηται], they will properly dispose of in secret, so that no one will know what has become of them.⁷⁶⁶

Telephus and Parthenopaeus: Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 99; P. K. Marshall, 92; M. Grant, 88; Alope and her son Hippotheus (when Alope revealed as the mother, she was killed by her father, and the son exposed again): Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 187; P. K. Marshall, 157; M. Grant, 144.

b) Attempts to avoid prophecy in oracle / dream relating to offspring, exposure and reared by shepherds / animals – Oedipus: Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 66; P. K. Marshall, 65; M. Grant, 65; Aegisthus: Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 87; P. K. Marshall, 81; M. Grant, 79; Paris: Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 91; P. K. Marshall, 85; M. Grant, 82. See also: 10 characters identified as “Those Suckled by Animals”: Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 252; P. K. Marshall, 183; M. Grant, 167: (8 exposed, and 2 – the girls – were orphans).

⁷⁶³ Exposure in drama and other ancient literature: Van Hook, 135-141, 142-144: “But such cases were exceptional”: *ibid.*, 141. See also: J. W. Jones, 287f; Bolkestein, 222-239; Mays, 887; Brunt, 148-154; Dixon, 19, 237-240; A. Cameron, 105-114; Tooley, 315-317; Eyben, 12-81; Trenkner, 36f; Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 13-18; Amundsen, “Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children,” 3-22.

Some examples of exposure in myth and drama: Romulus and Remus: Livy, *Ab urbe condita libri*, 1.4.1-1.5.7; Loeb 1:16-23; cf., Plutarch, *Vit., Romulus* 2-3.18-19; Loeb 1:94-99. Cyrus: Herodotus, 1.108-118; Loeb 1:139-155. Oedipus: Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 717f; Jebb, 100f; *ibid.*, 1014-1185; Jebb, 134-155. “I gave her the child to be exposed... If you had been ready to carry out my commands, you should have made away with the child, not falsely asserted its death when in fact you gave it a chance of living” – Terence, *Heautontimorumenos* 629f, 635-637; Loeb 1:180f.

The recommended dramatic technique of discovery - ἀναγνώρισις: Aristotle, *Poetica*, 6.1450a; Bywater, 20f; *ibid.*, 10.1452a-11.1452b; Bywater, 30-33; *ibid.*, 16.1454b-18.1456a; Bywater, 44-55.

⁷⁶⁴ Ferngren, “Status of Defective Newborns,” 53.

⁷⁶⁵ Eyben, 15. Cf., “The exposure of deformed infants seems... to have been normal practice”: Brunt, 149.

⁷⁶⁶ Plato, *Respublica* 5.8-9, 460a, 460c; Loeb 5:462f; cf., “We said that the offspring should come from parents in their prime” – *ibid.*, 5.9, 460d; Loeb 5:464f; for men and women past the age of lawful procreation, relationships are free with whoever they please, “First admonishing them preferably not even to bring to light anything whatever thus conceived, but if they are unable to prevent a birth to dispose of it

Aristotle argued in a similar way with the aim of bringing about an efficient and self-sufficient state:

Inasmuch therefore as it is the duty of the lawgiver to consider from the start how the children reared are to obtain the best bodily frames, he must first pay attention to the union of the sexes, and settle when and in what condition a couple should practice intercourse...[not too young or too old to avoid: ἀτελῆ γίνεται]...As to the exposing [περὶ ἀποθέσεως] or rearing the children born, let there be a law that no deformed child [πεπηρωμένον] shall be reared.⁷⁶⁷

However, these are recommendations within idealised legislation and, as one recent commentator puts it, in using ancient texts to show general attitudes towards the exposure of infants with impairments, the views of Plato and Aristotle “must be taken cautiously because they come from philosophers...they cannot be regarded as revealing for the popular opinion.”⁷⁶⁸ The recommendations put forward by Plato and Aristotle are located to a specific tradition at a specific period: early Sparta.

Similar legislation does not seem to have existed in Athens... No other document gives evidence for the practice of exposing abnormal newborn

on the understanding that we cannot rear such an offspring” – *ibid.*, 5.9, 461c; Loeb 5:466f; cf., Plato, *Theaetetus* 161a; Loeb 7:74f.

