

THE EARLY TYPES OF HOSPITALS DURING THE FIRST THREE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES AND THE EARLY BYZANTINE PERIOD*

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The establishment of the early medical centers was realized during the first three centuries A.D. by pioneer physicians. Women doctors at the beginning, and men later, founded the early types of hospitals with personal initiative. The function of the institutions first took place in centers of adoration, caverns, inns, monasteries, clinics and private houses. Later the Byzantine State in cooperation with the Church organised the first real hospitals. The probable reasons for their establishment are the following: the social need of human beings to help one other and be cured together with others, according to the opinion of Basil the Great and Meletius Iatrosophista¹; the new Christian spirit of charity, hospitality and cure of body and soul of the patients, misfortunate persons and new faithful; the role of the personal initiative and wills; the institution of monasteries with hostels inside for treatment of any ill person; special circumstances provoking illness among many people such as epidemics, famine, persecutions, serious diseases such as leprosy and psychiatric mania; the small number of the scientific and miraculous physicians and the need of the multitude of patients for someone to stay near them for healing; the need for curing special social groups such as aged men, poor, pregnant women, orphans, widows, divorced women, lunatics; the existence of quackery, magic medicine and witchcraft without the principles of medical science; the organisation and administration for treatment by the State, Church and medical circles in a real medical center.

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The pioneer and founder physicians are the following: The female doctors sisters Ss. Zenais and Philonilla (1st cen., commemorated 11 October) from Tarsus of Cilicia, relatives of the apostle Paul, worked in a cavern - hospital in the area of the town^{2,18,19} Demetrias in Greek Magnesia. They practised the art of medicine with charity, improvisation and apostolic zeal. They were honoured with the title «friends of peace» because they were peace-lovers, unmercenary and protectresses of medicine, who worked miracles^{2,17,19}.

The woman doctor Hermione^{17,20,21} (1st-2nd cen., commemorated 4 September) daughter of the Deacon Philip lived in Caesarea of Palestine and studied the art of medicine^{3,20}. After a long journey with her sister Eftychida^{17,21} she went to Ephesus in search of the apostle John, but didn't find him because of his assumption. In this famous town, Hermione practised the art of medicine²⁰ and founded the first inn-hospital³, («*publicum hospitium*»)²⁰ i.e. a public hostel which is an early model of the later *Byzantine xenon*. It was more or less an infirmary, an asylum for the ill, poor and misfortunate. She practised the art of medicine in a philanthropic way, encouraged and revigorated the multitude, that entered her initial inn-hospital. Hermione cured the diseases of the body and spirit with the invocation of Christ's Name. She was a virgin and prophetess¹⁷ and crowned a martyr physician. In very deep old age she suffered many tortures by the emperors Trajan and Adrian, but she miraculously fell asleep in peace, as did her executioners, a little before decapitation³.

The three saints Zenais, Philonilla and Hermione are the unmercenary and miracle-worker doctors and they are the female protectresses of medicine.

The physicians saints Cyrus and Joannes suffered martyrdom in the 3rd cen. trying to give courage to the young mother saint Athanasia and her daughters Theodote, Eudokia and Theoctiste, who had been imprisoned. Their memory is celebrated on 31 January and 28 June. Cyrus was a doctor in Alexandria and Joannes a physician soldier from Edessa of Syria. During a persecution they took refuge in a monastery near the Arabian gulf. They offered healing for free to all patients at a small hospital of their monastery. They were thus called unmercenary and divine healers. Man's bad heredity of the passions was treated by the two doctors: «*taking from divine grace the gift of miracles, you continually work miracles cutting out all our passions with your invisible surgical operation*». In their dismissal hymn they are honoured as «*the great clinic of the world*», «*the doc-*

tors of miracles and the healers of the patients, who illuminate the universe»⁴.

The doctor saint Diomedes (3rd cen., commemorated 16 August) was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, studied medical science, was married and became the «*best*» physician, philosopher and humanist working miracles. He accepted all patients in his clinic and laboratory in Nicaea of Bithynia and cured them with «*divine surgery*» and the «*cooperation of the Spirit*». His nursing home was «*a common laboratory*», «*a clinic unsalaried*» and «*a most calm harbour*». He offers healing and benefits them «*who recourse to him with faith*»⁵.

The saint and doctor Thallelaeus (3rd cen., commemorated 20 May) suffered martyrdom in 284 A.D. in Anazarvus of Cilicia. He practised the art of medicine in Phoenicia of Lebanon «*in his own house*» in a small infirmary. He carried upon his shoulders the sick in this nursing house, treated their wounds and considered the pains of the patients to be his own pains. «*The wise Thallelaeus*» served the ill with humility and without distinguishing between faithful or idolater. He is worthy as a «*treasure of healing who donates the cure for free*»⁶.

During the early Byzantine era (4th - 7th cen.) the cooperation between the State, Church, the private initiative and the medical circles was very fruitful. New imperial constitutions, canons of Ecumenical Synods, private wills and the medical legislation arranged the conditions of foundation, administration and the financial functioning of hospitals.

Justinian's medical legislation such as the Codex and Digesta define the conditions of establishment of a hospital by personal initiative or by behest. The citizen could appoint the manager or the committee of the hospital. Saint Constantine the Great regulates in the schools and hospitals the instruction of the art of medicine by the physicians and professors⁸. Emperor Theodosius II the Minor defines the duties of the assistants of the physicians, who were called *parabolani*, in curing of the ill bodies of the patients⁹. In accordance with Canon VIII of the 4th Ecumenical Synod in Chalcedon (451 A.D.) poorhouses and hospitals are founded by the Church¹⁰. *Novella Constitutio* of Justinian governs the administration and financial function of the first hospitals. The income of the infirmaries results from donations, legacies, wills, loans, mortgages, buying and selling, financial privileges and grants¹¹. Especially for the taxation of the asylums and hospitals Theodosian Codex¹² and emperor Justin I¹³ don't deli-

ver them from the burden of any public tax. Emperor Heracleius (7th cen.) with his 23rd *Novella Constitutio*¹⁴ and a Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod¹⁵ deal with the erection of churches in hospitals and the situation of the hospital's clergymen.

In the West, according to saint Hieronymus, Fabiola (4th - 5th cen.), established the first «*hospitalium*» in Rome, and worked there as a nurse¹⁶. In the Arabic world the first hospitals were erected mainly from the 8th century.

Conclusion. The early types of hospitals were connected with places of adoration, caverns, inns, monasteries, clinics and private houses. They were established during the three first Christian centuries for various reasons, first by female doctors, the saints and protectresses of medicine Zenais, Philonilla and Hermione. In the early Byzantine era the institution and functioning of hospitals were regulated by the State, Church, private wills and medical legislation.

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