Discussions of Plato’s views on infanticide show those defective physically and parentally collected together, the similarities with the Spartan traditions, and lack of explicit reference: Guthrie, 481f; Van Hook, 142f; Rankin, “Plato’s Eugenic,” *passim*. See also: Rankin, “Hesitant Eugenic,” *passim*; A. Cameron, 108f; Tooley, 316; Noonan, 4f. “It is impossible to say with what seriousness Plato endorsed this suggestion”; Eyben, 32-35; Amundsen, “Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children,” 3-5. In a discussion of Plato’s views, it is stated: “It is not even suggested that the physically deficient shall be eliminated”: Rankin, “Hesitant Eugenic,” 57.

⁷⁶⁷ The passage continues: “But on the ground of number of children, if the regular customs hinder any of those born being exposed, there must be a limit fixed to the procreation of offspring, and if any people have a child as a result of intercourse in contravention of these regulations, abortion must be practised on it before it has developed sensation and life; for the line between lawful and unlawful abortion will be marked by the fact of having sensation and being alive”: Aristotle, *Politica* 7.14.1-12, 1334b-1335b; Loeb 21:616-625. Cf., Persons over the age of 50, “By four or five years must be discharged from the duty of producing children for the community”: Aristotle, *Politica* *ibid.*, 7.14.12, 1335b; Loeb 21:624f. On the efficiency of a state and self-sufficiency of its population: Aristotle, *Politica* 7.4.1-7, 1325b-1326b; Loeb 21:552-559.

⁷⁶⁸ Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 209.

children in Greece...Isocrates thus praises Athens on the ground that the exposure of infants, among other ‘atrocities’ is not practised there.⁷⁶⁹

If the exposure of impaired infants was ever common in Sparta, it was not practised as routine by the time of Agesilaus, king of Sparta from 398 BCE. Born lame, he became one of Sparta’s most eminent leaders.⁷⁷⁰ There is a similar picture in Roman law. In the Twelve Tablets, the legislation of Rome’s founder Romulus, infanticide is forbidden except for offspring “maimed or monstrous from their very birth” – πλὴν εἴ τι γένοιτο παιδίον ἀνάπηρον ἢ τέρας εὐθὺς ἀπὸ γουήης.⁷⁷¹ The specified purpose of this legislation was similar to that of Plato and Aristotle: “to increase the power of the Romans.” Again, such a law encouraging infanticide on the grounds of impairment has been pinpointed to this early period only: “There is no confirmation of Romulus’ law in the juristic texts of the classical period.”⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁹ Dasen, *ibid.*, 209.

⁷⁷⁰ Spartan exposure of impaired infants one of the “peculiarities” of early Spartan law, and discussed in the context of other Greek legislation: Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 205-210. Early Spartan legislation as recorded in Plutarch: “Lycurgus did not regard sons as the peculiar property of their fathers, but rather as the common property of the state, and therefore would not have his citizens spring from random parentage, but from the best there was...The freedom which thus prevailed at that time in marriage relations was aimed at physical and political well-being...Offspring was not reared at the will of the father, but was taken and carried by him to a place called Lesche, where the elders of the tribes officially examined the infant, and if it was well-built and sturdy, they ordered the father to rear it, and assigned it one of the 9, 000 lots of land; but if it was ill-born and deformed [ἀγεννῆς καὶ ἄμορφον] they sent it to the so-called Apothetae, a chasm-like place at the foot of Mount Taygetus, in the conviction that the life of that which nature had not well equipped at the very beginning for health and strength, was of no advantage either to itself or the state”: Plutarch, *Vit., Lycurgus* 15.8-16.3; Loeb 1:252-255.

For some Enlightenment philosophers, Sparta was an ideal to be followed: “it gets rid of deformed infants (sending them humanely abroad)”: E. Rawson, 181f; for others, however, the practice of infanticide provoked “horror”: E. Rawson, 259, 276. Infanticide of infants with impairments in Sparta was admired by Nazis, not least Hitler himself, who is shown to “single out the Spartans’ courageous decision to destroy inferior children (rather than adopt the unnatural method of birth control, which allows all those born, however feeble, to survive)”: E. Rawson, 340-342.

⁷⁷¹ Infanticide in the *Twelve Tablets*: Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.15.2-3; Loeb 1:354f. Cf., Cicero’s discussion of the power of the tribunes of the plebeians: “it was begotten in the midst of dissension among our citizens, after parts of the city had been occupied and besieged by armed forces. The after it had been quickly killed, as the Twelve Tables direct that terribly deformed infants shall be killed, it was soon revived” – “cito necatus...ad deformitatem puer”: Cicero, *De legibus* 3.8.19; Loeb 16:480f. See also the fragment of ancient legal text quoted by Cicero – *The Twelve Tables* 4.1; Loeb 3:440f.

⁷⁷² A. Cameron, 109; cf., *ibid.*, 113: “From this time onwards [2nd century A.D.] there is no rational defence of infanticide, except in the special case of deformed children, and even that soon disappears”;

Whatever the legal situation, there are possible references to infanticide on the grounds of impairment taking place at later periods. For instance, in Soranus' work on gynaecology, he includes a discussion of whether a newborn is worth rearing. The mother must have spent the pregnancy in good health, the child must be born at the due time, when placed on the ground the child must cry vigorously, and the child must be "perfect in all its parts, members and senses." Impairment was clearly not the sole determinant for deciding that a child is "suited by nature for rearing." However, as with the theoretical recommendations of legal philosophers, there is no evidence of the extent to which Soranus' advice was in fact practised.⁷⁷³ The Elder Seneca describes how

Many fathers are in the habit of exposing offspring who are no good. Some right from birth are damaged in some part of their bodies, weak and without hope. Their parents throw them out rather than expose them. Some even cast out home-bred slave children, when they are born under an evil star or are

cf., Tooley, 316f. Romulus, the supposed originator of these early laws, was himself exposed as an infant, along with his brother Remus.

Exposure was an issue discussed by Pliny and Trajan, but not in terms of impairment: "The question concerning free-born persons who have been exposed as infants and reared in slavery by those who took them up, has been frequently discussed": Pliny (the Younger), *Epist.* 10.65, 66; Loeb 2:362-365.

On the Roman *ius tollendi / suscipiendi*: Connery, 22-32; Buckland, 102f; Brunt, 148-154; Harris, "Roman Father's Power," 93-95; B. Rawson, 11f, 172, 210f; J. Thomas, 415; Watson, 98-100; Dixon, 26f, 61f, 95f, 237-240; Evans Grubb, "Constantine and Imperial Legislation," 133, 134f; Eyben, 16f, 19-22, 27.

Cf., the realm of the Sophists: "That nation, as the barbarians believe, excels in wisdom and is governed in accordance with good customs. The children that are born they acknowledge and rear, not according to the discretion of their parents, but of those to whom the charge of the physical examination of children has been committed. If these have noted any who are conspicuous for defects or are crippled in some part of their limbs, they give orders to put them to death": Curtius Rufus, 9.1.24-25; Loeb 2:370-373.

⁷⁷³ Whether a newborn is worth rearing: Soranus, *Gynaecia* 2.6.10 (2.26.79) – 2.8.12 (2.28.81); H. I. Rose, 248-252; Temkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*, 79-82. Soranus mentions and criticises certain current practice: "the majority of barbarians, as the Germans and the Scythians, and even some of the Hellenes, put the newborn into cold water in order to make it firm and to let die, as not worth rearing, one that cannot bear the chilling [also into wine, brine, urine, or sprinkled with fine myrtle or oak gall]... We, however, reject all of these... the fact that the child did not withstand the injury does not prove that it was impossible for it to live if unharmed; more resistant children will also thrive better if not harmed in any way."

It is important to distinguish impairment and prodigy: for example, 'maimed' (*ἀνάπηρον / debilem*) and 'portent' (*τέρας / prodigium*): Amundsen, "Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children," 11-15. Some modern commentators unhelpfully switch between the two or do not make any clear distinction: e.g. Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*; Holden, *passim*.

physically weak – “inutiles... aliqua corporis parte mulcati, infirmi ei in nullam spem idonei... invalidos.”⁷⁷⁴

The context for these words was a debating practice – not necessarily an objective environment! This said, there is a record of the emperor Claudius passing legislation for the protection of slaves treated in a not dissimilar way:

When certain men were exposing their sick and worn out slaves [“aegra et adfecta”] on the island of Aesculapius because of the trouble of treating them, Claudius decreed that all such slaves were free, and that if they recovered, they should not return to the control of their master; but if anyone preferred to kill such a slave rather than to abandon him, he was liable to the charge of murder.⁷⁷⁵

Literary evidence of various kinds suggests that exposure on the grounds of impairment was taking place at this time in the Graeco-Roman world, but the extent of this practice is not clear. While archaeological material supports the view that exposure was occurring, there is little evidence of the exposure of infants with impairments – hardly to be expected if their exposure was indeed routine. For example, in a recent extensive study of Roman cemeteries, this comment is made: “it is perhaps worth mentioning that none of the perinatal infants in the present study showed any evidence of skeletal deformity.”⁷⁷⁶ And, as even the strongest advocates of the high frequency of exposure in the ancient world point out, “Of course there were deformed children who survived.”⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷⁴ Seneca (the Elder), *Controversiae* 10.4.16; Loeb 2:438f.

⁷⁷⁵ Suetonius, *Divus Claudius* 5.25.2; Loeb 2:50f.

⁷⁷⁶ While there may be archaeological evidence of exposure (Smith and Kahila, *passim*), studies conclude that there is no evidence of skeletal deformity in infants exposed (Mays, 887).

⁷⁷⁷ “It was not uncommon for deformed children to be reared” – Hands, 70; cf., Eyben, 15f (with references *ad loc.* in footnote 37: “Of course there were deformed children who survived”).

Although not illegal, at least in the Graeco-Roman world prior to the 4th Century CE, infanticide in general was practised with “shame and secrecy”:

A study of the sources often reveals hesitation and aversion, and not only social but moral objections as well...References since the Hellenistic period and even earlier on this subject are rarely neutral or sympathetic toward the perpetrator; more often than not they are hostile.⁷⁷⁸

Even its proponents in the ancient world write of it in ways that show that it was not a practice generally supported. Plato, for instance, wrote of exposure without explicit reference – seen by some as an indicator of some hesitancy and sensitivity to public opinion. Cultures that did not practice infanticide were applauded, both by outside observers, and by those belonging to the cultures.⁷⁷⁹ Infants with impairments were not excluded from these attitudes:

These instances of condemnations of child exposure...can be taken to include the condemnation of the killing of defective newborn and not to be limited to the exposure of healthy infants.⁷⁸⁰

Some modern Christian writers assert that ancient Christians were “very influential in changing attitudes towards infanticide.” However, the strong Christian and Jewish criticism of infanticide in general had many parallels in pagan texts.⁷⁸¹ Christian

⁷⁷⁸ Brunt, 149; cf., J. W. Jones, 288; “There was a certain public opinion against it”: A. Cameron, 106, 110f; “The myth of the lame god Hephaistus confirms this aversion to exposure.” Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece*, 209f. Hesitation and aversion: Eyben, 19, 56; cf., *ibid.*, 48-56, 81. This is discussed under the themes of ancient views in the law (Eyben, 19-32), philosophy (Eyben, 32-43), medicine (Eyben, 43-48), public opinion (Eyben, 48-56), and religion (Eyben, 56-74).

⁷⁷⁹ Plato’s lack of explicit reference: Rankin, “Plato’s Eugenic,” 414-416; cf., Eyben, 48f. In contrast, however: “It was not punished and it was almost universally practiced and viewed with general indifference” – Ferngren, “The *Imago Dei*,” 37; cf., Ferngren, “The Status of Defective Newborns,” 53: “It was always the Roman custom not to permit deformed children to live.” Cultures without exposure applauded – Jews: Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.5; Loeb 3:182f; Germans: Tacitus, *Germania* 19.5; Loeb 1:160f (see *ad loc.* footnote 2); Isocrates on Athens: *Panathenaicus*, 121-122; Loeb 2:446-448; cf., Eyben, 49.

⁷⁸⁰ Amundsen, “Medicine and the Birth of Defective Newborns,” 9.

⁷⁸¹ Jewish traditions: infanticide and exposure of infants described in Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.20.114-119; Loeb 7:546-550; Yonge, 605f. (no exceptional or particular mention of infants with impairments): “Moses has utterly prohibited the exposure of children, by a tacit prohibition, when he condemns to

influence can be traced in the passing of legislation outlawing the practice, but they drew on what was already familiar when “presenting those aspects of Christian social life [including opposition to infanticide] which they felt would be most understandable and most attractive to pagans.”⁷⁸² In their condemnation of infanticide, Early Christian writers mention children with impairments, but they do not identify them as being at particular risk – again, hardly what one would expect if infants with impairments were, as is alleged, routinely exposed.

Assertions by modern commentators that the exposure of infants with impairments was a regular and accepted practice in the ancient world do not have a critical basis. There is no agreement that exposure in general was a common practice, let alone exposure on

death, as I have said before, those who are the causes of a miscarriage to a woman whose child conceived within her is already formed.”

On Jewish attitudes: Eyben, 58-61; Connery, 7-21. No Jewish laws on infanticide, as none needed: Preuss, 412. Texts relating to infanticide applied to abortion also: Rosner, *Medicine and Jewish Law*, 118, 181f; see also: Abraham, 28, 133-135, 195, 221f; Preuss, 413-416; Jakobovits, 118-133; Bleich, “Abortion in Halakhic Literature,” 134-177 (especially 157, 160f); Rosner, “Tay-Sachs Disease,” 178-190; A. Cameron, 110-113; Tooley, 320f; Noonan, 6; Herring, 25-54.

Summaries of Early Christian attitudes – Eyben, 62-74; Connery, 33-45; Brunt, 149f; G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 46-50; Noonan, 7-18. Christians were not unique – there were pagans with similar views: Eyben, 40-43; Evans Grubb, *Law and Family*, 59, 70f, 85, 90-92, 270f. “Christians [from the second century] were presenting those aspects of Christian social life which they felt would be most understandable and most attractive to pagans”: Evans Grubb, *Law and Family*, 71; cf., G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 46f, 82-85; A. Cameron, 113f; Amundsen, “Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children,” 8-10; Eyben, 48-56. Early Christian influence in legislation in this respect: Connery, 46-64; J. Thomas, 395; Evans Grubb, “Constantine and Imperial Legislation,” 134-136; Evans Grubb, *Law and Family*, 325; G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 48f; Eyben, 29-32; Ferngren, “The status of defective newborns,” 47-56, 61; Amundsen and Ferngren, “Early Christian Tradition,” 50 (with references in primary and secondary literature in footnotes 12-18 *ad loc.*, p. 60f). Council decrees forbidding infanticide: quoted in Amundsen, “Visigoth Medical Legislation,” 568f.

⁷⁸² Specific influences of Christianity –

a) human life being a gift from God / theories of infant baptism: Tooley, 318-322; see also on baptism: Ferngren, “The Status of Defective Newborns,” 53f.

b) influence of notion that all, including infants with impairments, possess the *imago Dei*: Amundsen, “Medicine and the Birth of Defective Children,” 15-18; cf., Ferngren, “The *Imago Dei*,” 23-45.

c) God causes the birth of each child – with purpose, even if this is not clear to humans: Ferngren, “Status of Defective Newborns,” 52f.

We can compare the rise of hospitals (foundling and homes) through the influence of the Early Church in relation to value of all human life: G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 49f, 62; Ferngren, “The *Imago Dei*,” 31-34; Ferngren, “Status of Defective Newborns,” 53-56.

the grounds of impairment. On occasions and in particular places, the impairment of an infant did lead to their exposure; but this was not a routine practice “commonly resorted to.” Whatever the frequency of exposure in the ancient world, reasons other than a child’s impairment were more pressing to those parents who faced such a decision.

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